



U.S. General Services Administration

# U.S. General Services Administration FY 2022-2026 Learning Agenda

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## Our Plan

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) is committed to ensuring a strong culture of evaluation, evidence-building, and learning. GSA's Learning Agenda sets a series of agencywide learning targets in alignment with GSA's strategic objectives and in collaboration with varied offices across GSA. Implementation of the Learning Agenda offers an opportunity to improve how GSA builds and uses evidence to better align performance, budget, strategic planning, policymaking, data, and evidence-building activities.

In developing the Learning Agenda, GSA engaged internal and external stakeholders. Internally this included key stakeholders from across the agency, as they advised and helped develop questions for inclusion in the Learning Agenda. Externally this included insights shared by the Office of Management and Budget. These collaborative activities resulted in a final recommendation to the Administrator to ensure alignment with GSA's overarching priorities and strategy. GSA's Evaluation Officer worked closely with varied stakeholders with expertise in the program areas to ensure that the Learning Agenda is relevant, realistic, and meaningful.

To develop a learning agenda grounded in the agency's strategic direction, GSA has identified key learning priorities that align to the strategic goals and objectives. They include a range of strategic and operational questions, and represent an evolution of GSA's prior learning priorities. GSA also received increased funding enabling us to build capacity by hiring additional dedicated evaluation specialists to progress our agenda. GSA's Learning Agenda is organized around GSA's strategic priorities: Real Estate Solutions, Acquisition, Digital Government, and Government Operations. GSA has prioritized four learning goals, with the intention of building a robust evidence base around these topic areas. GSA's Evaluation Officer is working closely with leadership from GSA program areas to ensure that the Learning Agenda is relevant, realistic, and meaningful, and directly in service of GSA's Strategic Plan and priorities. Over the coming months, GSA will gather external feedback on the updated agenda, including the public, state and local governments, the private sector and other expert input.

GSA understands that there will be ongoing changes to investments and programs resulting from new legislation. As such, we view this document as living and subject to change. Current learning questions purposefully leave room to accommodate shifting priorities, and GSA expects updates to the Learning Agenda in response to changes to existing programs or new initiatives. Our intention is to maintain a continuous feedback cycle with leadership and key stakeholders to ensure that our Learning Agenda remains focused but flexible. GSA will include and prioritize updates to this document as capacity allows.

## Learning Questions

The Learning Agenda includes a range of strategic and operational questions, and short- and long-term learning targets. For each learning question, we have identified possible topics for further evidence-building currently under development and consideration. These projects may be supported by policy analysis, foundational fact-finding, program evaluation and/or performance measurement activities between fiscal years (FY) 2022 and 2026. Further details on priority evaluation activities will be detailed in GSA's Annual Evaluation Plans. While the Annual Evaluation Plan will support progress on the Learning Agenda, these efforts will also have additional and independent workstreams and thus not fully overlap.

# Real Estate Solutions

<b>Learning Question</b>	What technologies and solutions does the Federal workforce need to additionally improve effectiveness in a more responsive remote work setting?
<b>Learning Type</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Foundational fact-finding; operational; short term</li><li>• Program evaluation; strategic; short term and long term</li></ul>
<b>Lead Team</b>	Public Buildings Service
<b>Key Strategic Objective</b>	Develop and offer integrated space and virtual workspace options and services that maximize flexibility, particularly in anticipation of increased telework.

## Case for Learning

The Public Buildings Service (PBS) aims to provide financially and environmentally sustainable, accessible, optimized, and responsive workspace solutions that enable a productive Federal workforce. This means developing and deploying innovative solutions that give Federal employees greater workspace flexibilities. GSA manages and maintains one of the nation's largest and most diverse real estate portfolios that supports more than 50 agencies, and houses nearly 1 million Federal employees. PBS houses nearly 50% of the total Federal civilian workforce, which makes it the landholding agency that houses the most Federal civilians.

This learning question helps PBS build the evidence needed to inform its strategic decisions about:

- Optimizing GSA's Real Estate Portfolio
- Reducing vacant inventory space, and
- Solution sets for customers that integrate real estate, human resource, and technology solutions

This learning will generate evidence that enables actionable approaches to meeting customers' evolving needs, while remaining focused on right-sizing GSA's Federal real estate portfolio to be financially and environmentally sustainable.

In addition, the impacts that COVID-19 will have on the demand for real estate portfolios are still unknown. It is vital that PBS understands the long- and short-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and how these effects will shape the demand of physical

workspaces, and what new workspace solutions PBS will need to offer that enable agencies to use a mix of on-site and remote work postures to perform their missions. PBS will work to balance these evolving needs with long-term real estate decisions, while also identifying where there are knowledge gaps and limitations that need to be resolved or filled in over time.

