Client Enrichment Series – Q & A

Topic: Introduction to Requirements Development
Date of Presentation: March 19, 2015
Link to Series Information: CES Historical Topics

1. Will the Needs Assessment Questionnaire be revised to include questions relating to technology based requirements?

   The latest 2012 version of the Needs Assessment Questionnaire (or Needs Assessment Interview Tool)includes some basic questions about a client agency's interest in exploring technology requirements. When a client representative indicates an interest in expanding the space requirements discussion to also include technology, the PBS representative that utilizes the tool will bring in the appropriate representative from the Federal Acquisition Service (FAS). FAS is GSA's conduit to technology experts and they have the expertise to explore the wide range of technology options with the client agency.

2. Concessions space often conflicts with circulation space. What procedure should be followed to ensure that the correct amount of concession space is assigned?

   When concessions space is part of a client agency's assigned usable area, the requirements associated for this space, including its size and equipment needs, should be considered alongside all other aspects of the workspace. The requirements discussion should also explore alternate amenities that provide greater flexibility, such as an unstaffed, open break area with vending machines which could be repurposed should future space realignments be needed. Discussing both concessions space needs and planning for anticipated space realignments will ensure that the concessions space is properly accommodated.

   When concessions space is a general building amenity that is billed to client agencies as joint-use space, design options are more limited. Unless it is part of a broader repair and alteration project, reconfiguring concessions spaces in publically accessible building locations (e.g. lobbies) are costly. Should a client agency be interested in such joint-use facilities, they should contact the local GSA property manager or regional account manager to explore any potential options.

3. Please discuss how "Freeze The Footprint" and the "150 all-in" will work for a small office (3-10 employees) and which has paper records.

   The term "Freeze the Footprint" originates from OMB Memorandum M-12-12, "Promote Efficient Spending to Support Agency Operations," which directs all executive agencies to "freeze" the size of their overall office and warehouse portfolio as compared to FY12 baselines. The impact is an increase in space in one location must be offset by a decrease in space in another location.

To help monitor this balance most federal agencies utilize a metric called a utilization rate (UR, also known as an allocation rate) which is an area of space divided by the personnel benefiting from the space. n "all-in" UR refers to the total usable area (also known as ANSI-BOMA Office Area, or ABOA) that is assigned to a client agency, divided by the headcount that occupies that area.

Generally speaking, UR goals tend to be more difficult to achieve in smaller offices. For example, a national or regional office will typically succeed in reaching a 150 all-in UR through reducing office and workstation space, implementing efficiencies with paper and other storage items that require storage and adopting a moderate amount of desk sharing. The larger population base (the denominator in the equation) allows for a broader distribution of the support spaces, such as meeting and storage rooms (the numerator in the equation).

On the other hand, using the example above, a small office of less than 10 people will have a greater pro-rata share of support spaces because many support spaces such as meeting and storage rooms have a minimum size which do not directly correlate to the office's population.

The best approach to meet a utilization rate goal for a paper-intensive small office is to look at its operations and examine the true need for paper files. Some questions to explore are:

- *Is the paper kept because of regulation, agency instruction, local office protocols, or personal preference?*
- *Are there legal or policy reasons why the paper cannot be stored centrally?*
- *What is the retention period for the paper? Is there a way to transfer or dispose of the paper earlier in the retention period?*
- *What is the possibility of converting the paper files into electronic formats?*
- *To what extent can these electronic files be accessed by an agency employee outside the office, such as when teleworking?*

The answers to these questions will help identify the extent to which the paper files are true regulatory requirements, personal habits, or something in-between. Utilization rate reductions can be made through decreasing paper and increasing remote file access.

4. Do UR rates include circulation space?

There are two types of circulation:circulation not assigned to a specific agency (typically in elevator lobbies) and circulation within an agency's overall space that is part of the usable area.

Un-assigned circulation is not part of a UR calculation. Not only is there no way to control this circulation because it is part of the overall building design, but this circulation is also often unknown until after the requirements development stage when the actual building is identified.

Internal circulation that is part of the client's space such as circulation between workstations and support spaces should be included in a UR calculation. Circulation is a function of the type and quantity of spaces. By selecting other types of spaces such as workstations or meeting rooms, client agencies can control this type of circulation.

