



DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION EXCELLENCE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Issued November 17, 2022

CHAPTER 1

OBJECTIVES | HISTORY

THE U.S. GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION'S (GSA'S) DESIGN EXCELLENCE PROGRAM IS A PROVEN METHOD FOR PRODUCING HIGH-QUALITY, SUSTAINABLE FACILITIES. THESE INTERCONNECTED POLICIES AND PROCEDURES DELIVER EXCEPTIONAL VALUE TO OUR PARTNER AGENCIES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES. SINCE ITS LAUNCH IN 1994, THE DESIGN EXCELLENCE PROGRAM HAS DRAMATICALLY IMPROVED THE PERFORMANCE AND PUBLIC BENEFIT OF THE BUILDINGS UNDER GSA'S JURISDICTION, CUSTODY, AND CONTROL. DESIGN EXCELLENCE UNCOVERS EFFICIENCY GAINS IN THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF BUILDINGS, MAXIMIZES THE PRODUCTIVITY OF FEDERAL WORKSPACES, AND ENHANCES AMERICANS' PERCEPTION OF GOVERNMENT. GSA RECOGNIZES DESIGN EXCELLENCE AS ESSENTIAL TO REALIZING THE FULL POTENTIAL OF A PROJECT.

1.1 DESIGN EXCELLENCE OBJECTIVES

Design Excellence ensures that federal civilian buildings express our government's commitment to public service and the values of American democracy. In doing so, Design Excellence puts the Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture into action. Within an individual construction or modernization project, this quality mandate translates to the following goals:

- Provide best value to partner agencies and taxpayers
- Develop safe, productive, and attractive workplaces
- Deliver projects on time and on budget
- Achieve building performance that is efficient and durable
- Uphold federal historic preservation and environmental policies
- Coordinate planning and design decisions with local community goals
- Leverage the skill of America's most qualified designers and artists
- Provide stewardship for the next generation of respected landmarks

Design Excellence also ensures GSA's compliance with the Brooks Act (40 U.S.C. § 1101, et seq.), which Congress passed in 1972. The law requires the federal government to procure architect-engineer services from firms based upon their competency, qualifications, and experience. Price quotations are not considered in this qualifications-based selection process (QBS). The Brooks Act further establishes seven fundamental steps for QBS, which center on a two-stage evaluation procedure.

The Design Excellence methodology is holistic. Its vision of exceptional public buildings incorporates expertise in architecture, urban design, landscape architecture, interior design, art, engineering, historic preservation, construction, security, sustainability, and workplace design. Although much of the language in Design and Construction Excellence Policies and Procedures is dedicated to design-bid-build delivery,

it applies to design-build and construction manager as constructor (CMc) delivery methods equally. Because any project that exceeds the current prospectus threshold must comply with both Design Excellence and Construction Excellence protocols, these policies and procedures apply to standalone contracts as well as indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contracts whose task or delivery orders may exceed the prospectus threshold.

Additional chapters in this document address design-build, design-build-bridging, and leasing applications of Design Excellence. Aspects of Design Excellence are also employed in energy savings performance contracts (ESPCs) and limited-scope or systems projects. Design Excellence critically informs design firm selection and delivery, and it is an integral part of GSA culture overall.

Please note that descriptions of certain tasks in this document by no means permit contracting officers to contradict directions printed in the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) or General Services Administration Acquisition Manual (GSAM), nor do they imply such permission. This note especially applies to procurement-related tasks.

1.2 DESIGN EXCELLENCE HISTORY

GSA established the Design Excellence Program in 1994, and the agency continues to refine and expand the program according to experience and evaluation. Its essential philosophy remains unwavering through this period. The Design Excellence Program is dedicated to thoughtfully defining project requirements and to selecting the most appropriate lead designer and design firm. Another constant is the involvement of members of the National Register of Peer Professionals, to guide design firm selection and critique projects through concept development. The insight of these distinguished private-sector professionals is invaluable to GSA.

1.3 GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR FEDERAL ARCHITECTURE

In 1962, President John F. Kennedy authorized the Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture. Conceived and written by Daniel Patrick Moynihan, this document is the philosophical foundation of the Design Excellence Program.

Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture

In the course of its consideration of the general subject of Federal office space, the committee has given some thought to the need for a set of principles which will guide the Government in the choice of design for Federal buildings. The committee takes it to be a matter of general understanding that the economy and suitability of Federal office space derive directly from the architectural design. The belief that good design is optional, or in some way separate from the question of the provision of office space itself, does not bear scrutiny, and in fact invites the least efficient use of public money.

The design of Federal office buildings, particularly those to be located in the nation's capital, must meet a two-fold requirement. First, it must provide efficient and economical facilities for the use of Government agencies. Second, it must provide visual testimony to the dignity, enterprise, vigor, and stability of the American Government.

It should be our object to meet the test of Pericles' evocation to the Athenians, which the President commended to the Massachusetts legislature in his address of January 9, 1961: "We do not imitate—for we are a model to others."

The committee is also of the opinion that the Federal Government, no less than other public and private organizations concerned with the construction of new buildings, should take advantage of the increasingly fruitful collaboration between architecture and the fine arts.

With these objects in view, the committee recommends a three-point architectural policy for the Federal Government.

1. The policy shall be to provide requisite and adequate facilities in an architectural style and form which is distinguished and which will reflect the dignity, enterprise, vigor, and stability of the American National Government. Major emphasis should be placed on the choice of designs that embody the finest contemporary American architectural thought. Specific attention should be paid to the possibilities of incorporating into such designs qualities which reflect the regional architectural traditions of that part of the Nation in which buildings are located. Where appropriate, fine art should be incorporated in the designs, with emphasis on the work of living American artists. Designs shall adhere to sound construction practice and utilize materials, methods, and equipment of proven dependability. Buildings shall be economical to build, operate, and maintain, and should be accessible to the handicapped.

2. The development of an official style must be avoided. Design must flow from the architectural profession to the Government, and not vice versa. The Government should be willing to pay some additional cost to avoid excessive uniformity in design of Federal buildings. Competitions for the design of Federal buildings may be held where appropriate. The advice of distinguished architects ought to, as a rule, be sought prior to the award of important design contracts.

3. The choice and development of the building site should be considered the first step of the design process. This choice should be made in cooperation with local agencies. Special attention should be paid to the general ensemble of streets and public places of which Federal buildings will form a part. Where possible, buildings should be located so as to permit a generous development of landscape.

Report to the President by the Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Office Space, June 1, 1962.

PROJECT PLANNING

DESIGN EXCELLENCE IS INTEGRATED INTO EVERY PHASE OF A PROJECT, FROM PLANNING AND CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT THROUGH BUILDING OCCUPANCY. AT A PROJECT'S INCEPTION, DESIGN EXCELLENCE MEANS TRANSLATING THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF FEDERAL ARCHITECTURE INTO PRACTICABLE GOALS SPECIFIC TO THAT PROJECT. THESE GOALS THEN GUIDE THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION PROCESS AND SERVE AS THE BASIS OF MEASURING QUALITY AND SUCCESS. WHILE DESIGN EXCELLENCE IS ESSENTIAL TO ALL ABOVE-PROSPECTUS-LEVEL PROJECTS, IT MAY BE ADAPTED TO A LIMITED-SCOPE PROJECT—IN FACT, SUCH ADAPTATION IS ENCOURAGED. TO PROMOTE A CULTURE OF DESIGN EXCELLENCE THROUGHOUT GSA, A PROJECT TEAM MUST INTEGRATE GOALS INFORMED BY THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR FEDERAL ARCHITECTURE WITHIN AN INITIAL PLANNING DOCUMENT. FURTHERMORE, TO ENSURE THAT A PROJECT INTEGRATES DESIGN EXCELLENCE PROCEDURES, ITS TIMELINE MUST INCORPORATE THE ACTIONS AND MILESTONES THAT ARE DETAILED IN THIS CHAPTER.