## Learning Activities and Potential Approaches

PBS will answer this learning question through a variety of evidence-building activities over the span of the Learning Agenda period. Priority initiatives under consideration in service of this Learning Goal include:

- How will the return to facilities impact employee engagement, satisfaction, health, and productivity?
- What features of new, adaptive workspace solutions satisfy customer needs and real estate demands in the short- and medium-term?
- What programs and workspace solutions improve collaboration and engagement for the Federal workforce?
- What processes or procedures should be streamlined and scaled nationally, to achieve speed of delivery and a consistently high-customer real estate experience?
- What is the demand for PBS to provide other services and how will that demand influence holding and reinvestment strategies for real property so that assets retained are viable and sustainable?
- How are space requirements changing in terms of needed space and use of space in a more flexible work environment?
- What will be the impact on local communities of a dramatic and relatively rapid shift in the federal government's real estate footprint, and the constellation of partners reliant on the pre-pandemic patterns of the federal workforce?
- What strategies and technologies are most effective to efficiently operate and maintain Federal facilities and reduce adverse climate impacts?

In the immediate term, PBS will integrate evidence-building initiatives and evaluation into its Workplace 2030 initiative and prioritize learning and evaluation as part of GSA's reentry plans. GSA will also explore agency collaborations to generate short-term, actionable evidence on varied reentry approaches, including possible collaboration with the Office of Personnel Management and the Office of Management and Budget, to directly inform PBS offerings and planning. GSA will also explore other potential collaborations on shared priorities with relevant agencies where there may be overlap in learning priorities.

## Anticipated Challenges and Solutions

Addressing the learning questions in a meaningful way will require continued data integration and refinement, and operational flexibility to incorporate testing and evaluation into implementation strategies. PBS will continue identifying data gaps, including data sources to which they do not yet have access, and where possible, develop and implement detailed plans for gaining access to and integrating the data to enhance the overall data architecture.

As with all learning priorities, GSA will prioritize piloting and learning around GSA's reentry plan and workspace solutions needs, as part of a broader portfolio of governmentwide collaborations. To build rigorous evidence around GSA's broader offerings, agency partners will need to be willing to participate in embedded evaluation efforts. GSA has a strong track record of cross-agency collaboration and data sharing in service of rigorous evidence and learning, which can be leveraged in service of this learning priority.

## Utilization

Evidence will inform PBS's approach and decisions on workspace solution offerings in the short and long terms. GSA will use evidence from the Workplace 2030 initiative to inform new services for Federal customers that support acquisition of furniture and IT equipment for teleworkers.

## Acquisition

<b>Question</b>	What strategies are most effective at increasing participation in procurement and contracting opportunities for underserved communities and small businesses?
<b>Learning Type</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Foundational Fact-Finding; strategic and operational; short term</li><li>• Policy Analysis; operational; short term</li><li>• Program evaluation; strategic; long-term</li></ul>
<b>Lead Teams</b>	Federal Acquisition Service Office of Government-wide Policy Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization
<b>Key Strategic Objective</b>	Aid U.S. economic growth by maximizing opportunities and minimizing barriers for small and/or underserved businesses seeking to do business with GSA.

### Case for Learning

The Federal Acquisition Service's (FAS) goal is to provide a modern, accessible, and streamlined acquisition system including solutions to support Federal agency customers and a robust marketplace connecting buyers to the suppliers and businesses that meet their mission needs. The Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization's (OSDBU) goal is to ensure small businesses have the maximum practicable opportunity to provide goods and services to the Federal Government. OGP helps agency partners prepare for the future of mission delivery by leveraging smart policy, analytical data, and dynamic program implementation across Government. Together, GSA seeks to refine its acquisition process to help small businesses better identify opportunities to engage with the Federal Government. GSA is committed to building the industrial base, breaking down barriers, and increasing Federal opportunities for small, disadvantaged, and socioeconomic businesses by instituting a multifaceted approach. (\$58.7 billion<sup>1</sup> was earned from a percentage of FAS contract spend and applied to FAS procurement programs in FY 2020.) Examining equity in the programs has the potential to remove barriers and increase contract dollars awarded to underserved communities.

This learning question helps OSDBU and FAS build the evidence needed to inform strategic decisions about:

- Where and when to make changes and investments, and

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<sup>1</sup> Data obtained through GSA's Office of Enterprise Strategy Management for FAS's FSS, GWAC, and International Data Corporation (IDC) programs for FY 2020.



- How to improve engagement with small businesses throughout the acquisition lifecycle.

While GSA has made progress on meeting small business-related performance targets, this process will help GSA identify where to make future investments and how to further improve its engagements with small businesses.

