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Introduction

The primary audience for this Site Selection Guide is GSA's real estate and design professionals and the customer agencies. A secondary audience for this Guide comprises the many stakeholders in the site acquisition process, including other members of the government, as well as GSA's partners. This Guide will be used by individuals possessing a wide range of site acquisition, site selection, and design knowledge.

GSA has broad discretion in selecting sites for public buildings under 40 U.S.C. § 3304. This Guide provides an outline for the entire site selection process. It is a menu of best site selection practices, GSA experience, and recommendations. Suggestions include who the participants should be, what roles they play, when the various activities of the process occur, and where the requirements can be found. GSA recognizes that every site selection is unique and that the required activities vary for every project.

This Guide encourages best practices for site selection in order to ensure completeness and consistency nationwide, to address the needs of the customer and the community, and to work toward a healthy environment. It is based on the premise that site selection is the first step toward responsible development. Most important, this Site Selection Guide is a tool for finding the most appropriate sites from economic, programmatic, and policy perspectives.

Benefits of Using the Site Selection Guide

By following the steps and suggestions in this Guide, the user can

- Ensure that the selected site is viable for the intended federal facility;
- Reduce the risk of unanticipated difficulties and their impact in terms of schedule and expense;
- Manage expectations among participants and increase understanding of the site selection process; and
- Encourage innovation and creativity in the site selection process while incorporating existing precedents and industrywide best practices.

“The quality of site design represents a significant federal investment and should, wherever possible, make a positive contribution to the surrounding urban, suburban, or rural landscape in terms of conservation, community design and improvement efforts, local economic development and planning, and environmentally responsible practices.”

P-100, Facilities Standards for the Public Building Service

“The choice and development of the building site should be considered the first step of the design process. This choice should be made in cooperation with local agencies. Special attention should be paid to the general ensemble of streets and public places of which federal buildings will form a part. Where possible, buildings should be located so as to permit a generous development of landscape.”

Sen. Daniel Patrick Moynihan
(D-NY)

Tools and Resources

This Guide includes useful tools and resources, such as simplified process charts, comprehensive checklists, project examples, sample worksheets, and examples, to illustrate the recommendations and suggestions. The following are some of the innovations in the Guide:

- Roles and responsibilities chart for GSA team members and contractors;
- Checklists of evaluation criteria;
- Strategies for interactions and communications with customer agencies and community stakeholders;
- Summary of major federal laws, Executive Orders, regulations, and GSA directives;
- List of resources for site selection expertise, including GSA Web site sources and professional associations;
- Summary of the NEPA process as it relates to the site selection process; and a
- Troubleshooting guide that contains the answers to frequently asked questions about the site selection process.

Site Selection Philosophy



Washington, DC

The Department of the Treasury acquired a brown-field site from the District of Columbia for the new Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms national headquarters. The site is being developed in conjunction with a new Metro station. This commitment will anchor revitalization of this area.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) mandates that all agencies use a systematic, interdisciplinary approach to planning and evaluating potential environmental impacts of projects. Related Executive Orders further mandate wetlands protection, floodplain management, and environmental justice. The investigation and evaluation of potential sites respond to these requirements.

State environmental laws often are more stringent than federal law. The federal government intends to follow both state and federal laws.

Historic Properties

Projects that use historic sites and buildings can serve as examples for successful reclamation and reuse of cultural/historic resources and signal the government's commitment to historic preservation, sustainability, and local communities. These projects set forth the federal government's commitment to provide leadership in the preservation of historic resources and to foster conditions where modern development can coexist with historic properties. The architectural and cultural attributes of historic buildings and sites must be considered to ensure that projects are carried out with a minimum adverse effect on qualities that contribute to their significance.

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) describes the process by which federal agencies, in consultation with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, must consider potential effects on historic properties. When operationally appropriate and economically prudent, E.O. 13006 requires that federal agencies give first consideration to properties within historic districts when selecting locations for their facilities (subject to the requirements of the Rural Development Act and E.O. 12072).

Community Planning

The federal government is committed to earning multiple returns on its projects by making a positive contribution to the existing community in economical, physical, and social terms. Over the past fifty (50) years, the federal government has been directed to address community issues through E.O. 12072, the Public Buildings Cooperative Use Act, and the Federal Urban Land Use Act. At the heart of these directives is early and open communications with local officials and consideration of local planning efforts. GSA can identify and support benefits to the community through dialogue with stakeholders, especially local officials, residents, and the public. The dialogue begins early in the community planning stage and continues through the project development and site selection process.

At the beginning of site selection, the Site Investigation Team should consider how each site offers the potential to coordinate federal resources and strategies with local development and improvement efforts. Areas of common interest may include urban design, parking, mass transit, personal and property security, traffic flow, neighborhood conditions, local area activities, and employee and visitor amenities.

Security

Security has become a major concern in the construction of federal buildings; GSA serves as a leader in the nation's efforts to protect the American people and the federal workforce. A site can provide a safe working environment without becoming a fortress, isolated from the community. Each facility has its own risk assessment; however, there are some general requirements that affect most sites. All new federal buildings should have a minimum standoff distance of fifty (50) feet. Some specialized facilities may require a higher standard of security.

GSA recognizes that dense urban areas and historic properties may require an exemption from the standoff distance and, possibly, from blast criteria. Exemption from the PBS Commissioner must be issued for any reduction or modification of that requirement. In the Commissioner's words, "The 'achievement' of this standoff distance must be based on the feasibility of the site to accommodate a pragmatic, efficient, reasonable, cost-effective, and well-designed facility."

Politics and Partnerships

Federal projects have an enduring impact on the community at large and on the immediate neighborhood. Many individuals and groups benefit from the location and development of a federal facility. Federal investment in each facility can enhance local efforts for economic development or historic preservation, or it may draw attention and resources away from local projects.

Building relationships and creating local partnerships are effective tools in managing political and local concerns. Working in partnership with other groups (state, regional, or city organizations; local community groups; or local developers) can bring additional intellectual resources to a project and involves additional stakeholders in the process. Local partnerships also may attract additional funding and financial resources to the project.



Eugene, Oregon

The city organized a community design exercise to study the proposed locations for a new downtown federal courthouse. The design exercise process helped resolve initial conflicts regarding location and led to agreement on a site that was successful for all.



Omaha, Nebraska

GSA collaborated with the city on a donated site for a build-to-suit National Park Service building, which was recognized as an important early anchor for Omaha's waterfront redevelopment. GSA convened a community workshop and incorporated the city's needs into the competitive procurement. The project has a high-quality site, and Omaha moves forward on its waterfront project.

A recent GSA-commissioned study explains why communities value high-traffic public agencies (including USPS, IRS, SSA, U.S. Trustees, and U.S. Courts). In one large north-eastern city, the direct spending by federal employees and visitors alone exceeded \$80 million, enough to support more than one hundred (100) small businesses. In site selection, knowing the relative impacts of various agencies can help with site evaluation and tenant mix. (For more information about the study, see www.gsa.gov/goodneighbor.)

Understanding the local point of view is important in assessing the opportunity for and impact of site selection and facility development. Local politics and political influence are a part of every site selection and should be addressed from the beginning.

