



Helping Our Client Win the Race Against Time to Build a Smarter City



The Challenge

Our client, a global leader in connectivity solutions, had secured a contract to transform Rome into a “Smart City”.

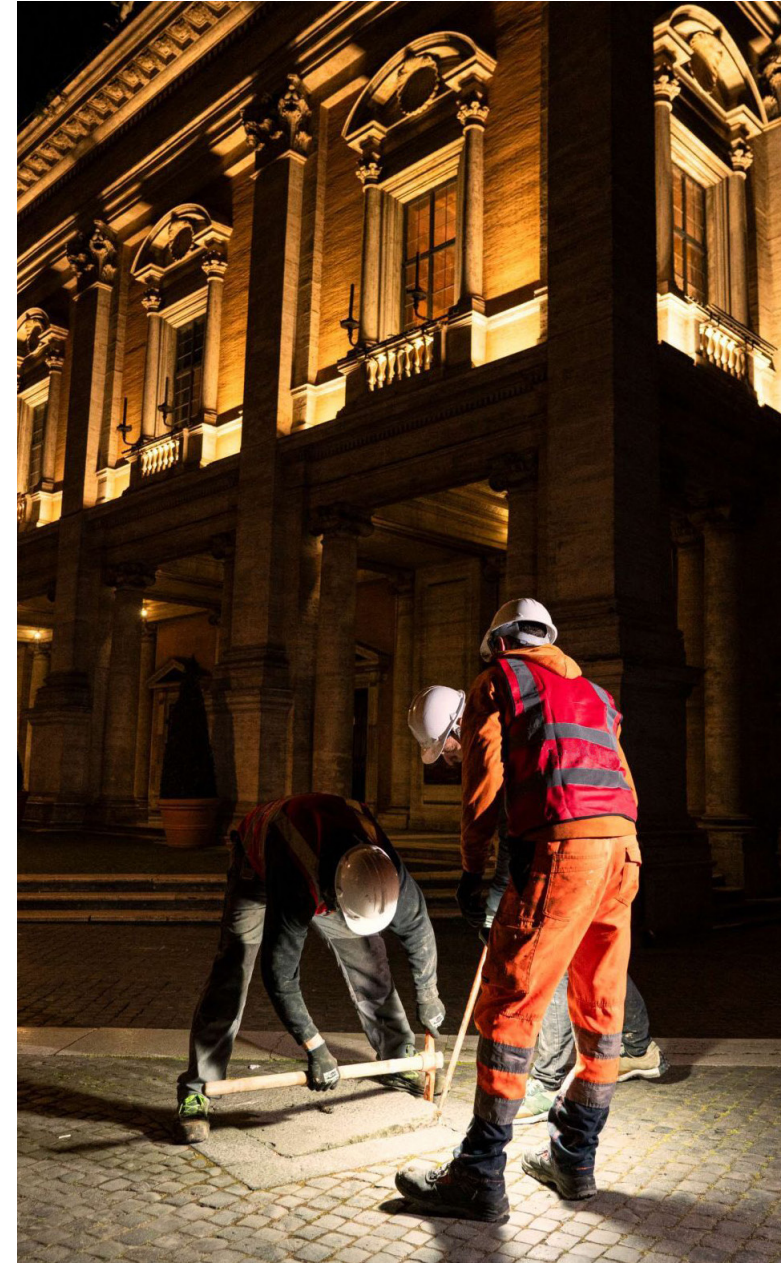
This involved upgrading Rome’s metro system to 5G, installing city-wide public Wi-Fi, setting up small cell networks for expanded coverage, and building an infrastructure to run IoT applications like CCTV and environmental monitoring.

It was a huge project—and it had to be done fast.

The build timeframe was set for five years, but there was an added twist: the Pope’s Jubilee celebration was coming up on 24th December 2024 and the Municipality needed some elements up and running in time to support the event.

This included making significant progress on the 5G metro project and setting up Wi-Fi in major city squares. Suddenly, a five-year project had some make-or-break deadlines within the first 12 months.

The stakes were high, and our client knew that missing these deadlines would jeopardise both their reputation and the whole initiative.





The Starting Point - An Independent Program Review

With the pressure on, our client couldn't take any chances. They were mobilising to deliver a complex project and needed to reduce any risks to the program by making sure it was properly set up with a robust plan from the start, identifying any possible threats that could derail its success.

So, they called on us to assess precisely how well prepared and equipped the team and their suppliers were for such a rapid build. As an independent voice, we were tasked with running a comprehensive assessment of the project's setup, planning, and overall health.

We proposed the Mentor Independent Program Review (IPR) - an innovative program assurance service designed to proactively address common

pitfalls in large-scale business-critical program execution, such as delays, cost overruns, and a failure to deliver the improvements to an organisation's business operations and performance.

The client agreed and we set to work.

Within just two weeks, our team had met with local leaders and their teams, analysed existing plans, and reviewed the status of commercial agreements with suppliers.

Working alongside the client's Group Technology team, we also reviewed the technical designs, spotting any inconsistencies or overlooked challenges.





