Walls, Windows and Doors:
Overcoming Obstacles in Project Management

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The following strategies are presentation - as well as participant - generated ideas to move projects forward when obstacles are encountered in managing a project.

Process Strategies
- Make sure you have **administrative/training support** before you begin
- Do the groundwork – do your **research**, know **justifications** and what's behind project
- Make sure **everyone** – from participants & partners to stakeholders - **know the goals**
- Consider doing a smaller **prototype project first** to see how it goes
- Break your project into **smaller, doable parts** and work on them piece by piece
- **Prioritize** each smaller section so you can see your progress
- **Delegate** appropriately – don't do it alone
- **Renegotiate** with partners/stakeholders if necessary
- **Communicate and articulate project and outcomes clearly** and make sure all stakeholders are in the loop (not just partners but staff, community as well)
- Build **ongoing advocacy** into the project to keep everyone informed
- Consistently **re-examine and re-evaluate** the project to stay on track
- Consider **delaying** less integral parts or **expanding timelines** if the project runs into trouble
- Be ready to bring in **additional partners**
- Set **firm deadlines** if the project begins to stretch out
- Attach your **project goals to your annual professional goals** to keep project in forefront
- **Balance** competence/confidence with being willing to take advice
- **Reach out** beyond original partners to involve other natural partners

Personnel Strategies
- **Coach** – work with more difficult team members/partners on ways they can play a more positive role. Kindness and respect are the operative words in coaching
- **Communicate** – both listen and share in a way that keeps everyone informed and feeling like they are truly a stakeholder
- **Support** – through leadership and empathy everyone on the team and in the partnership
- Provide clear and careful **vision and care** of the project in your leadership
- Examine our strong "No!"s to see if they are **age-based** or based on the facts
- **Strip away emotion** from interaction in order to see what the facts are
- **Gut check-** if you are losing sleep over an interaction, take action to remediate it
- When working with a difficult person, be sure to **listen to what s/he is saying**
- Look at an **unhappy stakeholder as a "devil's advocate"** who can improve the overall project
- Create a **safe space** to allow discussion to include difficult subjects or disagreements
- Easy to get caught up in "loud voices"; **seek out quieter people** for their perspective and support them
- Recommended reading/listening - **Brene Brown – <u>Rising Strong</u>** - the power of vulnerability; learning to fail and get back up

Perseverance Strategies

- **Incorporate new information** – stay current on the project but don't be afraid to adjust as new info changes focus or as the project evolves
- **Be Patient** - projects take time. You may need to adjust deadlines and timelines to adjust for real library life
- **Flexibility** - be ready to change and adapt an idea to make it project stronger
- Keep **vision of outcome** ahead of you to stay on track/inspired
- Keep lines of **communication** open
- **Find others** to build/maintain enthusiasm with you
- Know your **strengths/limitations**
- Be willing to allow "**thinking stage" time to allow you to tackle parts of the project** in a way that lets you work on those without swallowing the whole project.
- Make a **chart** that shows progress of project
- Consider **narrowing focus to a smaller aspect** to move project forward and make it more manageable

Overall

- **Believe in yourself** AND those who you are working with to bring change about. Be convinced you CAN do it! It helps you be a good advocate.
- **Celebrate** the success of each piece of the project and thank those who worked on the process