Project Management

The goal of every project is a successful design and building—successful for the user, the community, the federal government, and the environment. Project management is one of the keys to a successful project. The following components are critical to successful project management.

Communications

Federal projects involve many, many people and generate significant interest and discussion within the community. One of the keys to successful communications is the early clarification of expectations and the project's ability to meet those expectations. Managing the flow of information is critical to successful internal and external communications; it is equally important to know when and how to share information.

It is beneficial to develop a project Communications Plan and use a Communications Specialist. This specialist creates a Communications Plan for all of the stakeholders (GSA, the customer agency, local officials and developers, congressional delegations, neighboring property owners, residents, and business community members) and the media. The plan also should identify issues of common interest, opportunities, and schedules for communications with different groups of stakeholders.

Project Team

The Project Team evolves and changes over the life of the project, as different expertise is required at different phases. The Asset/Portfolio Manager starts initial project planning. As the Project Team evolves, the Project Manager (PM) oversees all project activities through construction. The PM is responsible for continuity and availability of information and communications through all phases of the project.

Once the team begins preliminary fact-finding for sites, Site Investigation Team members are added to the Project Team. A Site Specialist is generally chosen to lead the Site Investigation Team. The Team Leader should be experienced with the process; the team should include staff and consultants who understand the goals and requirements of the site selection and acquisition process. GSA's Center for Construction and Project Management has developed strong supporting tools and processes to guide Project Managers and their teams.

The multiple interests of the customer, the local community, and the federal government are not always in full agreement. The Project Team considers and prioritizes all concerns when evaluating sites and determines which factors are critical.

Work Plan

The key tool for successful project management is the Project Management Plan (PMP). Using the PMP as the foundation, the site selection phase of a project has its own Work Plan, which identifies schedule, budget, staffing, and work tasks for that phase. The Site Selection Work Plan helps the team coordinate their tasks, plan the work process, understand the roles and responsibilities of GSA staff and contractors, and chart the anticipated schedule.

Decision-Making

Developing support among decision-makers and obtaining project approvals are necessary for the success of the project. Identifying who is responsible for making each decision and recognizing when decisions are needed are equally important. Timely communications and advanced planning support confident decision-making.

The following are some activities that have a major influence on the schedule:

- Community involvement,
- Project requirements,
- NEPA process, and
- NHPA process.

Rockford, Illinois

GSA and the city formalized a partnership to obtain a well-located brownfield site for the new courthouse, consistent with the city's economic development program and planning goals and with GSA's programmatic needs.

Rockford expedited the site acquisition and provided funds up to \$500,000 from EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative.



Priorities and Requirements

While federal laws, regulations, and directives contain myriad requirements, it is the responsibility of the Region and the Site Investigation Team to determine the requirements and priorities for each project. The priorities set during the Feasibility Study should be reviewed and confirmed prior to beginning the site selection process.

Additional priorities and requirements may be added as the project progresses and as new policies and directives are implemented.

Schedule

Many site issues can impact the project delivery schedule—from assembling multiple parcels, to relocating displaced owner/occupants and tenants, to mitigating environmental problems. The site's characteristics influence the time needed for data collection and evaluation of environmental and historic conditions (for the NEPA and NHPA processes), negotiation and acquisition, and site preparation (relocation of owner/occupants and tenant studies, remediation, demolition, and construction of infrastructure). Community involvement and support can be effective tools in moving the process forward, and adequate time must be included in the schedule for all of these activities. The project schedule identifies and tracks the critical path for site selection activities. By preparing the project time line and noting key activities and milestones, the team is able to anticipate and plan for potential scheduling issues. Regular status updates of the project schedule support the management of team activities and timely project completion.

Financial Performance

Financial performance is measured in several ways—initial costs, rent rates, life cycle costs, and community costs. The project site has an impact on all of these, especially the initial acquisition costs, which can be substantial, and the construction and operational costs. For this reason, the investigation should include site analysis and studies by a design professional to test the impact of the program on the site before final selection is made. This information is used to determine the infrastructure budget and other site-related costs and to forecast the rent rates, based on the location and quality of the building.

GSA and customer agency financial performance are critical determinants of the success of a project. However, external relationships can impact the project's financial performance as well. Partnerships with local government or developers can contribute other financial resources that can lead to a successful project. These partners may be able to donate a site, share costs, or provide access to additional funding not available to the federal government. GSA is committed to maximizing the return on investment dollars in ways that support the community wherever possible while providing the best site and financial performance to the customer agency.

Conclusion

Excellence in site selection is both a commitment and a process. It is a commitment to provide GSA customers with well-located, high-quality sites for quality workspaces, public spaces, buildings, and landscapes. It is also a process of researching, evaluating, and selecting a site that can best serve the interests of the federal government, the users, and the community.

Site Selection Process

Overview

While initial costs are a significant driver, all of the factors must be considered in order to make the right decision. This Guide is designed to offer assistance to the Site Investigation Team and ensure that all appropriate requirements and best practices are implemented in order to identify the most suitable site for the customer agency and the local community.

For a complete review of the GSA site acquisition process, see *GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property*.

Site selection is a critical step of the overall site acquisition process, which is outlined in *GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property*. *Guidebook 1* is an excellent resource for the complete site acquisition process, including information on appraisals, negotiation, title, closing, and condemnation. This Guide focuses on site selection exclusively.

When does site selection really begin? Site issues are considered early in the capital development process and often are part of preplanning discussions with the customer agency and public officials. During the Feasibility Study, the site acquisition budget is developed for the Site and Design Prospectus. Team members use the informal consultations and preliminary site research to understand the costs of potential sites. At this time, the team also may begin preliminary NEPA and NHPA studies.

Formal site selection commences when the GSA Central Office issues a “Limited Site Directive”; this follows submission of the President’s Budget (which includes the Site and Design Prospectus) to Congress. Typically, there are seven (7) months from the issuance of the Site Directive to the release of funds. Often, this amount of time is insufficient to complete the site investigation and still meet the project schedule. A typical site investigation takes nine (9) months; a more complex one can require much more time. Many projects require site investigative activities such as NEPA studies, meetings with stakeholders, preparation of offers, and so forth.

Informal site investigations are encouraged prior to receiving the Site Directive in order to complete the site investigation process so that site acquisition can occur shortly after funds are released.

The Process

The Regional Offices establish the appropriate site selection process for each project. Until Congress authorizes and appropriates specific site acquisition funds (BA51), the Regions should plan for and provide planning funds (BA61) from the Regional budget. The local Project Team must make the critical decisions and set the criteria for each project. The initial decision as to whether to advertise for sites is vested in the Regional Administrator. The GSA Central Office, including the Office of the Chief Architect, offers expertise on topics related to the larger interest of the federal government and provides support as requested by the Regions. The Site Knowledge Bank also is available for support at all stages of the process.

The site selection process involves a series of data collection and evaluation activities that become more specific in each subsequent step of the site selection process (see Site Selection Process Diagram on page 23). Each step evaluates the suitability of the criteria categories. The evaluations move in a methodical manner, addressing more detailed criteria as the process proceeds. For example, Step 3 looks at macro-level evaluation of the delineated area and identifies “Go/No Go” criteria. Step 4 applies “Go/No Go” criteria as well as other criteria to the long-listed sites. Step 5 uses even more specific criteria to rank the short-listed sites.