PLEASE NOTE THAT, AS OF THIS DOCUMENT'S 2022 PUBLICATION, AN INITIAL OR ORIGINAL PLANNING DOCUMENT GENERALLY REFERS TO A CAPITAL MANAGEMENT PLAN (CAPPMP). THE CAPPMP IS A DYNAMIC DOCUMENT THAT GUIDES THE DELIVERY OF A PROJECT FROM ITS PLANNING PHASE ONWARD. THE CAPPMP DETAILS A PROJECT'S DESIGN EXCELLENCE OBJECTIVES, ITS DESIGN EXCELLENCE SELECTION PROCESS, AND RELATED ACTIONS AND MILESTONES WITH ASSOCIATED SCHEDULING. THE REGIONAL PROJECT MANAGER UPDATES THE DOCUMENT THROUGH DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION; MOREOVER, THE CAPPMP IS SUBMITTED WITH EACH PEER REVIEW AND INTEGRATED DESIGN REVIEW (IDR), SO THAT REVIEWERS HAVE A CLEAR PICTURE OF A PROJECT'S TEAM, SCOPE, GOALS, AND POSSIBLE RISKS.

2.1 COLLABORATING WITH THE OFFICE OF DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

GSA's Design Excellence Program is located within the Office of the Chief Architect (OCA) which, with the Office of Project Delivery, make up the Office of Design and Construction (ODC) in GSA's Central Office. Because fulfilling Design Excellence necessitates close collaboration between the GSA regional project team and ODC, each project will have a regional project management team made up of the:

- Contracting officer
- Project manager
- Regional chief architect

While this document uses the term “regional project management team” to refer to all three roles, it is the team's project manager and regional chief architect who act as liaisons between the regional project team and ODC's project stakeholders. From pre-planning through commissioning, these two colleagues work with the Design Excellence Program and OCA in scheduling peer reviews, design reviews, and other relevant meetings. And of these two, the regional chief architect should act as the primary liaison to ODC—for example, by vetting SAM.gov announcements prior to their submission to the chief architect and providing sufficient notice to the Design Excellence Program of opportunities for peer review, among

other responsibilities. The regional chief architect also provides knowledge about GSA policies, procedures, initiatives, and customer programs, as well as national perspective on GSA's lessons learned and best practices, to the regional project team.

2.2 DESIGN EXCELLENCE GOALS AND PRIORITIES

Integrating the goals and priorities listed in this section can ensure excellence in each phase of a project's life. The regional project management team must develop a process, schedule, and strategies that support these goals and priorities. It is important to note that the thoughtful coordination and review described here requires significant advance planning.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

- Identify the appropriate procurement delivery method and review the corresponding Design and Construction Excellence Policies and Procedures chapter
- Establish and document Design Excellence goals in the initial planning document and the Source Selection Plan
- Involve local planning officials and GSA's subject matter experts, and incorporate their input into initial documents
- Coordinate with GSA's Office of Portfolio Management & Customer Engagement on the development of a prospectus, as required

SAM.GOV ANNOUNCEMENT

- Accurately describe the project, program of requirements, scope of work, and Design Excellence goals (see Chapter 1 for bulleted goals) to attract highly qualified and talented lead designers and design firms
- Specify a selection process that allows GSA to find a firm most capable of realizing Design Excellence goals, budget, schedule, performance, and tenant requirements on behalf of the customer

EVALUATION BOARD

- Appoint an Evaluation Board comprised of individuals who understand the project type and design priorities (See FAR 36.602-2 and GSAM 536.602-2)
- Confirm that board members have the professional qualifications and experience to make an informed selection of the lead designer and design firm

SELECTING THE FIRM: LEAD DESIGNER AND DESIGN FIRM

- Recommend entities that combine an outstanding lead designer with a design firm that possesses a track record for delivering quality and performance, thereby improving the likelihood of a successful design
- In accordance with the Brooks Act and FAR 36.6, rank the lead designers and design firms so GSA will negotiate price with **the most highly qualified** entities for the project
- Note that the terms "lead designer" and "lead engineer" may be interchangeable in cases where the regional project management team has determined that a project, especially an above-prospectus-level project that is overwhelmingly focused on engineering systems, can realize the Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture under the leadership of an engineer as opposed to another design professional. In those cases, an engineering firm or engineer of record should support the lead engineer, taking the place of the term "design firm." Ideally, the initial planning document and Source Selection Plan should already state that the project focuses largely on building systems whose upgrades have minimal architectural impact, to avoid time-consuming revision.

