



### **Project Initiation**

**Question #1:** One of the limitations I have found is that GSA has few Contracting Officers in our area. This makes the projects stack up, waiting to be released in a solicitation. What can be done about this?

**Answer:**

**One area of emphasis in earlier project initiation and project planning is the Leasing Contracting Officer does not have to do as much of the work on their own. Project planning and requirements development can and will be accomplished by other team individuals which enables the Leasing Contracting Officer to focus their time and effort on primarily on the acquisition work; including that needed to post solicitations.**

**Question #2:** It seems to take a long time for projects to get started after submitting an SF-81. How long should I wait before I call to check up on my project?

**Answer:**

**If you do not receive confirmation of your space request within three (3) business days, notify the local PBS point of contact (most likely the person you sent the SF-81 along to). Or, contact your Regional Account Manager (RAM) who can assist in ensuring your request has been received and is being addressed. PBS is working to improve the SF-81 process in terms of how it is submitted and how it is used to initiate project discussions with the client.**

**Question #3:** What can we do as customers and who do we call if we feel like it's taken too long?

**Answer:**

**Prior to Project Manager assignment, the RAM should be called if you have any concerns. Upon Project Manager assignment, the project manager will work with you to develop a realistic schedule that serves as the basis for agreed upon timeline expectations. In addition, the Project Manager should establish communication and escalation protocols at the beginning of every project, including a leadership matrix, so you will know when and how communications will be managed and who to contact if you have any concerns.**

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**Question #4:** Should we expect to get a list of all the GSA stakeholders (a project hierarchy) for each project at initiation?

**Answer:**

**This typically does not occur during project initiation. Initiation involves defining the project goals, determining functional standards, and forming a project team. The complete list of stakeholders should be identified during the next phase - project planning - as part of the communication plan development. As part of communication plan development, GSA and the client should discuss who all the stakeholders are, what their communication needs are, and what role they play in making any key decisions on the project.**

### **Communications**

**Question #1:** Who is actually in charge of the project? Is it the GSA project manager, the Leasing Contracting Officer (LCO), the Leasing Specialist or the Broker? It seems like there are different people every time I have a project with GSA. What does the escalation scale look like?

**Answer:**

**Roles and responsibilities are defined at the outset of planning during a project kickoff meeting. The Project Manager (PM) has the overall responsibility for managing the project - which includes coordination of the project team, facilitating project decisions, managing the project schedule and resources, and ensuring effective communication with the client. The Leasing Contracting Officer (LCO) has formal decision making authority on the acquisition itself in close coordination with the PM, client, and other members of the project team. The broker serves as a Subject Matter Expert (SME) but does not manage the project nor make acquisition decisions.**

**Question #2:** Are Contracting Officers all local to a GSA region or do the regions share COs?

**Answer:**

**The majority of the Contracting Officers are local to a specific region. We look for opportunities to share resources across regions where necessary.**

**Question #3:** Can the customer request a project update at any time during the project?

**Answer:**

**Yes. The PM should establish communications preferences with you at the onset of the project planning. You and the PM should get into a regular communication rhythm that meets your needs. This can be either regular meetings or conference calls, or a short**

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project status via email at key milestones or established frequencies. If you need a project update outside of the communication protocols established between you and the PM, you should expect a timely response (within 24 hours).

### **Requirements**

**Question #1:** How will GSA address OMB’s new policy of “freeze the footprint” (no new/expansion square footage) when a lease needs to be re-competed and a move is possible? Would that be a valid sole source justification for not moving?

**Answer:**

**GSA looks at all viable options for meeting client requirements while also meeting public policy goals for promoting competition in its procurements. For every project, we seek to find the most economical solution that meet your requirements and deliver best value for the taxpayer.**

**Question #2:** Our agency has a well-developed set of requirements, and often, it seems GSA is trying to impose a *one-size-fits-all* strategy. How do we come to a resolution when GSA’s goals differ from the customers’?

**Answer:**

**At the beginning of the project, we will work with you to establish project goals to ensure we meet your requirements while balancing the need to meet other public policy requirements in the areas of procurement, sustainability, historic preservation, use, etc.**

**Question #3:** Is there a checklist for requirements development used by GSA? Who is in charge of recording our initial requirements? Can GSA share this with the customer? Sometimes we don’t know what we don’t know.

**Answer:**

**Typically, a centralized intake point is used in each region to record your initial request or requirements submission, and then to help direct the work to the appropriate personnel. GSA uses a handful of tools to collect, assess, and develop, requirements depending on the project type, size, and complexity. For example, a Needs Assessment Questionnaire may be used to better understand and document the customer’s initial requirements. Space planning tools exist to help develop your space request into viable options. A detailed leasing checklist is used as your requirements are firmed up and feed into the acquisition planning. This checklist is used by GSA as an in-person or over-the-phone tool to understand our customers’ requirements.**

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**Question #4:** We don't want to keep explaining our requirements over and over to GSA. We have to keep re-training your staff. What are you doing to remedy this?