The Guide is divided into five chapters, (one for each step of the process), plus a section on troubleshooting, an overview of NEPA activities, and several appendices.

Step 1: Confirm Readiness emphasizes that decisions made during the Feasibility Study should be reviewed and validated prior to commencing detailed site investigations (either formal or informal).

Step 2: Develop the Work Plan reviews the development of a Work Plan and a Communications Plan and the selection of the evaluation criteria.

Step 3: Conduct Search for Sites starts the real work of collecting and analyzing data, finalizing the delineated area and evaluation factors, advertising for sites, and compiling all offers to be evaluated.

Step 4: Evaluate Long List focuses on the analysis of the long list to identify the top three (3) sites for the project.

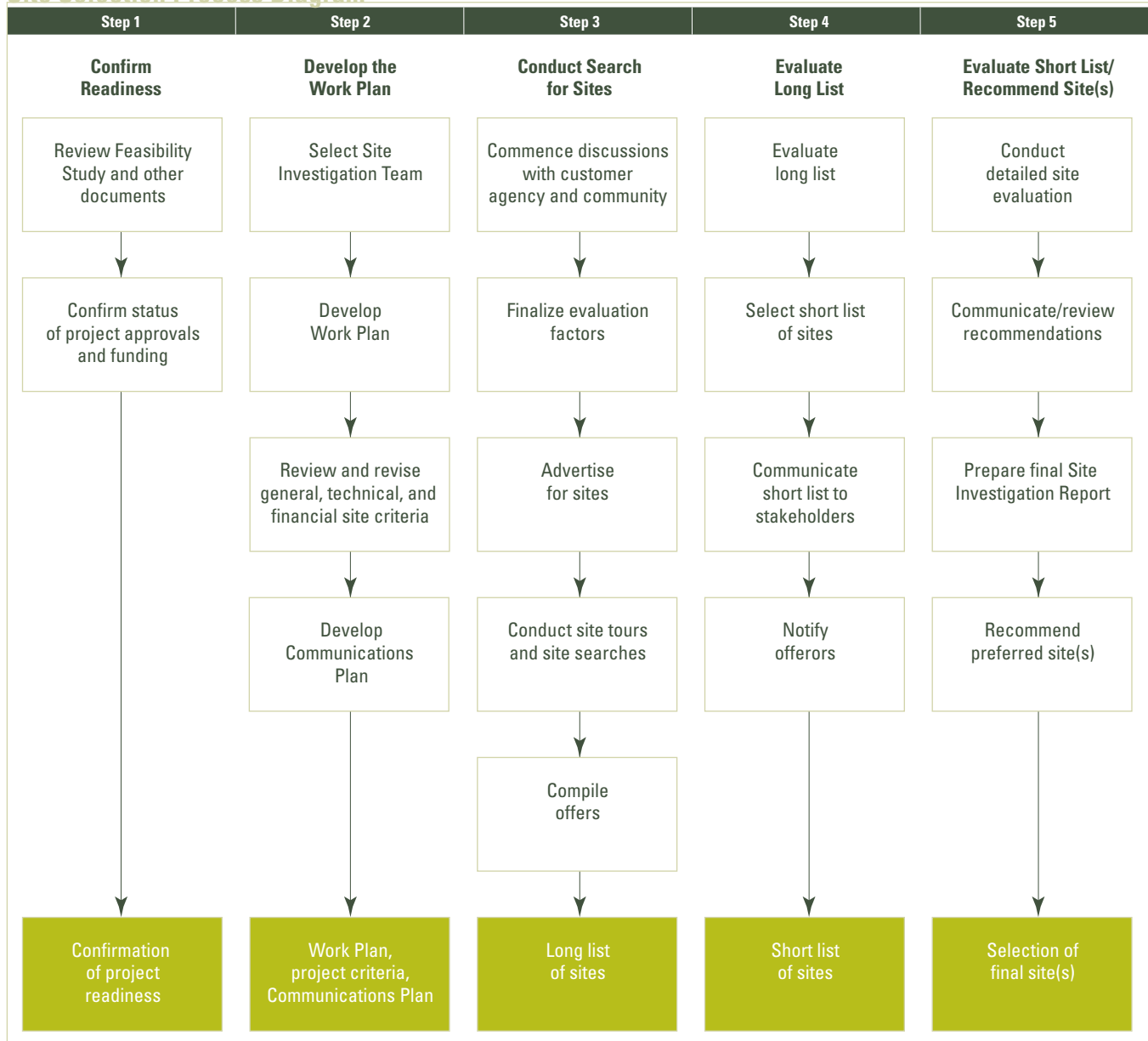
Step 5: Evaluate Short List/Recommend Site(s) describes the detailed evaluation process to develop the recommendation for site selection.

Troubleshooting Guide provides GSA experts’ answers to commonly asked questions about site selection.

NEPA Activities in Site Selection summarizes NEPA requirements regarding environmental protection, including levels of analysis.

Appendices include glossary and definitions, team roles and responsibilities, and a list of professional organizations and resources for site selection.

Site Selection Process Diagram



Step 1: Confirm Readiness

Purpose

The Regional Offices establish the appropriate process for each project, based on the project requirements, expected time needed for site selection, availability and expertise of Regional staff, and other factors. (See Exhibit 1.1: Capital Program Delivery Process.)

The purpose of the readiness review is to assess when to begin the formal and informal site selection activities, to determine whether there are any significant changes in the assumptions of the Feasibility Study and Site and Design Prospectus, and to identify any emerging issues and information that can impact site selection.

A readiness review can identify changes in GSA regulations and programs, local market and real estate development conditions, the mission or operations of the customer agency, or the current availability of sites since the completion of the Feasibility Study. Identifying changes early on allows the Team Leader to plan and manage the schedule, budget, and team resources appropriately.

Recommended Activities

Review Feasibility Study and Other Documents

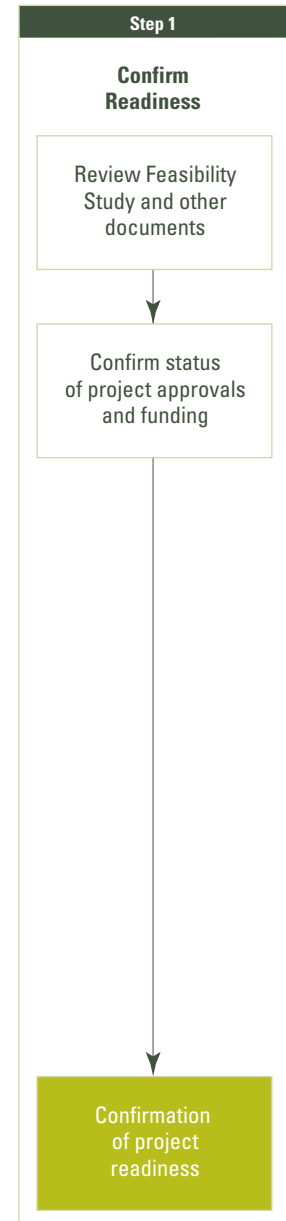
Review the Site and Design Prospectus, Feasibility Study, and Project Management Plan to identify new and unchanged conditions for the project.

