Sustainable Partnerships Pay Off in Times of Financial Uncertainty

By Bret Pilney, PE, LEED® AP

The chaos of uncertain financial times makes the development of sustainable partnerships a key element in delivering aviation projects on time and within budget.

The aviation industry, still recovering from the devastating effects of the 2001 terrorist attacks, has experienced additional setbacks in a financial crisis that has tightened personal and business travel budgets, constraining funds for airport improvements.

Reduced funding for projects does not change the industry’s pent-up need to produce facilities that improve the travel experience and accommodate tenant needs. Expectations are still high that consultants deliver a quality product while being cost-conscious and adhering to project budgets. How can both be accomplished?

Multi-year, on-call consultant contracts are one way to develop sustainable partnerships. The formula lies in the method used to select consultants. The selection process is most effective when owners choose consultants based on qualifications versus lowest fees. Typically, cost-based selections do not lead to sustainable partnerships.

By joining forces with owners, a good consultant can deliver solutions that accommodate reduced budgets but still enable owners to fulfill their requirements and meet constituent needs. Long-term owner/consultant partnerships are mutually beneficial. Owners receive a quality product without busting their budgets, and consultants earn a reputation as a trusted adviser, resulting in repeat business.

As an employee-owned firm, Burns & McDonnell brings a unique value to these partnerships. The principles of ownership apply to all our work, whether for ourselves or for our clients: working efficiently, saving money, combining talents to deliver the best product.

To us, being a partner means not taking for granted that all options have been considered before moving forward on a project. We aren’t afraid to ask the tough questions that an owner would ask themselves. By becoming an extension of our client’s staff, we read between the lines, carefully consider owner needs when determining the best direction, and make cost-effective recommendations — the same steps an owner takes to reach a good decision.

Our processes automatically integrate sensitivity to client budgets and diligence in generating creative solutions within the boundaries of material selections, life-cycle costs, and operations and maintenance impacts.

Aviation Partnerships

Examples of sustainable partnerships
Burns & McDonnell has developed:

- Kansas City Aviation Department, 55 years
- Dulles International Airport, 50 years
- John F. Kennedy International and LaGuardia airports, 50 years
- Miami International Airport, 45 years
- O’Hare International Airport, 26 years
- San Francisco International Airport, 22 years
- Denver International Airport, 20 years
- Johnson County (Kan.) Airport Commission, 20 years
- Lambert-St. Louis International Airport, 18 years
The current financial crisis has driven the aviation industry to develop sustainable plans for the entire airport campus. Burns & McDonnell’s 68 years of experience with the full range of aviation-related projects enables us to see the broader picture and analyze it before determining the necessary resources to get the job done. A holistic view can lead to broader efficiencies that lower your bottom line.

At Burns & McDonnell, a partnership is more than just collaboration. It meshes two entities to create a stronger team and smarter solutions that result in better facilities that withstand the test of time.

Our partnerships are sustainable because we’ve made it our mission to make our clients successful. When we become a member of the team, that mission is easily accomplished.