

Green Building Advisory Committee Options Paper: Committee Membership and Operations

I. Background

The GBAC was established in June 2011 and held its first meeting on November 11, 2011. Most committee members joined at that time, agreeing to two-year commitments. As a result, most of these terms will be up in November 2013. This presents an opportunity to rethink the committee, its membership and operations.

We'll need to answer these questions within the guidelines provided by the Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA), which created and provides detailed instructions on this committee; the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), which governs the operations of all Federal advisory committees; and the direction of GSA leadership.

II. Options for renewing the membership:

EISA lists 10 Federal agencies to be represented on this committee, along with "other relevant agencies and entities, as determined by the Federal Director" (of the Office of Federal High-Performance Green Buildings or OFHPGB), including six specific categories of members (see Appendix).

OFHPGB initially asked the SSOs of each of the 10 Federal agencies (plus the Department of Veterans Affairs) to name a qualified representative to the group. The Office also conducted significant research and conversations to identify the most knowledgeable and experienced non-Federal members to represent the categories articulated in EISA. This level of scrutiny and control was important to ensure that the committee gained the unique expertise required, both on green building, which involves many complex environmental, social and economic issues, and on the Federal building context.

A first step toward renewing the membership is to ask current members whether they would be interested in continuing their service to the committee. Balanced against the value of retaining experienced, knowledgeable members is the value of rotating members so that fully qualified representatives of other industries, companies, governments and NGOs may be included.

Options to renew the membership include:

1. An informal, primarily internal process similar to the one OFHPGB used to choose the current membership
2. A more formal and open process including a call for interested members

The latter process provides for broader input into the selection of members and the opportunity to locate previously unidentified experts, and may create more interest and awareness of the committee. However, it likely would be more resource- and time-intensive. It could also raise expectations that cannot reasonably be fulfilled – for example, hundreds of industries are connected in some way with green building, but it is not feasible to represent more than a fraction of them on a committee of a manageable size.

Additional considerations in renewing the membership include:

- 1) Staggered terms (say, a mix of 1, 2 and 3 year terms) would avoid the problem in the future of a majority of members' terms being up for renewal simultaneously.
- 2) Chairmanship of the committee: Current Committee by-laws state: "The GSA Administrator will select a non-Federal member of the committee to be the Chairman of this Committee." The Committee can recommend procedures for naming a new (or retaining the current) Chair, which may include a vote.

III. Ideas for improving the committee

Most Federal advisory (FACA) committees are reviewed every two years to determine if they should be continued. This committee was exempted from this requirement by EISA. Still, the two-year point does provide a convenient moment for reconsideration of the direction and operations of this group.

GSA seeks feedback from the group on the current value and effectiveness of the committee and any ideas for improvement (again, within the parameters of EISA, FACA and GSA leadership direction). Potential issues for discussion include:

- Meeting schedules, venues and procedures
- Topical focus of committee meetings
- Opportunities to be more efficient and effective
- Different ways to structure discussions

GSA appreciates your service and feedback, and will work to incorporate your comments to the greatest extent possible.

Appendix: EISA language on membership of the committee

SEC. 494. GREEN BUILDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

(b) MEMBERSHIP.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Committee shall be composed of representatives of, at a minimum—

(A) each agency referred to in section 421(e); and

(B) other relevant agencies and entities, as determined by the Federal Director, including at least 1 representative of each of—

(i) State and local governmental green building programs;

(ii) independent green building associations or councils;

(iii) building experts, including architects, material suppliers, and construction contractors;

(iv) security advisors focusing on national security needs, natural disasters, and other dire emergency situations;

(v) public transportation industry experts; and

(vi) environmental health experts, including those with experience in children's health.

(2) NON-FEDERAL MEMBERS.—The total number of non-Federal members on the Committee at any time shall not exceed 15.