Confirm Status of Project Approvals and Funding

Confirm approvals, funding, and schedule for GSA and the customer agency.

Duration

This task typically takes two (2) weeks.



Review Feasibility Study and Other Documents

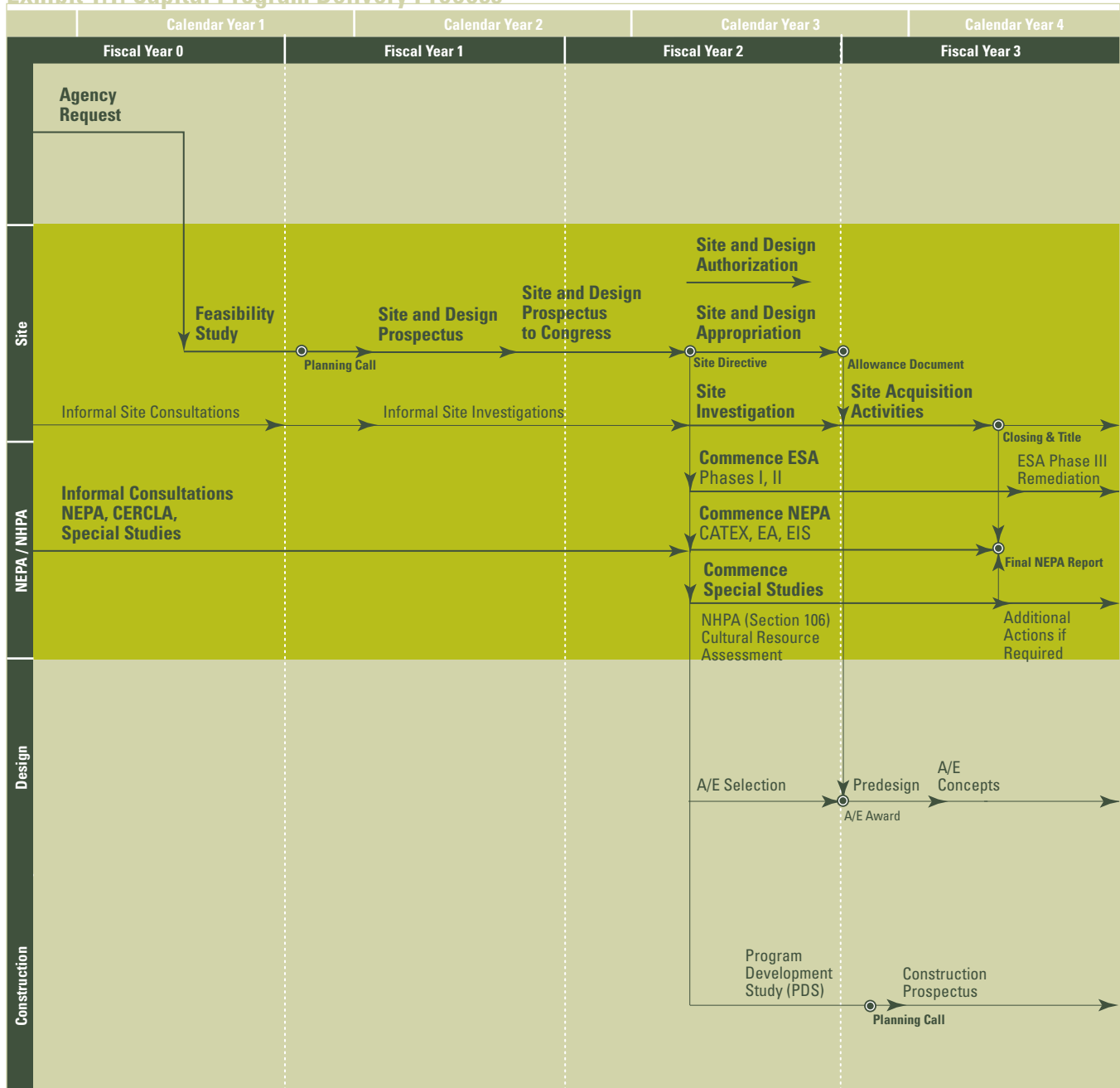
The Feasibility Study (with the Project Management Plan, when available) comprises the business proposal for the project. As part of the capital delivery program, it establishes the design and site acquisition budgets that GSA proposes to Congress. The Feasibility Study reflects all relevant input documents and related information that define the customer agency's operation and facility needs. The study identifies the basic requirements of the project, defines viable alternatives, analyzes the alternatives, evaluates delivery methods, and recommends the preferred solution while taking into account portfolio and facility needs, GSA and customer agency parameters, and financial and technical constraints.

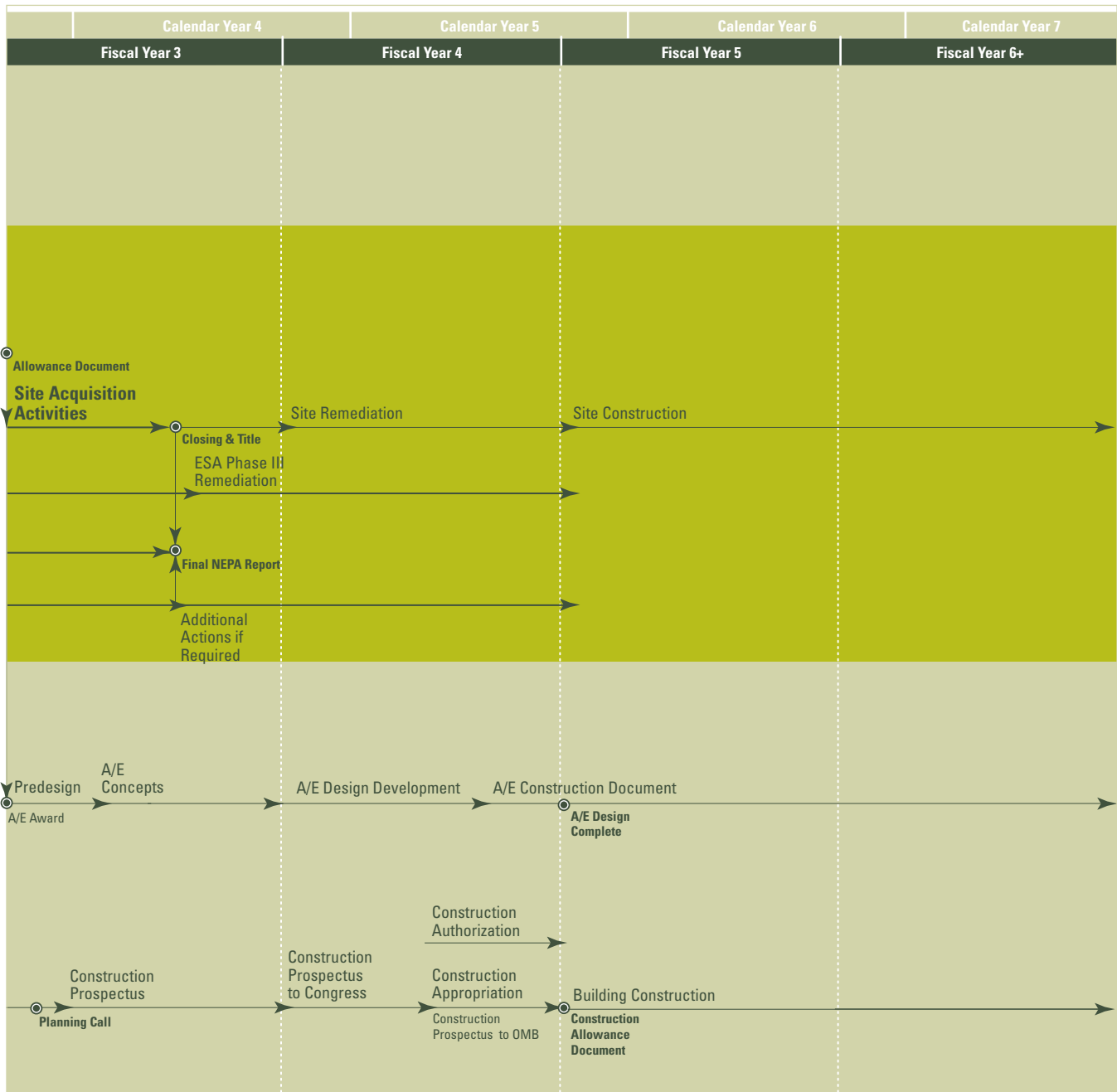
The Team Leader should review the Site and Design Prospectus, the Feasibility Study, and related documents to assess their validity to provide ongoing support for site selection. Identify any topics or assumptions that may need to be modified because of recent changes in the customer agency, local community, or economic conditions. The review also should consider recently enacted changes to GSA programs, initiatives, and federal regulations to identify conditions and factors that have emerged since completion of the Feasibility Study and ensure that such conditions and factors are addressed in the site selection process.

