



2026 EUROPE TRI-SERVICES REGIONAL SUMMIT

MARCH 3-5 • 2026 • FRANKFURT, GERMANY

Hosted by SAME



#28 - The Cross-Cultural Planning Toolkit

Summary

This session explores participatory planning methods for US military personnel working with Host Nations on bilateral plans. Drawing from five years of European partnerships, presenters will share case studies and provide a toolkit through hands-on activities addressing cross-cultural planning challenges, including differing political systems, values, and standards.

Full Description

American planning decision-making processes are bolstered by democratic values of equality and public input, and research findings show that plans developed by stakeholders are more successfully implemented than plans developed without them. But how do you make plans alongside Host Nations who have different cultural, political, and socioeconomic influences in their planning processes — not to mention different planning and construction standards — than ours?

This session will teach attendees about how American political values have directly informed the evolution of participatory planning methods and how these methods can work in cross-cultural settings. The information will be relevant to US military representatives working on both strategic and master planning efforts.

Participants will participate in facilitated, hands-on activities that support relationship building and participatory decision-making, and receive a work-in-progress toolkit of resources to help them better plan alongside Host Nations. This toolkit will be updated after the session to incorporate new information learned from the group's discussions.

The presenters of this session have worked on behalf of the US Army and Air Force to create bilateral master plans with four European countries over the past five years. We will share short case studies to illuminate key points and will encourage attendees to share their experiences and lessons learned with each other in order to support mutual learning. If you

want practical tools that will help you address complex challenges in multi-cultural settings, this session is for you.

Learning Objectives

- Name the political and social values that inform American participatory planning processes
- Learn how to identify the cultural differences between American and foreign decision-making processes
- Examine tools, resources, and activities that can assist with cross-cultural collaborative planning efforts
- Hear examples from other practitioners about their experiences with cross-cultural planning

Speakers

Abbey Ness, AICP, PMP

Abbey Ness is a certified urban planner, facilitator, and project manager with a broad background in federal planning. Her experience includes master plans, area development and district plans, AICUZ studies, encroachment studies, environmental studies, and community partnership plans for all branches of the U.S. military. She has extensive experience in meeting design, facilitation, and stakeholder engagement.

Abbey has served as a board member of the American Planning Association (APA) Federal Planning Division and APA Virginia. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Policy from Duke University and a Master of Urban and Environmental Planning from the University of Virginia.

Jill Schreifer, AICP, PMP, CCF

Jill Schreifer has over two decades of experience in federal planning, facilitation, and training. A former active-duty Air Force civil engineering officer, she has led over 450 planning studies for federal clients worldwide, including all branches of the US military. Jill is an expert facilitator and has led hundreds of charrettes, workshops, and instructional courses.

Jill holds a Bachelor of Science in Engineering from Duke University and a Master's in Business Administration from Emory University. She is a board member of the National



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Capital Area Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA) and the APA Federal Planning Division (FPD).

Steve Baird, ACIP, CCP

Steve Baird has over 30 years of federal master planning experience involving Federal agencies. He recently managed ground-breaking country-wide master plans in Poland for USAFE and USAREUR. Since 2020, he leads the growing planning practice at Black & Veatch and has managed four nationally recognized award-winning projects in Texas and Germany.

Steve holds a B.S. in Architectural Engineering from the University of Miami (FL) and served eight years as an active-duty Air Force Civil Engineer Officer. He maintains AICP-certification and is also a Certified Charrette Planner and currently serves as the Vice Chair of the Federal Planning Division of APA.