PBS Customer Forum Series – Q & A

Topic: Occupancy Planning & Solutions

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Date of Presentation: June 10, 2021

Supporting Session Links:

- Occupancy Planning and Requirements Development - resource page on gsa.gov
- National Customer Engagement Contacts
- GSA Safer Workplace Strategy Book

I find that the third party broker has no incentive to get the government client the best rental rate. Can agencies request GSA representation only (no third party broker)?

> ***Answer -*** PBS strategically set projects to use GLS in order to expand PBS resources as well as leverage industry experts. Please see the "Leasing Highlights" session on 6/22/21 which highlights successful projects using GLS.

Will training and a demonstration be provided? Is there funding available from GSA to implement these types of workplace solutions? Are there any incentives?

> ***Answer -*** Additional training for the Project Liquidity Strategies (Lessor Funded Move, Replication and Furniture Costs & Agency Rent Restructure) will be provided throughout the remainder of FY21 and into FY22 via individual customer presentations and a CES session.
>
> Training and a demonstration of the Workplace Investment & Feasibility Modeling (WIFM) tool is also available now to interested client agencies. WIFM allows agencies to explore on their own the potential rough order magnitude cost of implementing a workplace change. To arrange a demonstration and training, email workplace@gsa.gov and mention your interest in WIFM.

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This is a huge organizational change overhaul. How will GSA assist with getting managerial buy-in?

Answer - As part of every workplace engagement, GSA will engage front-line leaders to understand their business and workplace concerns and preferences.This typically takes the form of one-on-one interviews with the leaders, as well as a group discussion on the future vision of the organization and how the workplace can support this vision. Our experience is that discussions are the best way to address any concerns that managers may have about workplace changes, especially when organizational and/or mission changes are also anticipated.

In those instances when an organization is about to go through a significant workplace change, such as adopting a desk sharing approach for the first time, GSA will also recommend change management services. These services can help both leaders and employees navigate the workplace changes successfully.

All of these services are customized to meet client and project requirements. Agencies that are interested in learning more are invited to email the GSA Center for Workplace Strategy team at workplace@gsa.gov.

With regard to support spaces - does your engagement cover the entire spectrum of common areas - lobbies, break areas, storage, mail rooms, etc?

Answer - Yes, GSA’s workplace engagement service examines all aspects of the workplace. In addition to addressing individual workspaces (eg, workstations, benching stations, private offices) and potential desk sharing approaches, standard support spaces (eg, storage) and special support spaces (eg, server rooms, laboratories) are also examined.

GSA

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We ran into a problem excessing the old workstation components. Is there any way the GSA property can speed up the process because of the situation after the pandemic?

> ***Answer -*** Every situation is unique, but in general, the customer should contact it's agency Property rep and/or the GSA Personal Property Management (PPM) office to discuss the issue and/or report the excess. PPM would offer a number of potential options for disposal including -- scrapping (abandonment and destruction), transfer to school or federal agency, transfer to a state agency, or sale to the public. Normally, the process is 21 days for federal/state screening and up to 30 days for sale and payment of the property. These time frames can be expedited depending on the particular situation.

Is this process the same for all regions? Usually each region has their own way of doing business.

> ***Answer -*** Yes, this is a national process and all regions are meant to follow the guidance. There may be some minor nuances to the outreach, but you should always be engaged timely and with the utilization of the Client Project Agreement. Note: The process is set based on the expiration date of the occupancies, but there are triggers outside of the expiration date that may have GSA reach out to you for strategic engagement out of cycle.

Who is a POC at GSA to talk further with?

> ***Answer -*** Please contact your account lead found on the **National Account Teams** site.

Scoring with the additional costs amortized would appear to be a challenge.

Answer - An enhanced tenant improvement allowance will result in higher payments to the lessor and therefore increase the present value of the minimum lease payments over the life of the lease. This could potentially increase the risk of scoring. It is important to include the enhanced allowance when conducting the preliminary scoring at the requirements stage in order to properly assess the risk of scoring.

If herd immunity isn't achieved, does GSA recommend Agencies continue with reducing their footprint and stack occupants?