SELECTING THE FIRM: DESIGN-BUILD FIRM

- Recommend the three most highly qualified design-build firms for the project (See FAR 36.303)
- Rank the design-build firms most qualified to deliver the project according to the quality of the concept proposal and to other technical criteria stated in the Solicitation and Source Selection Plan

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

- Convene the first Design Excellence peer review early in the concept development phase with at least three distinct concept proposals, and a second peer review that refines the preferred concept
- Conduct additional Design Excellence peer reviews if recommended by the chief architect
- Participate and address comments in integrated design reviews (IDRs) before each peer review as well as the commissioner's concept presentation
- Periodically analyze the project scope, budget, and schedule to ascertain that goals are being met; when necessary, work with the firm to adjust the design without compromising quality or program
- Complete and obtain signatures on the Commissioner's Readiness Checklist before the commissioner's concept presentation
- Update goals in the original planning document

ART IN ARCHITECTURE

- Meet the requirements of GSA Art in Architecture Policies and Procedures and follow requirements in GSAM 536.70.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT AND CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTATION

- Periodically analyze the project scope, budget, and schedule to ascertain that goals are being met; when necessary, work with the firm to adjust the design without compromising quality or the design concept approved by the commissioner of the Public Buildings Service (PBS)
- Schedule reviews as needed to help the project achieve scope, budget, and schedule while ensuring its continuity with the design concept approved by the PBS commissioner
- Update goals in the original planning document

CONSTRUCTION

- Convene two peer reviews, at 15% and 65% construction completion
- Conduct a lessons learned session with project stakeholders at 85% completion
- Update goals in the original planning document

POST-CONSTRUCTION

- Distribute the finalized planning document, lessons learned, and other relevant quality-assurance materials to the building manager

2.3 PLANNING THE SELECTION PROCESS

In consultation with OCA, the regional project management team will determine one of three processes for selecting a lead designer and design firm. (Additional chapters in Design and Construction Excellence Policies and Procedures address selection processes for delivery methods other than design-bid-build.)

The chosen selection process is documented in the Source Selection Plan. A Source Selection Plan is required for any GSA acquisition. While the plan outlines how procurement negotiations will be conducted and identifies selection milestones, the instruction to “identify who will complete the evaluation” refers only to organizational structure and roles. For example, if the plan states that GSA will select a provider of design or engineering services via an Evaluation Board (which is known informally as an “evaluation panel,” although this term applies specifically to Phase 1 procurement of design-build services), the regional project management team is under no obligation to name the members of the Evaluation Board at this early stage in a project’s life. If the regional project management team does name specific Evaluation Board members in its Source Selection Plan, the team is permitted to specify those members’ names via an approved amendment to the plan.

2.3.1 TWO STAGES

The most common selection process comprises a Stage I lead designer portfolio evaluation, followed by Stage II submissions and design team interviews. (Please note that “design team,” “integrated team,” or “A/E team,” all of which refer to the collaboration between the lead designer, design firm, and any necessary additional consultants, are sometimes used interchangeably with “firm.” Officially, however, “firm” refers to the business partnership between a lead designer and design firm, and that the term can be spelled “Firm” in legal contexts.) The Stage I portfolio submission includes an overview of a prospective lead designer as well as project examples, summary of experience, statement of philosophy, and description of design approach for that leader. During Stage I, a majority of the Evaluation Board’s work is focused on determining the lead designers most highly qualified to design the federal workspace and to lead a collaborative team toward a sustainable and inclusive solution. Stage II submissions and interviews provide additional information about the design firm and any additional A/Es or consultants, for example: how they are organized, how they work with clients, how they work with community stakeholders where clients are located, and how the lead designer will address a project’s specific priorities and solutions with these collaborators.

2.3.2 TWO STAGES PLUS CHARRETTE

This process adds a one-day charrette to the two-stage process, so that a charrette jury may assess design strategies as well as each firm’s approach to design. The charrette immediately follows Stage II interviews. A small stipend is paid to each firm to compensate for the additional time and expense of participating in the charrette. GSA project teams can determine the stipend amount by using the professional services lookup tool available at [GSA Insite](#).

OCA will recommend a jury to evaluate submissions and a charrette advisor who is paid from project funds. Regional project management teams must alert OCA and the Design Excellence Program at least two months in advance of any planned charrette.

