



## Mission-Driven Infrastructure Delivery: Takeaways from the 2026 SAME Pacific Industry Forum

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I recently attended the 2026 Society of American Military Engineers (SAME) Pacific Industry Forum (PIF) in Honolulu, Hawaii, along with several of my MBP colleagues. The forum brought together military, federal, and industry leaders to discuss infrastructure priorities and challenges across the Indo-Pacific.

In the Pacific, many projects are separated by thousands of miles, with limited local labor and resources and complex supply chains. Transportation, workforce support, materials, equipment, housing, and sustainment are not secondary considerations; they are part of the delivery system and often determine whether a project can proceed at all.

While the geography in the Pacific may be unique, many of the broader delivery challenges are not. Owners and project teams in other markets are also facing growing workloads, limited capacity, pressure to move faster, and important decisions that need to be made earlier. The discussions at PIF also underscored a broader point about what constitutes successful delivery. For mission-driven infrastructure, completing construction is not the end goal. The asset needs to be ready to perform as intended when required.

That idea came through in a number of ways at the forum. Five in particular stood out to me:

### 1. Successful Delivery Means More Than Finishing the Project

Cost, schedule, and quality remain fundamental measures of project performance. But when infrastructure is essential to military operations, completing construction is only part of successful delivery. The real outcome is usable capability, available when the mission requires it.

Runways, ports, fuel systems, utilities, communications infrastructure, warehouses, and other facilities are not simply capital assets. They are parts of an operating network. They must remain available, support continuity of operations, recover from disruption, and perform under the conditions for which they were built.

One subtle but important signal came from both U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) and U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM): they used the word “operator” rather than “stakeholder.” The distinction matters. A stakeholder has an interest in the project; an operator must employ, sustain, and, when necessary, recover the capability under real mission conditions. That perspective changes the questions a delivery team asks and when it asks them.

For owners, success is therefore not simply a completed project. Commissioning and acceptance, resilience reviews, an integrated schedule and risk analysis, and operational readiness criteria should be built into the delivery solution from planning through turnover. These are not closeout activities. They are how the team verifies that the asset is available, supportable, and ready to perform when required.

## 2. A Growing Pipeline Is Only Part of the Story

The forum highlighted significant infrastructure needs across the Indo-Pacific, including military facilities, utilities, water infrastructure, barracks, civil works, and remote-site infrastructure.

The question is how to deliver that volume of work with the capacity available.

Federal agencies are managing substantial programs with constrained staffing, while industry faces workforce and contractor capacity limitations. This is particularly true in island and remote locations where every project operates within an interconnected ecosystem. Contractors, operators, residents, and government agencies may all be competing for the same shipping capacity, port access, flights, housing, fuel, equipment, materials, food, and skilled labor.

A contractor's solution cannot stop at moving project materials. In constrained markets, it may also need to address housing, transportation, food, medical support, communications, and the sustainment of a non-resident labor force without displacing the people and services already supporting the mission. These conditions may be more pronounced in the Pacific, but the lesson applies anywhere multiple programs compete for limited regional capacity. Capital plans have to account for the entire market that will ultimately deliver and sustain the work.

## 3. Earlier Industry Involvement Means Earlier Decisions

One of the clearest themes at the forum was involving industry earlier in the project delivery process. Agencies discussed accelerated and progressive design-build, design-build-to-budget, construction management at risk, performance-based requirements, and earlier procurement of design and preconstruction services as means of doing so. Agencies also discussed how they might communicate leaner requirements that focus more on desired outcomes and give industry greater flexibility in how to achieve them.

The intent is to address long-lead procurement sooner, improve sequencing, bring industry knowledge into the process earlier, and get projects moving sooner.

Earlier involvement also means owners and operators must make important decisions while information is still developing. Cost, schedule, risk, constructability, resilience, commissioning, acceptance, and operational requirements need to be considered together as the project takes shape.

Clear decision authority also matters. Without it, decisions can become a bottleneck even when the delivery approach is intended to accelerate the work. Earlier industry involvement only creates value when it is matched by earlier owner and operator decisions.

## 4. Collaboration Goes Beyond the Contract

The discussion also focused on the working relationship between government and industry.

Both government and industry leaders called for earlier, more candid feedback, clearer demand signals, practical risk allocation, and greater investment in the workforce and local capacity. Government leaders also recognized the need to provide industry with more predictable programs, faster decisions, greater transparency, and fewer requirements that add limited value. In the Pacific, collaboration also means understanding how one project's demand for ships, housing, labor, or fuel can affect the wider operating environment.

Industry has a role to play as well. Government speakers challenged firms to bring solutions and practical ideas to the table. That includes solutions for the surrounding delivery ecosystem, not only the work inside the project fence line.

Changing the delivery approach alone is not enough. Government, industry, and operators need relationships, shared information, and decision-making processes that can function at an operational pace. Those connections are difficult to create for the first time during a disruption; they need to be built and exercised during routine delivery.

### 5. Faster Delivery Requires Useful Project Controls

The pressure to move faster does not reduce the need for project controls. It makes timely, useful information even more important.

An integrated schedule can show the effects of a delayed decision, procurement constraint, or long-lead item on the date a capability becomes available. Risk analysis can identify threats to operational continuity and recovery before they affect the work. Cost information can help owners evaluate options while the design is still developing. Clear governance establishes who has the authority to make decisions and when those decisions are needed. Commissioning, acceptance, and readiness criteria provide the evidence that the delivered asset can actually perform its mission.

As projects move faster, owners need an integrated view of cost, schedule, risk, resilience, acceptance, and operational performance. The purpose of project controls is not simply to report progress; it is to help the owner protect time to capability and act before a project issue becomes a mission consequence.

### LESSONS BEYOND THE PACIFIC

Many of the conditions discussed at the SAME Pacific Industry Forum are specific to the Indo-Pacific, but the delivery issues are not.

Owners in other markets are also managing complex programs with workforce and resource constraints, schedule and budget pressures, and a need to make decisions sooner. Ports, utilities, transportation systems, hospitals, data centers, manufacturing facilities, and other mission-critical assets face the same basic question: how do we deliver capability quickly without sacrificing continuity, resilience, or readiness?

Faster delivery involves more than changing the acquisition or contracting approach. It requires an operational mindset: define the required capability, involve the operator early, understand the full delivery ecosystem, make timely decisions, and integrate commissioning, acceptance, scheduling, and risk management from the outset.

For mission-driven infrastructure, the finish line is not construction completion. It is operational capability: an asset that is available, accepted, supportable, resilient, and ready to perform as intended when required. That is the mindset shift the Pacific demands—and one that infrastructure owners everywhere can apply.

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