The Team Leader should confirm key project criteria:

- Project requirements;
- Site cost assumptions;
- Relocation cost assumptions;
- Project approvals and funding; and
- Project schedule.

Exhibit 1.1: Capital Program Delivery Process





The Office of the Chief Architect issues the Site Directive after the President's Budget is signed and submitted to Congress. The design award and real estate purchase contract(s) are contingent upon project authorization and funding appropriation by Congress and necessary for the acquisition and purchase of the site. The Allowance Document transfers the appropriated funds to the Region.

Confirm Status of Project Approvals and Funding

After the Site and Design Prospectus is prepared and enters the review and approval cycle, each Region decides when to begin preliminary site investigations. The timing reflects preferences of the Regional Office, the complexity of the project requirements, and potential acquisition strategies. In the past, some Regions waited until the Site Directive or Allowance Document was issued to begin site selection. This is not recommended because it can create a significant delay in the provision of the facility.

Until specific site acquisition funds (BA51) are authorized and appropriated by Congress, the Regions should plan for and provide planning funds (BA61) from the Regional budget. The availability and the amount of funding should be reviewed at this time. Check the Site and Design Prospectus budget and the source of funding for preliminary site investigations.

Recommended Activities

Review the Site and Design Prospectus for the amount of funding requested. Verify progress of the site and design authorization and appropriation and identify the date for the release of funds for design and site acquisition.

Confirm the availability of funds to carry out preliminary site investigation activities, especially those activities that may precede receipt of the Allowance Document. Preliminary site selection funds may be available from the Region's Budget Activity 61 (BA61) funds or through an RWA from the customer agency. Common site selection expenses may include travel and contractors. Step 2 (Develop the Work Plan) of the Guide provides more information about identifying contractors for the project.

Outcome

Confirmation of amount and type of funding for site selection

Duration

This task typically takes one (1) week.

Step 2: Develop the Work Plan

Purpose

The Site Selection Work Plan is an important project management tool. The site selection process is complex and requires careful management of the schedule, budget, and team resources. Creating and using the Work Plan establishes a framework for organizing and leading the site selection effort.

Composing a Site Selection Work Plan can:

- Provide guidance to ensure that site selection is performed accurately and completely;
- Ensure that the appropriate experts and professionals participate at the right time;
- Complete the site selection tasks in an efficient manner; and
- Keep stakeholders informed and aid in reaching consensus for the recommended sites(s).

Recommended Activities

Select Site Investigation Team

Develop a project-staffing plan that addresses roles, responsibilities, reporting structures, and decision-makers. The plan also should identify at what point in the process each member joins the team.

Develop Work Plan

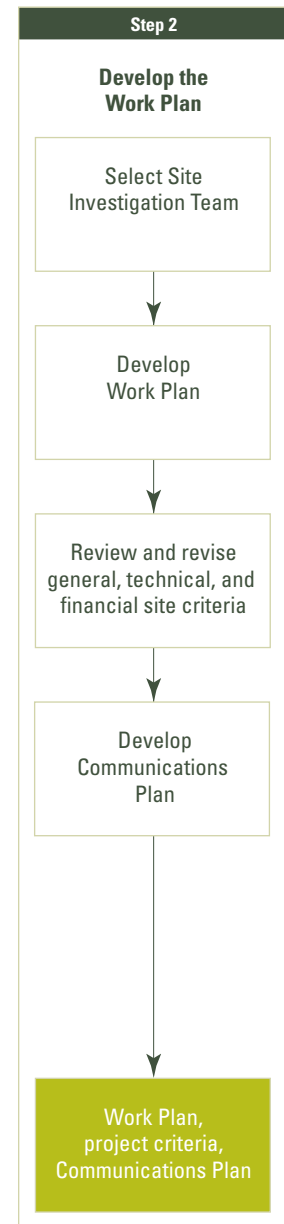
Develop a Work Plan that addresses scope, schedule, approval process, and budget.

Review and Revise General, Technical, and Financial Site Criteria

Review and customize site selection criteria for the specific needs of the project, customer agency, location, and budget.

Develop Communications Plan

Develop a communications strategy that informs the customer agency, GSA, local community, congressional delegations, and other stakeholders of the process, activities, and results.



GSA always provides the leadership and “in-house” subject matter expertise on site selection, even if some expertise and roles are outsourced.

When determining team composition, it is important to consider the following:

- Appropriate team size;
- Availability of GSA staff or contractors to fill roles;
- GSA Central Office participation;
- Need for outside experts; and
- Nature of the project, the location, and the potential sites.

Don’t forget to include a Communications Specialist to assist with both political and media concerns.

Duration

This task typically takes two (2) weeks. Factors impacting duration:

- The project type and location (Some properties will need more analysis and require more specialized evaluation than others. For example, dense urban sites or brownfield properties may require greater investigation on historic preservation, renovation, or remediation efforts.)
- Customer agency participation and expectations
- Ability of Team Leader to manage the process based on experience, workload, and support

Select Site Investigation Team

A strong and competent Project Team contributes more to successful site selection than any other item identified in this Guide.

The Asset Business Team is organized by Portfolio during initial project planning and is responsible for project creation. In the early stages, the Asset/Portfolio Manager typically leads the team, which comprises representatives from major GSA disciplines and the customer agency. The Asset Business Team evolves into the Project Team. This team brings in particular specialties (as contractor/consultants or as team members), based on the individual needs of the project. When the project scope is fully identified, the Project Team is restructured. Led by a Project Manager, the reorganized team includes other members, such as an appraiser, Urban Development Officer, or Historic Preservation Officer, as required. The Project Manager designates a Team Leader, as appropriate, for project planning and delivery. The Team Leader develops the Work Plan and the Communications Plan.