2.3.3 TWO STAGES PLUS VISION COMPETITION

This process adds a vision competition to the two-stage process, so that a competition jury may assess design strategies as well as each firm’s approach to design. Firms must accept the competition invitation to participate. The vision competition follows the Stage II interviews. The vision competition will add a minimum of 30 calendar days to the process. A small stipend is paid to each firm to compensate for the

additional time and expense of participating in the vision competition. Project teams can determine the stipend amount by using the professional services lookup tool at [GSA Insite](#).

The vision competition adds to project schedule and cost. OCA will recommend a jury to evaluate submissions as well as a competition advisor who is paid from project funds. To allow adequate time to write a program, develop rules, and coordinate schedules, the regional project management team must notify OCA and the Design Excellence Program at least two months in advance of the competition.

Whatever Design Excellence selection process is chosen, it is critical that the SAM.gov announcement accurately describe the process and selection criteria, to avoid adverse consequences and unnecessary delays.

2.3.4 MILESTONES OF THE SELECTION PROCESS

Upon determining a project's selection process, the regional project management team must prepare for the milestones itemized below.

TWO STAGES:

- 1 Send a copy of the SAM.gov announcement to the chief architect for review
- 2 Issue SAM.gov announcement upon the approval of the deputy commissioner of PBS
- 3 Conduct pre-submittal meeting
- 4 Receive Stage I submissions
- 5 Stage I evaluation and shortlisting of firms
- 6 SAM.gov shortlist announcement
- 7 Invite shortlisted firms to Stage II interviews
- 8 Firm networking session
- 9 Receive Stage II submissions
- 10 Stage II interviews and evaluation
- 11 Evaluation Board Report
- 12 Submit final Evaluation Board Report with rankings to GSA Selection Authority
- 13 Final selection by GSA Selection Authority and announcement of decision

TWO STAGES PLUS CHARRETTE:

- 1 Stage II interviews and evaluation
- 2 Coordinate Stage II charrette with the Design Excellence Program
- 3 OCA recommends a charrette advisor and a jury
- 4 Jury evaluates charrette submissions and submits charrette report to Evaluation Board
- 5 Evaluation Board Report
- 6 Submit final Evaluation Board Report with rankings to GSA Selection Authority
- 7 Final selection by GSA Selection Authority and announcement of decision

TWO STAGES PLUS VISION COMPETITION:

- 1 Stage II interviews, evaluation, and shortlisting
- 2 Coordinate vision competition with the Design Excellence Program
- 3 OCA recommends a charrette advisor and a jury
- 4 Invite shortlisted firms to vision competition
- 5 Distribute pre-competition briefing and information packets
- 6 Jury evaluates vision submissions and submits competition report to Evaluation Board
- 7 Evaluation Board Report
- 8 Submit final Evaluation Board Report with rankings to GSA Selection Authority
- 9 Final selection by GSA Selection Authority and announcement of decision

2.4 DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION EXCELLENCE ADJUSTMENT

During the planning effort, it can become apparent that some projects may not need to engage fully with Design Excellence processes. Conversely, it can become apparent that projects that do not fall under Design Excellence's purview would benefit from its policies and procedures. In these cases, the regional project management team may submit the Design/Construction Excellence Adjustment Form to the Design Excellence Program for consideration. This form allows the regional project management team to initiate discussions with the chief architect concerning the intricacies of a certain project and the implementation of Design Excellence tailored to that project. The form can be found in the Appendix.

DEFINING | ANNOUNCING OPPORTUNITIES

THE SAM.GOV ANNOUNCEMENT REPRESENTS THE TRANSITION FROM PLANNING TO PROJECT EXECUTION, AND IT IS A VEHICLE FOR INVITING DESIGN PROFESSIONALS TO COMPETE FOR GSA PROJECTS. SUCCESSFULLY EXECUTING THE SAM.GOV ANNOUNCEMENT IS CRITICAL TO THE DESIGN EXCELLENCE PROGRAM. THE ANNOUNCEMENT MUST CONVEY GSA'S MISSION OF PRINCIPLED PUBLIC BUILDING AND FRAME THAT MISSION WITHIN SPECIFIC PROJECT TERMS, SUCH AS PROGRAM AND SCOPE OF DESIGN WORK. IT ALSO MUST OUTLINE ALL THE STAGES BY WHICH A FIRM IS SELECTED, INCLUDING THE CRITERIA FOR STAGE I PORTFOLIO EVALUATIONS. THE REGIONAL PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM SHOULD USE SAM.GOV ANNOUNCEMENT TEMPLATES TO ENSURE THESE ESSENTIAL TASKS ARE FULFILLED.