For more information about determining the appropriate amount of internal circulation, please see

"Circulation: Defining and Planning" which is available upon request.
www.gsa.gov/portal/mediaId/190511/fileName/Circulation_-_Defining_and_Planning_(May_2012).action

5. Are different circulation rates used for cubicle space and closed office areas/conference room space?

   Yes! The circulation multiplier that is used during the planning/requirements development stage must be customized to match the nature of the space. Considerations include the type of space(workstations v. enclosed offices), the predominance of large enclosed spaces (e.g., meeting rooms), and where possible, the efficiency of the floor plate (less efficient = more circulation). Generally speaking, when the ratio of workstations to enclosed spaces increases, the circulation needed for that space also increases.

   We recommended referencing "Circulation: Defining and Planning" to help determine the right amount of circulation for a given workplace project.
   www.gsa.gov/portal/mediaId/190511/fileName/Circulation_-_Defining_and_Planning_(May_2012).action

6. How does the Freeze the Footprint play into planning?

   "Freeze the Footprint" should be part of any workspace planning discussion. The client agency's method for achieving this goal, which often includes a UR metric, will certainly impact the overall size of a specific project and the workplace strategies that are adopted for that space. Please see the previous questions and answers for more insights into this topic.

7. What about emergency occupant plans, for the different workplace choices? COOP plans?

   Emergency Occupant and COOP plans should always factor in an organization's workplace strategies. For example, let's assume an organization has adopted desk-sharing as a workplace strategy. This approach allows individuals to share a desk, either through a reservation system (known as hoteling) or as open, unreservable seating (known as free-address or hotdesking).

   Should there be an emergency in the building, the organization needs to know which employees are in the office sharing a desk and which employees are outside of the building. In the case of hoteling, this can be accomplished through accessing the reservation system and identifying which employees are in the office. In the case of free-address/hotdesking however, this data isn't available. Other sources of data, such as key-card building entry and exit records, should be accessed to see which employees are actually in the building. Without this data, it is very difficult to know how many people need to be considered in an emergency situation.

   Similarly, COOP plans should consider the agency's ability to continue its mission with a distributed, mobile workforce. A good way to evaluate this potential is to prepare the workforce for mobile work should the building be closed for a few days due to adverse weather. This situation tends to be less critical than a COOP situation which allows the client agency to identify any weak points in the COOP response.

Client agencies that are interested in learning about how GSA has addressed these topics should contact their Regional Account Manager or National Account Manager. Briefings by GSA's Office of Mission Assurance can also be arranged.

8. Can an agency use the FIT program for a leased site that the agency has delegation of leasing authority for (so GSA will not be procuring the leased space)?

   No. FIT allows client agencies to pay for furniture and technology over time. This program is technically a leasing arrangement through which the client agency pays GSA via the Occupancy Agreement for that space. FIT cannot be utilized without an OA.

9. Were office/cubicle square footages determined for each of the 6 workspace standards? If so, how were those square footages determined?

   The six configurations indicated in the slides are not workspace standards. Instead, they are illustrative examples of how the workplace can be configured to best meet the mobility and acoustic needs of any type of office worker.

   GSA's Work Pattern Methodology considers the typical work activities for each type of job function (e.g., project manager, food inspector, lawyer). Specifically, it considers where the work is conducted (e.g. at desk, in meeting room, at home), the activities that occur in the individual workspace (e.g. on the phone, heads-down concentrative work), and how these activities will change over time. From this, overall space planning recommendations are made to support those activities. For example, job functions that require an individual to be away from his or her desk in meetings for significant portions of time will need access to a variety of meeting rooms. Another example is job functions that require an individual to be away from the office for significant portions of time are also good candidates to explore desk sharing. The space size is then influenced by the overall project goals such as achieving a specific UR, or the workplace strategies that are adopted, such as desk sharing.

   Client agencies who are interested in learning more about GSA's Work Pattern Methodology are encouraged to visit the Workplace Solutions Library at http://gsa.gov/HTML_WSL/Pages/Introduction_Main.html

   Additional information about workplace strategy and GSA's workplace program can also be found athttp://gsa.gov/totalworkplace