The Site Investigation Team can be viewed as a subset of the overall Project Team. The Project Manager manages the overall construction project and ensures that each program subteam has the necessary resources and assistance to accomplish their “part” of the project. The program areas such as procurement and sites, which are subsets of the overall project, also may have Team Leaders, that is, the Site Investigation Team Leader leads the Site Investigation Team and coordinates acquisition and relocation of real property.

Staffing for the project addresses roles, responsibilities, reporting structures, and decision-making authority. The size of a Site Investigation Team is determined by the complexity of the project. The composition is dependent on which GSA staff are available, what expertise must be contracted, and when team members' expertise is required.

Recommended Activities

1. Identify the Team Leader (usually a Portfolio Manager or Site Acquisition Contracting Officer from the Region); select members for the Site Investigation Team, including core GSA team members (ideally continuing from the Feasibility Study effort); and choose a Program Coordinator from the GSA Central Office.
2. Write the project-staffing plan. This plan should include roles, responsibilities, functions, and a detailed list of activities and should articulate decision-making and leadership/management responsibilities. (See Exhibit 2.1: Site Investigation Team Member Worksheet for potential team members.) Use the tools in "Appendix C: Site Investigation Team Roles/Responsibilities and Worksheet" for a description of team member roles and responsibilities and for help when mapping team member responsibilities. Identify requirements for contractors to support the Site Investigation Team.
3. Initiate the selection of contractors and manage their participation. Contracted services may include architectural programming, real estate market surveys, real estate appraisals, NEPA and environmental site assessments, NHPA and historic preservation and cultural investigations, civil engineering, and other specialty functions.

Outcomes

- Identification and definition of team members and contractor roles
- The right expertise on the team

Duration

This task typically takes two (2) weeks.

References

"Appendix C: Site Investigation Team Roles/Responsibilities and Worksheet"

GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property, "Chapter 1, Section 2: Authority"; "Chapter 1, Section 3: Site Selection Criteria"; "Chapter 1, Section 13: Site Acquisition Report" (especially the notes about team composition); "Chapter 1, Section 14: Responsibilities of the Site Specialist"

Site Investigation Teams (including any GSA Central Office members) should have regular meetings with Regional Management (ARA or RA).

Team Leaders and members should have access to and be familiar with *GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property*, which offers a comprehensive look at all aspects of the process.

This Guide includes four criteria checklists to help review and define the appropriate evaluation criteria for each step of the process. Each checklist uses three categories of criteria:

- **Project requirements** are based on the customer agency's needs, facility and parking requirements, and operation.
- **Technical factors** reflect technical functions such as best practices in site design, architecture, and facility construction and operation; as well as federal requirements and policies, including historic preservation, sustainability, and so forth.
- **Financial factors** are those that contribute to the facility's design, construction, and operation.

Each of these three categories comprises a series of subcategory topics, which are included in every checklist. Examples of the type of criteria and the level of evaluation are provided in the checklist for each step. Remember that not every criteria topic is needed for every project.

Recommended Activities

1. Review Exhibit 2.3: Site Selection Criteria Category Checklist to identify the criteria categories appropriate for this project and to eliminate categories that are not needed. The criteria categories are offered as a menu of possibilities. It is unlikely that a project requires all of the categories. Make sure to refer to the Feasibility Study for local and site factors previously identified.
2. Prioritize the major criteria. Consider how the type and importance of criteria for this project may impact the Work Plan and success of the site selection.
3. Identify potential topics for future NEPA, NHPA, and special studies. Determine whether contractors or GSA specialists should be brought on board to support the Site Investigation Team.

Outcomes

- Identification of the site selection criteria categories early in the Work Plan
- Fine-tuning of the team's effort, based on the project and location

Duration

This task typically takes two (2) weeks.

Exhibit 2.3: Site Selection Criteria Category Checklist

Project Requirements

Required Site Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Minimum/Maximum Area• Expansion Capabilities
Location Preferences	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delineated Area Boundaries• Adjacencies
Site Coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Building Footprint Area• Parking• Circulation and Open Space
Security Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Setbacks• Entry Control• Site Access
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Redevelopment and Rehabilitation Potential• Alternative Transit Availability• Energy Efficiency or Reduction in Usage• Habitat Preservation or Improvement• LEED Credit Potential
Neighborhood Character/ Immediate Surroundings	
Traffic and Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public Transit/Walkability• Service Access• Public Parking• Traffic Capacity
Image and Visibility	
Local Planning Requirements/ Initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Land Use Plans• Local Initiatives
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Site and Design Prospectus
Schedule	

Technical Factors

Physical Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Site Context/Location• Hydrology/Topography• Physical Features• Existing Improvements and Buildings• Vegetation and Landscape• Archaeological Features• Environmental Hazards• Threatened, Rare, and Endangered Species
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Technical Factors (cont.)

Zoning and Local Codes

Public Streets and Alleys, Drives, Curbs and Walks

Subsurface/Geotechnical Conditions

Seismic Conditions/Requirements

Energy Conservation/Utilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Water• Electric• Gas• Voice and Data
--------------------------------------	---

Sewer	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sanitary Sewer• Storm Drainage
--------------	---

Historic Preservation/Site History	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Historic Preservation Eligibility or Designation• Former Site Uses, History of Existing Structures• Local Groups
---	--

Existing Use, Ownership, and Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Current Uses• Adjacent Uses• Type of Land Ownership• Function and Pattern of Land Use
---	--

Community Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Location, Type, and Size
---------------------------	--

Financial Factors

Site Acquisition and Relocation Costs

Demolition/Remediation Costs

Site Construction and Preparation Costs

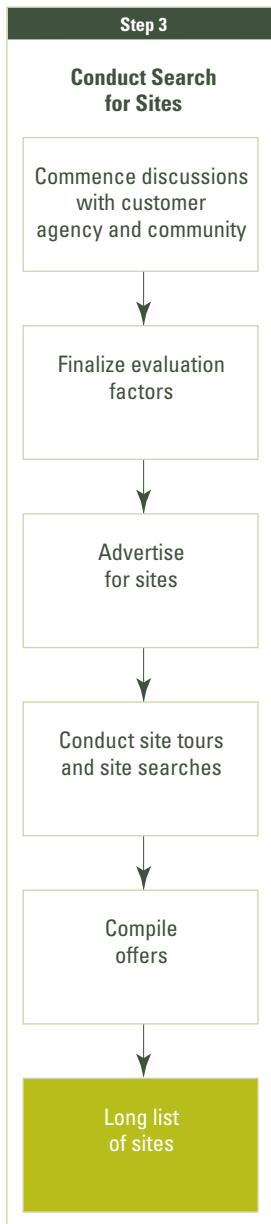
Infrastructure Improvements

Local Economic Development Impact

Funding Sources Through Partnering

GSA Financial Performance

Step 3: Conduct Search for Sites



Purpose

GSA's site selection process supports effective and efficient performance of the customer agency's missions and programs. Additionally, the process provides an opportunity to support federal policies for sustainability, community planning, historic preservation, and environmental quality in the delineation of the search area and the development of criteria chosen to identify successful sites.