3.1 OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ARCHITECT AND CUSTOMER MEETING

In cases where a customer lacks familiarity with GSA's Design Excellence Program, the project manager and regional chief architect should discuss the opportunity to perform direct customer outreach in cooperation with OCA. Such a meeting would provide an overview of Design Excellence, explain the forthcoming SAM.gov announcement, and otherwise describe how the Design Excellence process fulfills customer needs.

3.2 ARTICULATE DESIGN EXCELLENCE GOALS

SAM.gov announcements must identify every above-prospectus-level project as a Design Excellence opportunity unless otherwise agreed upon in the Design/Construction Excellence Adjustment Form. For an indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contract whose task or delivery orders may exceed prospectus, the corresponding SAM.gov posting must also be characterized as a Design Excellence opportunity. A posting's introductory language must read as follows:

Through its Design Excellence Program, the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) commissions our nation's most talented creative professionals to design outstanding federal workplaces. These projects embody an exemplary integrated process whose results deliver enduring value to taxpayers. GSA defines quality as the thoughtful expression of artistry, local culture, and democratic values like civic participation, accessibility, and transparency, achieved in balance with affordability, constructability, reliability, and industry-leading sustainable performance. Design Excellence is the means by which GSA realizes the Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture, which President Kennedy authorized in 1962, and it is one of the agency's primary vehicles for catalyzing positive, inclusive change in local communities.

Continuing this legacy of world-class public architecture, GSA announces an opportunity for Design Excellence for [insert project name and location]. [The text will continue with language specific to each project. Refer to the SAM.gov templates for complete announcement language.]

The regional project management team may determine that some projects, especially prospectus-level projects that are strictly limited to systems upgrades, can realize the Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture without undergoing all Design Excellence processes. For these instances, the Design/

Construction Excellence Adjustment Form is available in the Appendix. Any adjustments must be approved by the chief architect. The regional project management team should make necessary alterations to the SAM.gov ODC template language, per the approved Design/Construction Excellence Adjustment Form.

3.3 DESCRIBE THE PROJECT ACCURATELY

SAM.gov announcements must accurately describe the nature of the project:

- Standalone new construction should include a summary that describes site, building type, tenancy, program, and specific design objectives that include sustainable performance and community integration.
- Annexes are more complex, as they may require a combination of rehabilitation and new construction. The SAM.gov announcement must accurately describe this mix.
- Modernization or limited-scope projects balance upgrades to site, architecture, preservation, interior and workplace design, and systems, so the SAM.gov announcement must describe these aspects accurately. Unless a modernization project is overwhelmingly focused on engineering systems, the announcement must state that the architect is responsible for project management and oversight, even if architectural design is a smaller part of the scope of work.
- IDIQ announcements are more open-ended than SAM.gov announcements of specific projects for which standalone contract are awarded. The announcement must describe the breadth of the IDIQ contract's possible task or delivery orders with as much detail as possible.

The accuracy of the project description is critical to attracting the most suitable firms to GSA projects. The Evaluation Board will also use that description to identify the most appropriate lead designer and design firm. Finally, an accurate SAM.gov project description allows OCA to recommend the most qualified members of the National Register of Peer Professionals to serve on the Evaluation Board and in peer reviews.

3.4 PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENTS

The SAM.gov announcement must clarify Stage I portfolio requirements. Stage I portfolio submissions should be no more than approximately 50 pages and submitted electronically.