Answer - This question is far more complex and requires additional details than can be accurately answered here. In general, GSA's mission is to help our customer agencies advance their missions while providing the greatest value to the American taxpayer. For many years, we have encouraged our customers to take advantage of innovative workplace solutions and designs to reduce their physical footprint. While we continue to encourage agencies to explore space-saving opportunities, current and recommended CDC guidance should also be a factor in decision-making. These decisions should be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by a customer agency in collaboration with GSA personnel.

Why is the SF 81 not accepted?

Answer - The SF-81 is accepted by GSA. We take your initial space requirements from you, the customer, anyway you want to provide it. Some agencies have their own forms they use. It is our job at GSA to take the requirements you provide and complete the Client Project Agreement (CPA). We

then ask the customer to review the information and provide confirmation that the information is correct. The SF-81 was created, I think back in the 70s, and our entire way of looking at space has really changed in the last ten years. The client project agreement has much more information, part of the driver for the is we have had a lot of audits in the past kind of asking us why are we making certain decisions that we do when it comes to occupancy, and really that is what this client project agreement serves as a document to basically show we are making certain decisions with occupancies and there's good reasoning behind it.

What if we can't sign the CPA? Does an email showing concurrence suffice?

Answer - Yes. You can send an email showing concurrence. If your SF-81, and what we have in our CPA does not change, your signed SF-81 can also suffice. I want to be really clear we are not going to make you sign something if we know there is already a set acceptance of what we are moving forward with, if that already exists, it might be an email from us saying something like hey, we have your SF 81 here is the CPA, we believe everything here is exactly how it was stated in the SF 81 and there is additional information, let us know if you see any issues but we will not ask you for another signature. But if there are changes or something that the planning manager, reaching out to you, there is something specific that they are seeing that could change your occupancy decision, that is what we would use to do that.

If my agency wants to do a workplace engagement for a specific project, how long does it typically take to finish?

Answer - On average, around six months. Which seems like a lot of time. However, a big part of that time is making sure that we are engaging the organization properly. We are not rushing how we collect information from the employees. A good chunk of time is allowing our consultants and office to provide recommendations and refine those with you versus trying to rush the final report out the door. The earlier we can get in, the better, higher quality product we can provide to you.

My agency is looking at more people working from home. How do you take this into account?

Answer - First off, we want to understand how desk sharing, as far as those staff positions, would be effective for them and to what extent there is an appetite for that. Desk sharing, as well as do their work someplace else as well. We want to make sure we collect that information by engaging the entire organization. The other part comes to the actual development of recommendations. We want to make sure that things like support spaces (i.e. meeting rooms) take into account the staff sitting at a desk in the office, as well as those employees working from home, but may pop in for other meetings as well. During that whole workplace engagement process, we look at both the demand as well as the supply parts of that equation when it comes to things like desk sharing and other aspects.

How does Change Management relate to developing requirements?

Answer - It really depends on the degree of change. Change management is steps that an organization will take to guide their employees, basically all their staff and the leadership, from where they are at now, to reaching the point where they are fully embracing the new workplace and using it as designed, allowing the workplace to become effective for that organization.

Part of that is also measuring the workplace to make sure it's doing their job. It is always good if an agency, especially now, with the pandemic, if an agency is considering if they don't have desk sharing thinking about doing it now, or if they are doing a hybrid type of work environment, they should think about adding some change management in there also.

One of the nice things about workplace engagement is in surveys and focus groups we ask many of the same questions and probe into the same topics that would help inform change management strategies as well. Those include simple things like communication methods or much more robust things like maybe

creating spaces so that they could try out the new workplace prior to completion of the project.

How are unions considered in the workplace engagement process?

Answer - We always involve unions and the bargaining unit organizations at the very start of a workplace engagement. One of the first questions we ask is if there is a union representation we should consult. If so, we like to do a presentation about the process, approach, addressing concerns they have, sometimes concerns, for instance on the survey that goes sound, whether the responses could be attributed to a specific person, but we go through those questions.

When we do employee focus groups we encourage the union representative to sit in on the focus group so they know what types of questions they are answering and how it goes. We found by engaging the unions early in the process, it makes it a bit smoother, even a lot smoother later on because they are familiar with the discussions and the recommendations we create are based off of the data we collected with them there, either in the room or through the survey questions.