There is no legal requirement that GSA obtain competition in selecting sites for public buildings. However, soliciting for sites is one way of "proving" that the chosen alternative is the best one. The evaluation process should be completed regardless of how the site is obtained in order to document the rationale for the selection. This methodical analysis will answer many questions often asked by Congress, OMB, and the taxpayer regarding how the site was selected.

The search for potential sites requires an understanding of GSA's real property acquisition procedures, as well as familiarity with real estate and development activities in the local community. Examining a variety of sites demonstrates that the selected site offers the government the best site for all factors considered. This process also provides viable second- and third-choice sites. If the preferred site is eliminated later, then these alternative sites can be used, without restarting the site selection process and adversely impacting the schedule. The examined sites may include sites presented by offerors, identified by the Site Investigation Team, or used in the Feasibility Study. This step describes the activities necessary to complete the search for sites and the evaluation of the site offers.

Recommended Activities

Commence Discussions With Customer Agency and Community

Through discussions with the customer agency and local community, identify appropriate areas and potential sites, define evaluation and other factors, and understand the potential to support local planning and development activities.

Finalize Evaluation Factors

Conduct background investigations to define the evaluation factors and ensure that they comply with customer location requirements, federal mandates, Prospectus limitations, and best practices.

Advertise for Sites

Determine the delineated area for site selection based on project requirements, plus technical and financial factors. Prepare and issue an advertisement for site offers, including donated sites, in accordance with GSA policies and procedures. Review site offers for completion.

Conduct Site Tours and Site Searches

Tour the local marketplace, view the delineated area, and identify potential sites.

Compile Offers

Compile information from submitted offers and all other sources to establish the long list of potential sites.

Duration

This task typically takes nine (9) weeks.

Commence Discussions With Customer Agency and Community

Through discussions with the customer agency and local community, identify appropriate areas and potential sites, define evaluation and other factors, and understand the potential to support local planning and development activities.

Recommended Activities

1. Meet with the customer agency and local community and engage key stakeholders, including the customer agency, GSA Central Office, local government, local planning agencies, community groups, and congressional delegation.

During the meeting(s), review project goals and local development goals to identify possible synergy. Request comments on potential delineated areas and sites, as well as on evaluation factors, to ensure that the process identifies several possible sites. Use Exhibit 3.1: Sample Agenda to help prepare for the meeting(s).
2. Keep minutes or other reports for all meetings and phone calls. Coordinate all contact with local authorities with the appropriate GSA Regional staff and communicate regularly with the Regional Administrator. The Team Leader should be the control point for all communications.

3. Meet with representatives of local government and civic organizations, including zoning boards, health departments, fine arts commissions, fire marshals, regional planning commissions, and local/urban design review boards, to ascertain development issues. In these meetings, explore the potential to leverage federal and local development efforts and to fine-tune the evaluation factors in support of the project and local needs.
4. Contact the state environmental agency and State Historic Preservation Office, when appropriate, and begin to discuss the potential sites' compliance with state policy, programs, and regulations.
5. Discuss the needs for publicity, press releases, and other communications activities. Determine who will issue information and how inquiries and potential problems will be addressed. Review schedules for internal and external communications milestones.

Outcomes

- Trust and development of consensus aided through ongoing dialogue with all project stakeholders
- Definition of delineated area based on local knowledge, customer and local input, and the process
- Identification of potential sites

Duration

This task typically takes four (4) weeks. Factors impacting duration:

- Total number of meetings to be scheduled with agencies and groups
- Characteristics of the potential delineated area
- Shared or competing nature of local groups and agencies
- Time frame to plan and develop the potential for synergistic partnerships with local government, community groups, and developers

Exhibit 3.1: Sample Agenda

Meeting With Customer Agency or Community

1. Introduce those in attendance
2. Review description of government project
3. Briefly describe overall process, including earlier Feasibility Study and other studies
4. Review current site selection activities, purpose, outcome, and schedule
5. Inquire about the local program and planning activities that may be supported or impacted
6. Review potential delineated area and potential sites
7. Identify potential opportunities and pitfalls
8. Identify additional sites
9. Assign next steps
 - Collect further data
 - Plan additional meetings

Fine-tune the sample agenda, based on project history and time line.

Consider these points in preparing for your meeting(s):

- Are the meeting participants familiar with the proposed project and the Feasibility Study?
- Have they been involved in site acquisition for other projects?
- What is the previous working relationship between this group and GSA and the Team Leader? Is this a first-time meeting or a follow-up?
- What are the local impacts of the project? Consider the impact on taxes, job creation, growth, revitalization, and other local issues.
- Has there been any previous community involvement? Will any be planned?

Zoning and Local Codes	Determine overall impact of local codes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Height Restrictions • Floor Area Ratio • Setback Requirements • Parking Ratios
Public Streets and Alleys	Determine special requirements for roadways and streets
Subsurface/Geotechnical Conditions	Determine local geotechnical, subsurface, and soil conditions
Seismic Conditions/Requirements	Determine state and local seismic requirements/parameters/zones
Energy Conservation/Utilities	Determine utility/infrastructure requirements for project Assess local systems' capacities and conditions
Sewer	Determine local sanitary sewer capacity and condition Determine local storm water regulations and capacity
Historic Preservation/Site History	Determine existing historic or cultural districts Identify local historic planning groups and programs
Existing Use, Ownership, and Control	Determine impacts of existing use, ownership, and control
Community Services	Establish proximity requirements to community services

Financial Factors

Site Acquisition and Relocation Costs	Establish site acquisition budget
Demolition/Remediation Costs	Establish range of site demolition/remediation costs
Site Construction and Preparation Costs	Establish range of site construction and preparation costs
Infrastructure Improvements	Review plans for local infrastructure improvements
Local Economic Development Impact	Establish target local economic development impact goals
Funding Sources Through Partnering	Establish target funding levels/percentages through partnering
GSA Financial Performance	Establish GSA financial performance targets

Note: This checklist is not exhaustive. Each project and each location will have unique factors. Use this checklist as a starting point to select the most appropriate factors for each project.

Advertise for Sites

Soliciting or advertising for sites is a way of demonstrating, through comparison and evaluation, that one alternative is the best one. No matter how the site is obtained, the evaluation process always must be completed.

If an acceptable site is identified for donation or exchange by a local government or if the federal government already has an acceptable site, then the advertising process may not be necessary. The Region makes the final determination with input from the PM and Site Investigation Team Leader whether to advertise for sites. (For more detail, see the “Troubleshooting Guide,” Managing the Acquisition: Does the site selection process require a competitive procurement?) When a site is not advertised, it is not necessary to establish a delineated area.

The advertising for a site focuses on a particular area suitable for the project. Typically, the site search delineated area is the central business area unless the customer agency has location requirements that justify a site outside that area. The choice of one area over another may create opportunities for both the project and the community. Some project requirements, technical factors, or financial factors may be satisfied by the choice of the project area. Setting the boundaries of where to locate the project and search for potential sites is the purpose of defining the delineated area.

