



Topic: Introduction to Project Management

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Link to Series Information: [CES Historical Topics](#)

1. How is GSA’s labor factored into the cost and budget of non-RWA projects? What are the impacts to the customer for GSA's labor for projects in federal buildings and ROI facilities?

GSA’s annual operating budget funds GSA labor on non-RWA projects. . For small projects, these costs may be tracked, but they are not part of the project budget or cost.

There is no financial impact to the customer for GSA’s labor on other projects. There is the normal impact of running multiple projects that happens when a project isn’t large enough to justify a full time project manager and staff. This happens not just between customer projects and GSA projects but also between projects from the same customer including internal GSA projects.

2. Why in some instances does GSA require a zero dollar RWA to start a project?

Prior to requiring zero dollar RWAs a couple of agencies were asking for project planning on a lot more projects than what they were funding. The agency management above those requesting the work were unaware of this. This was the solution developed to solve the problem. The zero dollar RWA gives GSA the assurance that the agency is serious about GSA doing the work and serves as a cross check for the agency management that they are only requesting projects that they have expectations of doing. This worked so well that it was implemented with all agencies in the region.

3. In what way does GSA collect information on what went well, really well, or not well? How is this information shared so that both GSA and the customer agency can improve future interactions? What mechanism do we have to make mid-course correction during a project and get things back on track if necessary?

GSA strives to provide excellent service delivery, but realizes obstacles arise that must not only be addressed in a specific project, but also shared and studied so that we can improve service delivery for the next project. For this reason, GSA maintains a national Lessons Learned database to assist project teams avoid issues and to enable these teams to provide the best service delivery possible. In addition, GSA analyzes data from its enterprise project management software for determining metrics and measures in key areas of interest in the project process.

GSA is actively involved in all details of a project since nothing beats boots on the ground for catching and making mid-course corrections. Regular team meetings involving both GSA and the customer agency help prevent and address any mid-course issues that arise. Additionally, GSA uses project management software to track project schedules and costs against predetermined, agreed upon baselines and requirements; this tracking assists GSA catch possible problems. Whether the issue is related to contract performance or team dynamics, GSA will address it using appropriate remediation methods.

4. How important is communication in project management?

The research on successful projects is clear: proper management of the scope, cost and schedule determine a project's success. GSA understands that in addition to these critical elements, communication also determines project success: the better the communication, the more successful a project. GSA believes in employing effective communication in all projects since ultimately, communication is directly linked with trust. Boosting communication boosts trust, which facilitates issue resolution through teamwork.

5. Do GSA project managers and supervisors also go through this presentation?

No, this presentation was developed as an introduction to project management, specifically small project management, at GSA targeted to the agencies we serve. The GSA project managers and supervisors have had more detailed training in general project management and specific areas of emphasis. We have on-going training available in areas such as twice weekly training on various aspects of our project management software. Some of the future items we mentioned such as Service Delivery Excellence, the training development is just being wrapped up now and training will start in June.

6. From a cost aspect, in your opinion what do you consider a "small" and/or "large" project?

The prospectus limit, which is established by Congress, distinguishes small and large (capital) projects. Currently, it is \$2.85M.

7. Is certification of Project Managers only required at GSA?

No, current project manager certification is outlined in a December 16, 2013 memo from the Office of Management and Budget, Office of Federal Procurement Policy.

This memo can be found at:

http://www.fai.gov/drupal/sites/default/files/FAC%20PPM%20Policy_121613.pdf

In addition, general guidance can be found at the Federal Acquisition Institute website at:

<http://www.fai.gov/drupal/certification/program-and-project-managers-fac-ppm>

8. Does GSA use a project risk assessment software tool?

The construction industry uses the Institute's Project Definition Rating Index to determine project construction readiness.

9. How do you determine if a project is Capital or Small project?

The prospectus limit is the general division between Capital and Small projects and is set by congress. Currently it is \$2.85M.

10. How does GSA assign particular PMs to particular projects? We see often that PMs have PM expertise but not subject expertise, which makes it difficult to manage projects from customer perspective.

Low risk projects are sent to the delivery office for project manager assignment. A regional project resource board assigns project managers to medium and high risk projects based on project requirements and a particular project manager's skills. Unlike medium risk projects, which are generally handled at the regional level, high risk projects require central office participation and oftentimes involve project managers nationwide.

11. Do you see GSA pushing FAC-P/PM certifications?

Yes, GSA Project Managers must acquire these certifications.

