



Client Enrichment Series – Q & A



Topic: Strategies for Effective Lighting and Acoustics

Date of Presentation: September 16th, 2026

Presenter(s):

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Strategies for Effective Lighting and Acoustics Session Resources:

View our September 16th [Recording](#)

Visit: [2025 Interim Core Building Standards\(CBS\) Submittal Matrix](#)

To request a copy of the presentation slide deck as a PDF, please email clientenrichmentseries@gsa.gov and indicate if you need a fully 508 compliant file.

Question: I like uplighting for uniforming lighting and less glare on computer screens in open cube space. However, doesn't this illumination strategy result in reduced illumination and cost more?

Answer: Direct/indirect lighting is one of the effective lighting strategies that helps to create more even illumination, reduces glare and contrast. Remember, it's not only about making sure we have a certain number of footcandles at the desk or other surface, it's about lighting strategies that do not cause glare, eye strain and contrast while providing the right amount of light. Energy costs are far outweighed by human capital and though we strive to conserve energy, we should not do so at the cost of human centered effective lighting strategies. Effective lighting strategies conquer both, by providing a properly lit and energy efficient space. In the past we have been more focused on the energy cost and have often overlooked the more important and expensive cost of human capital

Question: How about meeting IEEE standards for footcandles on walking and working surfaces?

Answer: GSA [Core Building Standards \(CBS\)](#), [linked here](#), recommends and follows the Illuminating Engineering Society standards. We meet the standards, for example, with effective lighting strategies like task lighting at the desk and work surface. Using task lighting at the surface puts the light where it's needed and gives user control. Instead of meeting a footcandle standard from a fixture installed in the ceiling 8 feet above the surface, put the light where it's needed most. This effective lighting strategy reduces glare, contrast and eye strain as we are not lighting a large space with light from above to meet a foot candle requirement on the work surface, we instead use a lower light level for the ambient light and concentrate proper light levels at the work surface



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Question: I am looking for acoustic mitigation recommendations for our updated workstation layout. Under the new guidance, the condensed footprint and low panels are causing significant speech distraction and background noise during virtual meetings. Given the constraints of the smaller footprint and lower furniture profiles, what specific acoustic interventions (e.g., sound masking, specialized materials, or layout adjustments) can we implement to improve speech privacy and reduce ambient noise?

Answer: A couple options. GSA can create a project and contract with a firm to investigate the acoustic conditions and develop strategies an agency can implement. Another option is to purchase and install phone booths or office pods. Something like this example of an office pod from a major furniture manufacturer [linked here](#). Even more options are to install acoustic panels on the walls and ceilings, add acoustic pad to carpet or the flooring material and to plan for effective acoustic strategies from the beginning of a design project where the activity based design approach is used to layout the space. This approach locates louder areas away from quieter areas, designates areas for private phone calls and provides multiple work settings designed as acoustic mitigation strategies.

Question: 1) Does GSA follow model codes like the International Building Code (IBC) Section 808? 2) For fire safety we must comply with ASTM E84 for Class A Fire - Rated? 3) IBC Chapter 8 governs interior finishes and acoustical ceiling systems. 4) Energy Efficiency Standards (10 CFR Part 433 / 434 used for federal building energy under 42 U.S. Code 6834? 5) Illumination level (41 CFR 102-74.180) used for specific operational illumination minimums for federal properties? 6) Life safety and emergency egress lighting must comply with NFPA 101 (Life Safety Code) and NFPA 70

Answer: GSA follows the Core Building Standards (CBS) which replaced the GSA P100. Here is a [link to the CBS](#). Reach out to your [Client Strategist](#) if you need further guidance.