The Delineated Area

Establishing the delineated area is a significant action. The future location and character of the project determines the relationship to the local community and cost of the project. More than that, the area selected also holds the potential to support other federal and local planning initiatives.

The delineated area defines the project area in geographic terms. The delineated area should be large enough to provide a number of sites for comparison and evaluation. It may be as small as several blocks in a dense urban area, or as large as an entire central business area in a rural community.

The Site and Design Prospectus may set parameters on the delineated area, so be sure to review the Prospectus to ensure “Prospectus integrity.” Project requirements, technical factors, or financial factors that can be addressed by the general location or that are partially influenced by location should be considered in the definition of the delineated area. Examples of location-specific factors (as distinguished from site-specific factors)

The selection of the delineated area must comply with all government laws and Executive Orders.

The Regional Counsel ensures that all applicable regulations and Executive Orders are followed.

The definition of the delineated area creates the first opportunity to support local planning initiatives.

5. Determine the advertising period. The optimum situation is to leave the advertisement open for thirty (30) days. However, if the schedule does not permit, or if the advertisement is being used mainly as a validation formality and the preferred site is fairly firm, then the advertisement may run for a shorter period. The time limitation for responding to the advertisement does not preclude the Site Investigation Team from accepting late offers. The team should continue to investigate sites for as long as it is feasible.
6. Place public notices and advertisements for potential sites in a variety of venues, including local publications (preferably, two daily local newspapers; if not, then use a weekly) and the FedBizOpps Web site to ensure the widest possible circulation. Provide copies of the advertisement to the local Property Management Office for display in public areas of the federal building lobby if possible. If it becomes necessary to amend the announcement or advertisement, then it should be revised as early as practicable and through the same process as above.
7. Meet with walk-in offerors at the place and times posted in the public notice and advertisement.
8. Review offers for completeness. Make sure that each offeror's file is complete. Request missing information from offerors in order to complete the files and prepare for the evaluation.

Send copies of public notices, advertisements, and publication schedules to the Commissioner of Public Buildings, the Office of the Chief Architect, and the Congressional and Intergovernmental Affairs Office in case they receive inquiries about site selection activities.

Outcomes

- Selection of a delineated area to satisfy project requirements, technical factors, and financial factors
- Completion and publication of the advertisement in accordance with GSA procedures
- Receipt of offers for review

Duration

This task typically takes five (5) weeks. Factors impacting duration:

- Project schedule
- Purpose of soliciting offers for this project
- Number of options for publication
- Local interest in providing sites

References

"Troubleshooting Guide"; "NEPA Activities in Site Selection"; "Appendix B: Major Federal Laws, Executive Orders, Regulations, and GSA Directives"; "Appendix D: Sample Advertisement"

GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property, "Appendix 5: Examples of Site Selection Criteria"; "Appendix 14: Examples of Advertisements for Sites"

Remember to bring a camcorder or a camera to record your observations and add graphic documentation to the project record.

Conduct Site Tours and Site Searches

There is no substitute for the actual experience of visiting the delineated area and potential sites. A field visit often reveals important views and visual relationships; information about the neighborhood character and amenities; as well as a better understanding of scale, proximity, and adjacencies.

By touring the local marketplace and viewing the delineated areas and potential sites, additional information may be gained that identifies other potential sites and suggests fine-tuning of the evaluation criteria. The team can identify potential sites to be analyzed and considered without a formal offer from the site owner or agent.

Recommended Activities

1. Tour delineated area to understand the neighborhood and identify other potential sites and evaluation criteria. Prepare a worksheet to help collect and record information about each site (see Exhibit 3.3: Site Tour Evaluation Worksheet).
2. Include customer agency representatives, a real estate representative, an appraiser, and an architect/engineer from either the GSA Regional Office or the GSA Central Office in the site visits.
3. Visit any sites that could be donated to the government.
4. Visit sites that are part of a redevelopment area.
5. Consider potential site exchange opportunities.
6. Tour sites identified by local groups.
7. Make additional inquiries into the marketplace.

Outcome

Application of local and field knowledge to define the delineated area and the evaluation factors for developing the advertisement

Duration

This task typically takes two (2) weeks.

Reference

GSA Guidebook 1: Acquisition of Real Property, "Appendix 21: Site Investigation—List of Items Needed"

If the delineated area is modified, then the site search should be readvertised.

Exhibit 3.3: Site Tour Evaluation Worksheet

Site Information

Site Name:

Site Size:

Site Address:

Site Location:

Character of the Parcel

Distinguishing Features:

Existing Structures on Site:

Other Existing Development:

Topography:

Physical Features:

Access and Circulation:

Vegetation:

Water Bodies, Wetlands, Floodplain, Surface Drainage:

Immediate Surroundings

Neighborhood Character:

Land Uses:

Shading and Solar Access:

Noise Sources (Street, Rail, Aircraft):

Odors:

Views and Vistas:

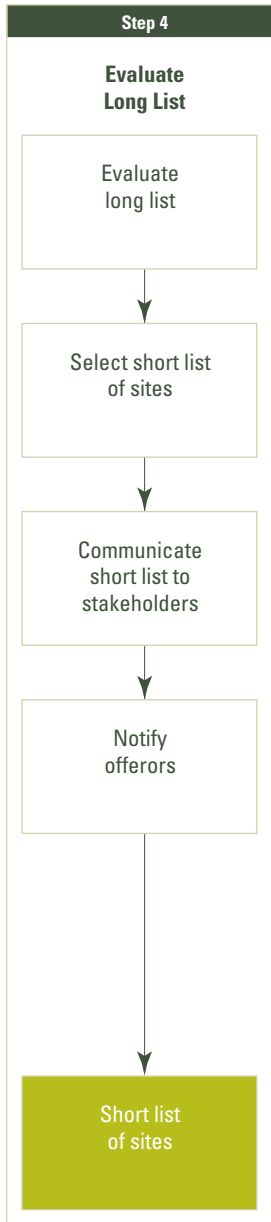
Adjacent Land Uses:

Adjacency to Roads and Public Transit:

Former Site Uses, History of Existing Structures:

Historic Preservation, Special Districts, and so forth:

Step 4: Evaluate Long List



Purpose

In this step, the Site Investigation Team—using their knowledge of the project and its requirements, technical factors, and financial factors—reviews and evaluates the long list. Typically, the three (3) most suitable sites that satisfy the evaluation criteria compose the short list for further analysis. Creating the short list is a significant step toward selecting the site.

The team coordinates with representatives of the customer agency and any contractors, such as professional services firms, for NEPA and NHPA studies. The team also should coordinate closely with representatives of local government, the congressional delegation, and stakeholders.

Recommended Activities

Evaluate Long List

The team reviews both offered and unoffered sites for their suitability to support the project requirements, technical factors, and financial factors described in the advertisement and determined by the Site Investigation Team.

Select Short List of Sites

Develop a summary of short-listed sites for review.

Communicate Short List to Stakeholders

The team reviews the short list with the GSA Regional Office team, customer agency, local government, and stakeholders, as appropriate, on a confidential basis.

Notify Offerors

Offerors are notified if their sites have been accepted for the short list and further study. Offerors whose sites did not meet the minimal (“Go/No Go”) criteria also are notified, and their offers are returned.