This learning will inform the shape and structure of small business acquisition programming, such as inreach and outreach engagements and e-tools for sharing information. It will also build actionable evidence around the acquisition process for small businesses and the acquisition workforce, informing programming to support small businesses and reduce existing hurdles.

### Learning Activities and Potential Approaches

OSDBU and FAS will answer this learning question through a variety of evidence-building activities over the span of the Learning Agenda period. This section contains high-level examples of multi-year learning activities. Initial priorities will focus on potential disparities or success barriers for underserved communities in Federal contracting and identify areas for further evidence-building activities and evaluation.

Illustrative activities and questions to further GSA's learning include:

- How do small and disadvantaged businesses (SDBs) fare in access to acquisition opportunities and outcomes relative to similarly situated peers across communities and in the broader marketplace of small businesses?
- What opportunities exist in GSA acquisition policy to streamline processes and eliminate potential barriers to entry and barriers to winning contracts for SDBs?
- What insights can the SDB community offer on their experiences, challenges, and successes to eliminate barriers and improve the SDB experience?
- What barriers to procurement and contracting opportunities stem from legislation or are associated with the FAR? What evidence-based changes can be implemented and what effect do they have to mitigate unintended consequences?
- What acquisition program or policy changes can address and reduce administrative barriers for GSA customers, especially those that have a disproportionate impact on underserved communities?
- What new tools and support does the acquisition workforce require to expand their outreach efforts?

GSA is exploring collaborations with the Small Business Administration's Evaluation Office to support learning of mutual interest to both agencies.

## Anticipated Challenges and Solutions

Addressing the learning questions in a meaningful way will require continued data collection, integration, and refinement. FAS, in partnership with OSDBU, will identify data gaps, including data sources to which they do not yet have access, and develop a detailed plan for gaining access to and integrating the data to enhance the overall data structure in the first phase. FAS will build on its existing data strategy to improve the quality and utility of data that is available for use in decision-making. This could include synthesizing and sharing data across the organization and from multiple sources, so that the data are accessible, reliable, and useful. In addition, it could highlight additional needs associated with current data and how to resolve them.

## Utilization

Evidence will inform FAS's approach and decisions on offerings, operations, and policies in the short and long terms.

# Digital Government

<b>Question</b>	How can GSA Technology solutions support effective service delivery to the public?
<b>Learning Type</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Foundational fact-finding; operational; short term</li><li>• Program evaluation and policy analysis; strategic; short and long term</li></ul>
<b>Lead Teams</b>	Technology Transformation Services Office of Customer Experience Office of Government-wide Policy Office of GSA IT
<b>Key Strategic Objective</b>	Implement inclusive, accessible, and equitable design practices that improve customer experience with technology and digital platforms.

## Case for Learning

TTS (Technology Transformation Services) strives for a digital government that delivers for the public through trusted, accessible, and user-centered technologies. TTS helps agencies make their services more accessible, efficient, and effective with modern applications, platforms, processes, personnel, and software solutions and to empower the public with better access to Government information and resources. With a focus on unifying, improving, and standardizing the experience the public has while interacting with the Federal Government, TTS has a number of digital platforms it has developed. Evidence on how to best leverage these solutions, improve and expand the solutions, and meet customer and public needs will be in direct service to GSA's Learning Agenda.

For example, TTS leads login.gov, USAGOV and US Web Design Systems. [Login.gov](#) offers users simple, secure access to online Government services. Users will be able to sign in with a single set of credentials for all participating Government programs. [USAGov](#) connects people with Government information more than 700 million times a year through its websites ([USA.gov](#) and [USAGov en español](#)), social media, publications, email, and phone calls to the [USAGov Contact Center](#). And [the U.S. Web Design System \(USWDS\)](#) makes it easier to build accessible, mobile-friendly Federal Government websites for the American public. Given the reach and scale of TTS offerings, further evidence on how to best leverage these services to better serve the public will be key in assisting GSA in delivering on its mission.

## Learning Activities and Potential Approaches

TTS's wide range of offerings and services offers enormous potential for learning. Initial priorities to explore in service of GSA's Learning Agenda include:

- Does digital identity proofing create or remove barriers in accessing public services? How can *login.gov* ensure equitable participation and better serve underserved communities?
- How can US web design systems improve accessibility? For whom?
- Does *USA.gov* improve information access to underserved communities?
- What technology improves the trust, experience, and engagement with digital services for tribal communities?
- How can *vote.gov* improve access to voter information and registrations for underserved communities?

GSA evidence-building efforts will closely coordinate with and operate in support of GSA's ongoing equity assessments. Understanding more about the potential benefits of *Login.gov* to serve as a front door for digital services, as well as equity and accessibility considerations are critical to providing simple, secure login for everyone.