12. Risk and Opportunities Management Methods

The question was raised on what type of risk and opportunities management GSA does. While small projects doesn't use risk management software as stated above, we do use risk management as part of determining the project team as well as managing the project itself.

For assigning the project team:

For routine projects we use a four tier cost based model: Under \$10,000 is minimal risk project, \$10,000 to \$150,000 without design is low risk, below \$150,000 with design or above \$150,000 and below prospectus is medium risk and above prospectus is high risk. For leasing the risk is based on square feet.

The next level of risk analysis is that each of the following items is assigned a risk score and the risk level is determined by the total risk score: cost, technical complexity, use of subject matter experts/outside A/E, acquisition strategy, market condition, schedule constraints, customer, customer/project manager match and project manager experience/project match.

We are currently revising the scoring of the risk assessment, so we won't cover that here.

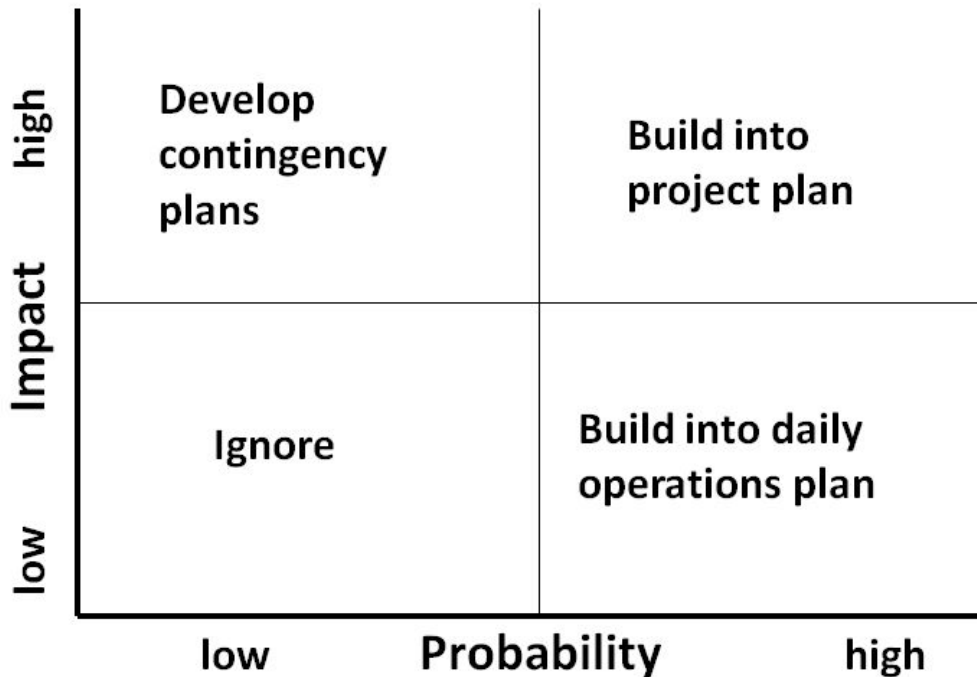
For the risk/opportunity management of the project:

We again look at a couple of different levels of risk and opportunity determination. For the simpler projects the project team brainstorms from which a risk/opportunity listing is developed. The probability of happening and impact if it happens are determined. How to avoid/mitigate the risks and how to implement the opportunities are then developed. From that the risks/opportunities are ranked and the team decides which of the the items require tracking during the project.

A more advanced method takes the impact scores and graphs them against the probability scores. The graph is divided into four quadrants with the horizontal divider represents the level where a change order would be required and the vertical line represents the team's flexibility in dealing with cost/schedule/quality changes. For example if the budget is firm then the vertical line would shift to the left because more things have to be included that might happen since there is no additional funding available.

Actions are then assigned depending on which quadrant the risk/opportunity is in.

Probability vs. Impact



From Personal Strengths Publishing, Project Management, The Team Approach

For risk/opportunities in the build into project plan quadrant, assume that they will happen, budget for it, schedule for it and put it in the contract as options.

For risk/opportunities in the develop contingency plans quadrant identify how the item would be handled, identify funding sources and schedule impact.

For risk/opportunities in the build into daily operations plan we have found that these are best handled as a building guide that is given to the project team/contractors. These items have no effect on the contract and the guide answers routine problems that come up such as scheduling the dock, use of freight elevators, etc.

Ignore the risks/opportunities in the ignore quadrant. They aren't worth the effort to plan ahead.