



# Utilities and Dedicated Project Management Teams: An Essential Partnership

In any given year, most utilities execute major projects that may include modernizing equipment, constructing new systems, and repairing, rebuilding, or relocating aging infrastructure. Because of the complexity of these projects, various factors have the potential to impede project progress and compromise success if not managed properly.

To move complex projects forward requires collaboration among all team members including vendors and subcontractors, balancing multiple timelines, and agility and responsiveness to schedule changes.

There's a lot to manage in the execution of a major project, and this is precisely why many utility companies choose to engage a project management partner rather than go it alone. A dedicated partner can make sure all the puzzle pieces — construction partners, subcontractors, timelines, equipment rentals, even seasonal weather — fit together efficiently.

Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), a nonprofit federal power marketing administration, provides 28% of the electric power used in the Northwest. BPA markets wholesale electric power from hydroelectric projects, operates and maintains high-voltage transmission lines, and promotes energy efficiency, renewable resources, and new technologies.

With so much responsibility and a large variety of projects requiring execution, BPA often partners with engineer-procurement-construction (EPC) providers. When executing projects with an EPC approach, BPA understands the value of engaging a trusted project management partner to collaborate with all relevant vendors and keep the project moving forward.

## **BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION SELECTS LEIDOS**

BPA's working relationship with Leidos began in 2011 when their construction partner brought on the Leidos Power Delivery Services team as a subcontractor. Throughout the course of that first multi-year program, it became clear to the Leidos project management team that their working style and core values — operational excellence, collaborative relationships, trustworthy stewardship, and safety — aligned well with similar values at BPA. In 2013, BPA expanded its partnership with Leidos by awarding the power delivery team a multi-year master contract as a preferred vendor.

BPA looked for an experienced and capable team backed by a strong project management organization to assist with their many power infrastructure projects. They found a fit with the Leidos Power Delivery Services team, a group that has worked with 50+ investor-owned utilities and 160+ municipalities and cooperatives across the country. Leidos brings extensive utility industry engineering experience and combines it with project management excellence to help power companies efficiently plan and manage both small-scale and large-scale projects.

To provide Bonneville Power Administration with the best possible service, Leidos opened an office in 2014 in Portland, Oregon, where BPA is based. Since then, BPA's relationship with Leidos has continued to expand and includes substation, transmission, telecommunications, and environmental engineering services.

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## **A LONGSTANDING PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN BPA AND LEIDOS**

- > **10 years**
  - > **5 states**
  - > **Hundreds of projects**
  - > **3 strong EPC partnerships**
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## **UTILITY ENGINEERING EXCELLENCE MAKES THE DIFFERENCE**

BPA also looked for a project management team that wouldn't stop at schedules and budgets. With backgrounds in utility engineering, Leidos project and program managers bring a depth of technical understanding to the projects they work on. They know the critical questions to ask, the key discussions that need to take place, and the appropriate team members to involve during every phase of the project. This approach removes day-to-day burdens from BPA, while giving them the assurance that their major programs are being managed in the most effective way possible.

BPA looks for EPC vendors with a robust approach to collaboration between engineering and construction entities. Leidos has successfully teamed with industry-leading construction firms and has demonstrated its role as a strong engineering and project management partner. Leidos project managers bring a depth of understanding to the overall project plan and how it affects each vendor on the EPC team, identifying potential issues in advance to mitigate problems and risks. To deliver on that promise, the team acts as the project's realists and troubleshooters.

As the realists, the Leidos project management team takes a holistic view of BPA's projects, uncovering potential gaps in planning or other issues that could arise and working with all team members to efficiently address and mitigate these risks up-front. The team collaborates with EPC program construction partners to prepare program-level schedules that account for engineering milestones, construction resources, permitting timelines, weather considerations, environmental restrictions, and outage requirements. The goal: To think of – and plan for – every variable of BPA's projects before anything becomes a problem. Working directly with BPA's construction partners, the Leidos project managers help marry all parties' plans and timelines with BPA's expectations.

Every project comes with unexpected hurdles and hiccups – no matter how well-planned. As adept troubleshooters, Leidos project management teams prepare alternate paths forward in the event that issues arise. They address any changes in project approach via in regular coordination meetings, onsite reviews, assistance and coordination of material procurement, and the tracking of schedules, scopes, and financials.

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***From planning through completion, the Leidos project management team balances technical, management, financial, and safety perspectives.***

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## **PROJECT SPOTLIGHT: FUTURE-PROOFING BPA FIELD COMMUNICATIONS**

In 2019, BPA launched a \$100 million EPC program to modernize its existing mobile radio system and improve voice communications between dispatchers and field personnel. The project covers five states and involves work at more than 100 sites.

In this large-scale effort to replace BPA's aging communications network, the Leidos team partnered with a construction firm to manage engineering efforts and coordinates with BPA and the construction team to ensure that scope commitments are met. To this end, Leidos maintains crisp communication between key stakeholders, including various subcontractors, in a highly variable environment. To help construction partners more fully engage their teams, for instance, Leidos provides insights and suggestions on project sequencing to ensure that vendors' timelines align well with potential weather conditions throughout the project.

But this particular program's variables didn't stop at adjusting to weather patterns or even adapting to evolving telecommunications standards. A global pandemic ushered in new restrictions on travel and site visits. To overcome this obstacle, Leidos worked with BPA to find alternative ways to secure onsite information and intelligence. With this agile approach, the Leidos team proceeded with established project timelines and kept the overall program schedule on track, all in the midst of COVID-19.





## COMMUNICATION BEST PRACTICES ARE KEY TO PROJECT MANAGEMENT

BPA has selected Leidos multiple times when there is a need to execute and manage complex programs with complicated project schedules and multiple stakeholders. This requires regular and clear communication. Ensuring that all parties start on the same page and stay there, the Leidos team employs communication best practices that include clear dashboards with data that keep BPA updated on budgets, timelines, potential project risks and mitigation methods, and the up-to-date project details.

At the onset of each project, the Leidos team sets expectations and establishes communication patterns that include the following:

> **Kick-off meetings.** At the start of every project, the statement of work is reviewed in detail with BPA and its construction partners to highlight any misunderstandings or gaps. This allows the larger team to get ahead of any problems before work begins. Kickoff meetings are also used to establish the desired frequency for touchpoints between all stakeholders and align expectations on the project.

- > **Regroup meetings.** These meetings include representatives from essential project partners and typically follow a regular schedule related to key project milestones.
- > **Project dashboards.** Leidos provides detailed dashboards that give BPA real time, at-a-glance project updates. The dashboards often include data related to budgets, timelines, potential project risks and their mitigation methods, and updated project details.
- > **Key points of contact.** Leidos lists major roles for each project as well as the key contacts for each role. This list streamlines communications with a communication matrix that allows project members to easily identify and get in touch with the most appropriate contact.

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***The need to repair, rebuild, relocate, or modernize power infrastructure is ongoing. Utilities consistently look to improve and update their infrastructure, and the project list is always significant. Working with a trusted partner to maximize efficiency and make the best use of both time and budget enables utilities such as BPA to meet their project goals year after year.***

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### LEARN MORE

[energy@leidos.com](mailto:energy@leidos.com)

[energy.leidos.com](https://energy.leidos.com)

