

Case Study

Project: Northern Hub

Introduction

The Northern Hub Alliance made a commitment to utilise Earned Value Management (EVM) across the Northern Hub programme as a tool to track performance; to identify issues; and to inform decision making. D2's Project Controls team were engaged to provide a full suite of EVM services in order to monitor project performance, based upon our staff's highly regarded approach to planning, cost collection and progress measurement.

The project was at the very heart of Network Rail's £1bn+ Northern Powerhouse to improve travel in the North. It is the biggest transport project in the North of England for decades and saw the construction of a new rail viaduct which, for the first time in history, provides a direct link between Manchester's three mainline stations (Piccadilly, Oxford Road and Victoria). The project spanned the boundary between Manchester and Salford, passing through the area of the first passenger railway station in the world, on Liverpool Road.

The urban areas are being redeveloped, creating open and attractive spaces for the public to enjoy. It aims to improve connectivity across towns and cities by creating new direct links to Manchester Airport. It has facilitated a step change in the level of train services operating on the network, increasing capacity for passengers by providing a faster and more frequent train service.

Client: Northern Hub Alliance

Deliverables

Our Project Controls scope was to provide a full-service implementation of an Earned Value Management System (EVMS), including requirements specification; system design and build; administration and maintenance; and user training.

Challenges and Solutions

EVM can require a step-change in how project data is collected and monitored and any implementation can expect to face a degree of inertia. Our biggest challenge was the variable level of knowledge and experience of EVM within the Alliance team. Failure to understand the benefits of adopting EVM, due to a lack of knowledge or a poor previous experience, led to a reluctance to engage from some Alliance members. This slowed down the implementation phase and put increasing pressure to deliver a tangible output as quickly as possible.

In order to solve this, D2 Rail held a series of workshops with the Alliance Participants to determine EV capability; and to develop relationships with the key stakeholders. We provided lunchtime learning sessions to upskill the wider team with general EV training, as well as more tailored sessions with the main contributors (planning and commercial teams). We also ran a pilot project as proof of concept to demonstrate outputs and benefits.

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Benefits

The EVMS implementation provided several benefits for the client, including:

- Single source of data – consolidated data source integrating cost, schedule and progress data for all Alliance Partners, allowing roll-up/drill-down and cross interrogation;
- Verifiable status reports – robust data management processes to ensure reliability of outputs;
- Objective analysis – identification of performance issues; trends; and forecasting using standardised metrics, to inform management decisions/corrective action;
- Management by Exception – structured approach enables management effort to be focussed on those areas that need it most;
- Stakeholder confidence – visibility of quality reports within the Alliance; Alliance Participants & parent companies; client organisation; and other external stakeholders; and
- Recognition and Reputation – the EVM outputs garnered praise from several external parties and furthered the reputation of the project/ Alliance within the industry.

Client: Northern Hub Alliance

Lessons Learnt

This project provided a number of lessons learnt for the Alliance team, including:

- A dedicated central team – investment in resources and a showing commitment to EVM;
- Management 'buy in' – setting up and engagement takes time and requires management support, from the top down, to reinforce commitment to EVA and resolve conflicts;
- Early Engagement – early involvement with key stakeholders is essential; and
- EV capability – upskilling the team with general EV training and project specific training sessions.

Client Testimonial

"D2 were integral to the successful development and implementation of Earned Value Management tools and techniques for the Northern Hub Alliance. Working collaboratively from the outset, D2 helped define the system requirements with the Alliance team and were able to tailor the solution to exactly what was required. They sourced the required cost and schedule data; configured the Earned Value Management System and set up bespoke reporting outputs to enable effective decision making for the Alliance throughout the project lifecycle. A job well done."

Tom Bright, Network Rail