**Answer:**

We are working to better organize our project personnel into customer-focused project teams, where feasible, where each agency has a dedicated group of GSA project team members. We are also developing mechanisms for project teams to more effectively access client standards and requirements information when starting a project so they don't have to start from scratch each time. We expect these efforts to enable us to improve the timeliness and quality of the requirements development work and to mitigate these client concerns.

### **Schedule**

**Question #1:** Who produces the schedule for the project? Is it the project manager? Is this a team effort?

**Answer:**

The PM is responsible for preparing the schedule in coordination with his/her team, including input from all stakeholders.

**Question #2:** I heard that GSA was supposed to bring on-line a project management system. I was also told that customers would have access to this system (limited). What is the status of this?

**Answer:**

GSA does have an electronic Project Management system (ePM) for all construction related projects that are typically in federally owned space, including customer RWA projects. Many of our customer stakeholders currently have limited access to ePM, and any new customers may request access through their GSA Project Manager. For a customer to gain access they are required to have an HSPD-12 NACI clearance or a similar background check that can be reviewed by GSA Security for compliance. The quality of ePM project information for customer consumption varies by region, project type and project manager. While the consistency and accuracy of ePM data has been improved, we will continue to seek further improvements to improve the value for all stakeholders. As the ePM Team has moved through internal adoption challenges over the last few years, we are looking at 2013 to focus more on the customer/tenant experience within the system, and grow that part of our user base. Web-based training for licensed ePM users is available on a weekly basis.

## Client Enrichment Series – Project Management Practices Q & As

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On a related note the ePM team is currently cleaning up Agency Bureau (AB) codes in ePM, which will make customer reporting a lot more accurate. Our end goal is a report filtered by AB code that gives a specific client/tenant a complete programmatic roll-up of all related design/construction projects.

GSA is also in the early stages of developing a business process management system for leasing projects. Client access has been identified as a potential enhancement; potential enhancements will be addressed after initial development work is completed.

**Question #3:** What project schedule software is used?

**Answer:**

The scheduling software used depends on project size and complexity. For most projects, *MS Project* is the most common tool used. The more complex capital construction projects utilize *Primavera* or similar. We continue to train all of our Project Managers on the use of appropriate scheduling software and how to build a realistic, detailed schedule that can be used to manage tasks and expectations throughout the duration of the project.

### **Closeout**

**Question #1:** Feedback from the customer other than the Customer Transaction Satisfaction Survey (CTSS) – how can customers react and give feedback outside of that survey?

**Answer:**

Direct continuous feedback to the PM and Project Team is always preferred. The PM should regularly ask you for feedback on how we are doing so necessary adjustments can be made during a project rather than miss those opportunities. You should also receive periodic check-ins from the RAM, Branch Manager, or Division Director as appropriate to ensure things are going well. If for some reason no one is checking in with you during a project please do not hesitate to contact the RAM if you have any concerns.

**Question #2:** After closeout, is there a mechanism for GSA to share lessons learned from a complex project in one region with other regions?

**Answer:**

There are mechanisms in place to share lessons learned across complex projects and they continue to be refined and improved. For example, the Construction Excellence Program routinely captures lessons learned from complex projects and shares them with GSA's senior project management leadership. Knowledge management tools are under development that enables project teams to document lessons learned so they can be by

## Client Enrichment Series – Project Management Practices Q & As

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other project teams.

### **Misc. questions:**

**Question #1:** Can you speak to GSA’s work on HSPD-12 requirements? My agency is ahead of the curve but GSA will not let us use our contractor to complete work. (Key issues are timeliness of clearances and agency clearances vs. FPS).

**Answer:**

**GSA has contractor suitability policy, procedures, and processes in place that are in compliance with Office of Personnel Management (OPM) directives and HSPD-12. GSA has a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Federal Protective Service (FPS) to process and adjudicate suitability determinations on all of GSA contractors. If an agency has a contractor working specifically for them, GSA does not clear the contractor, the agency has that responsibility. If the question is more about timeliness of the suitability determinations, I would recommend talking with the GSA project manager to identify exactly what might be delaying the suitability process.**

**Question #2:** Everyone realizes that government agencies and departments are going into a period of extremely limited funding. What steps is GSA taking to help clients deal with this issue?

**Answer:**

**GSA is setting the example by reducing our footprint and working through the issues associated with teleworking, desk-sharing, and alternative workspace strategies. We can assist agencies with advice, lessons learned, and expertise in developing your requirements to reduce costs, reduce your footprint, and increase productivity in the workspace.**

**Question #3:** Does GSA have minimum standards on what is considered “marketable space” when an agency asks to release space?

**Answer:**

**Defining a marketable block of space involves consideration of many factors and the unique aspects of each situation. PBS makes that determination. In lieu of a strict definition, the Pricing Desk Guide, section 5.3.2 provides guidance and examples.**

**Question #4:** If there is a significant increase in the amount of square footage applied to an agency’s Occupancy Agreement (OA), shouldn’t GSA be able to provide documentation backing up this increase instead of saying “just trust us?”

**Answer:**

**Any changes in OAs should be clearly communicated with the customer in timely manner. In addition, the project manager should remain in close contact with the customer on significant scope, schedule or budget changes so the customer can understand the issues and participate in any key project decisions that impact the square footage.**