What We Found: Biases and Blind Spots

Despite the local team's preparation, we identified hidden stumbling blocks in the form of biases and blind spots that, left unaddressed, could impact on the program before it had even left harbour.

Here's a snapshot of the main issues:

- 1. Over-optimism:** The energy and enthusiasm driving the team meant that project deadlines were based on over-ambitious targets rather than detailed, realistic planning. In some cases, there needed to be more consultation and discussion with key teams and suppliers to set goals and achievable timelines.
- 2. Underestimated Complexity:** The effort required to execute sophisticated technology installations was underestimated, leaving the team short on time to prepare for potential hurdles and unforeseen challenges.

3. Overconfidence: External factors like local regulations could disrupt the timeline.

4. Avoiding Tough Realities: A lack of a solid foundation for the program would cause those involved to overlook possible roadblocks that could threaten the project's success.

“Over the last 30 years we've found that blind spots and management biases are the root cause of program delays. They trip up even the most skilled and talented executives”.

David Hilliard, CEO Mentor

Drilling down further, we saw specific gaps:

- **Scope for Phase 1:** Without a more clearly defined scope for the first 12-month milestone, there was a danger the team could lose focus, potentially leading to delays and gaps in delivery.
- **Skill Shortages:** The skills and capabilities of the local team needed to be complemented by more experienced project managers and technical specialists to keep up with the pace and complexity of this build.
- **Unclear Plans:** The initial timelines set had to be based on estimates. Now, a firm baseline was required to hit the required targets and deadlines.
- **Governance Gaps:** Program governance needed to be strengthened, making it easier for the team to maintain alignment and accountability, track progress, and manage tasks.
- **Supplier Coordination and Management:** With the program at a crucial stage, supplier roles required more clarity and definition to ensure everyone involved was pulling in the same direction. The Company's plans needed to be backed off with the supplier's plans.



Our Recommendations: Setting Up the Path to Success

With these findings, we provided a clear plan to help our client's team close the gaps. Here's what we proposed:

- 1. Align All Stakeholders:** We stressed the importance of alignment at every level, from executives to on-the-ground team members, ensuring everyone was working toward the same goals.
- 2. Define Phase 1 Scope:** By setting a firm scope for Phase 1, the team could avoid any potential drifting and focus on specific, measurable outcomes.
- 3. Develop a Realistic, Flexible Plan:** We recommended building a plan with a solid Program Baseline—giving the team a reliable basis on which to deliver and a way to adapt to unforeseen changes.
- 4. Strengthen Supplier Management:** We recommended assigning clear roles for each supplier and establishing a reliable review process, with an integrated supplier/company plan that aligned the work closely with program needs.
- 5. Reinforce the Team's Capability:** We identified the need for more experienced hires to plug the gaps in the local team and equip them to handle such a large-scale project.
- 6. Implement Governance and Control:** We proposed a governance framework to provide visibility, track progress, and hold team members accountable for meeting deadlines.

The Outcome: Full Steam Ahead with Mentor's Support

Following our recommendations, our client's recognised the need for additional support. They asked us to step in and provide the Mobilisation Program Director, Program Office and Planning Lead roles to get the project properly established.

Our role was to make sure every part of the program, from Group Technology to suppliers, was fully aligned, focused, and mobilised for success.

With new governance systems in place and clear, detailed work structures, the local team gained the tools and guidance they needed to take on the project confidently.

Suppliers plans were integrated into the client plans, and roles were clearly defined, creating a strong foundation for success.

The program was now setup to meet the immediate milestones for the Pope's Jubilee. It also laid the groundwork for the long-term goals of the project.



A Smarter, Stronger Team Ready for Rome's Future

With these changes, our client's team felt confident in the program's trajectory, equipped with robust plans, strong governance, and the right resources.

And as the build progressed, new investors showed interest in supporting the project, adding even more strength to the team's efforts to make Rome a truly smart, connected city.

It was built for the Pope's Jubilee Year and launched on April 1st 2025. But its first real test came unexpectedly - when millions arrived for the Conclave following Pope Francis's passing on April 21st.

The network held strong. Rome stayed connected when it mattered most.

Today, the vision of a smarter, more connected Rome - ready to welcome residents and visitors has been realised.

And, in recognition, Rome was named Smart City of the Year at the 2025 Barcelona Expo in November 2025.



“*We engaged Mentor early in the mobilisation phase of a complex project to build smart city infrastructure against tight timelines.*

*The Mentor team added value immediately – applying their experience, methodology and practicality.
I particularly appreciate their commitment to ‘tell it like it is’ and force decisions.*

The outcome of the engagement is a robust, baseline plan, and well-founded confidence as we enter the build phase of the project.”

Andrew McGrath

**Group Chief Commercial Officer
Boldyn Networks**



Mentor Europe Associates Ltd,
Elsley Court,
20-22 Great Titchfield Street,
London W1W 8BE

enquiries@mentoreurope.com

Phone: 0118 359 2444