## Anticipated Challenges and Solutions

Measurement of reach and impact on the public, resulting from TTS services and offerings, will continue to pose a challenge when developing evidence moving forward. Data on user outcomes on a broad scale are not consistently collected currently, and will require significant effort and resources to capture reliably. Further complicating these efforts, such user outcomes are often one or more degrees separated from the user's contact with TTS. As GSA explores promising modifications to programs and platforms with potential to enhance impact, statutory requirements may pose some limitations inhibiting the range of possible modifications. Further, embedding evaluation into TTS offerings and outreach may require changes in terms of client engagement and operations, adding additional complexity and requiring additional capacity.

## Utilization

Evidence will inform TTS's approach and decisions on solutions and offerings in the short and long terms.

# Government Operations

<b>Question</b>	What GSA programs and policies are effective at improving climate adaptation, resilience, and mitigation?
<b>Learning Type</b>	Program evaluation and policy analysis; operational and strategic; short and long term
<b>Lead Team</b>	Office of Government-wide Policy
<b>Key Strategic Objective</b>	Provide centralized services and shared solutions that promote cost savings and environmental sustainability, enabling agencies to focus on mission delivery.

## Case for Learning

The Office of Government-wide Policy's (OGP) mission is to provide innovative solutions for the future of Government. OGP helps agency partners prepare for the future of mission delivery by leveraging smart policy, analytical data, and dynamic program implementation across Government. OGP aims to be the trusted partner leading to better Government with improved citizen experiences and savings. One key aspect of this is prioritizing an understanding of climate change risks and opportunities.

This effort supports OGP's overall mission by modeling how we build and use evidence to improve internal operations and inform policy guidance across the Government. Progress will require continuing to improve the use of data for decision-making and accountability for the Federal Government, including for policy-making, innovation, oversight, and learning. OGP will use the best available science-based climate data and develop and use new data sources and tools to better inform decision-making, including through risk-informed processes to identify its vulnerability to climate disruptions. High-quality data will allow us to run rapid, low-cost tests and identify effective policy changes, and we will identify, prioritize, and make progress on data gaps.

In formulating policy, OGP will work to advance equitable distribution of environmental risks and benefits and to avoid actions that may lead to increased risk of adverse climate-related outcomes, increased vulnerability to climate change, or diminished welfare, now or in the future.

## Learning Activities and Potential Approaches

OGP's diverse portfolio offers enormous potential for learning. Priority initiatives under consideration in service of this Learning Goal include:

- What programs or policies are effective at promoting greening of the fleet, including use of electric or other zero emission vehicles?
- What changes in federal travel policies are effective at improving climate adaptation, resilience and mitigation?
- Where are there opportunities to use the acquisition system to incentivize contractors to mitigate climate impact and plan for climate related risks?
- Which technologies, existing or emerging, enable GSA to minimize adverse impacts from climate and maximize greenhouse gas emissions mitigation?
- What strategies and technologies are most effective to efficiently operate and maintain federal facilities and reduce adverse climate impacts from operations or from severe weather events?

OGP anticipates making progress on evidence gaps through program evaluation, policy analysis, and data investments. This learning work has both strong data systems to capitalize on, as well as data systems which can benefit from focused efforts and investment. The existing data can be used as a foundation for rapid cycle testing and also long-term evaluations in the years ahead. This will allow us to make short-term progress, generating actionable evidence in the near-term, which will inform longer-term strategic learning opportunities. A focus on this area will also allow us to identify and prioritize the data gaps, and invest resources to ensure GSA data systems support continuous improvement and innovation in its services and policy areas. GSA will explore additional learning opportunities across OGP portfolios.

## Anticipated Challenges and Solutions

GSA will identify partner agencies and initiate data sharing activities to expand the available data. Fleet data, in particular, will require further investment and cooperation from partner activities, both within and outside of GSA, to serve as reliable indicators and outcomes for future evidence building activities.

In addition, implementing changes to federally owned buildings to address climate threats depends on the availability of funding to perform repairs and modernizations.

## Utilization

Evidence will inform OGP's approach and decisions on governmentwide policies in the short and long term. Further details on evidence utilization plans forthcoming.

## Next Steps: GSA FY 2022-2026 Learning Agenda

GSA's Learning Agenda and Annual Evaluation plans will be adapted to account for any major changes to Administration or Agency strategic priorities. GSA will also refine and specify utilization targets, to ensure evidence generated has a clear and concrete application and use case detailed.

GSA is planning to solicit additional external stakeholder feedback which, as implemented, will also inform Learning Agenda priorities and implementation. Upon publishing the Learning Agenda, GSA will develop a plan to gather external feedback and update the Learning Agenda as needed. Stakeholders engaged will include the public, State and local governments, and representatives of non-governmental researchers.