If the lead designer is an individual, then the portfolio must include:

- Three constructed projects completed by the lead designer within the past 10 years; each exhibit should include images and text whose length abides the page-count limit for the overall submission, and text must identify the individual's specific role in the project. The lead designer may have headed these projects with the affiliated design firm or with other entities.
- Five constructed projects completed by the proposed design firm within the past 10 years; each exhibit should include images and text whose length abides the page-count limit for the overall submission.
- A biographical profile of the lead designer, not to exceed three pages, that at a minimum encompasses education, professional experience, awards or other recognition, and areas of responsibility.
- A statement of the lead designer's philosophy and design intent, not to exceed two pages, that conveys personal understanding of the proposed project's design issues as well as a philosophy for approaching the project.

If the lead designer is a team of two people, then the portfolio must include:

- Two constructed projects per lead designer, completed within the past 10 years; each exhibit should abide the page-count limit for the overall submission, and its text must identify the individual's specific role.
- Five projects constructed by the proposed design firm within the past 10 years, with text and images abiding submission limits.
- A biographical profile of each lead designer, not to exceed three pages, that at a minimum encompasses each lead designer's education, professional experience, awards or other recognition, and areas of responsibility.
- A statement of philosophy and design intent, not to exceed two pages, that conveys the lead designers' combined understanding of the proposed project's design issues as well as a philosophy for approaching the project.

The SAM.gov announcement must provide detailed Stage I criteria, as well as a summary of the entire selection process (i.e., two stages, two stages plus charrette, or two stages plus vision competition). Please note that Stage I past-performance criteria refers to completed projects of similar size, program, or significance, but that the Brooks Act prohibits the SAM.gov announcement from requesting portfolio samples that resemble the GSA project exactly. Overly prescriptive past-performance criteria limit free-market competition and prevents the members of the Evaluation Board from exercising their expert judgment. Subsequent chapters of Design and Construction Excellence Policies and Procedures contain additional information about the selection process, which should be included in the announcement.

3.5 SAM.GOV SELECTION CRITERIA

The SAM.gov announcement must describe the selection criteria, which should include requirements in FAR 36.602 requirements, the evaluation criteria in chapter 5, and the following elements:

- Capacity to accomplish the work in the required time
- As a member of the full design firm, the architect or engineer of record must be licensed in the state where the facility is to be located. The required licenses must be in place at all times during procurement and through project completion.

3.6 SAM.GOV PRE-ANNOUNCEMENT

The regional project management team submits the draft announcement to OCA for review by the chief architect or a designee. This review will take one week.

3.7 POSTING THE FEDBIZOPPS SAM.GOV ANNOUNCEMENT

Upon approval of the SAM.gov announcement by the deputy commissioner of PBS, the contracting officer may post it to SAM.gov.

3.8 PRE-SUBMITTAL MEETING

It is useful for the GSA region to convene a pre-submittal meeting for design professionals who may be interested in pursuing the project. The place and time of this meeting must be included in the SAM.gov announcement. The contracting officer runs this meeting with the participation of the project manager, regional chief architect, a representative of ODC, and other team members that may include the chief

architect and/or a tenant representative. The purpose is to explain the Design Excellence process, clarify procedures in detail, and describe both the nature and the vision of the project. A typical meeting agenda, pre-submittal packet, and Standard Form 330 may be found in the Appendix.

3.9 FIRM NETWORKING SESSION

The contracting officer should plan a networking session in the city where the project is located before the Stage II submittals, so that local design firms, consulting firms, and other discipline experts may meet with the shortlisted firms and explore opportunities for joining them. This session should take place within two weeks of the shortlist's publication on SAM.gov. A sample invitation to the networking session is included in the Appendix.

THE EVALUATION BOARD

SELECTING THE MOST APPROPRIATE LEAD DESIGNER AND DESIGN FIRM FOR A GSA PROJECT IS THE ESSENCE OF THE DESIGN EXCELLENCE PROGRAM. THIS CHAPTER SETS POLICIES BY WHICH THE EVALUATION BOARD RECOMMENDS THOSE DESIGN PARTNERS (WHICH HEREAFTER MAY BE COLLECTIVELY REFERRED TO AS A “DESIGN TEAM” OR “FIRM”). NAMELY, IT CLARIFIES THE FUNCTION OF THE EVALUATION BOARD AS ESTABLISHED IN THE FEDERAL ACQUISITION REGULATION (FAR) AND GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION ACQUISITION MANUAL (GSAM), FOCUSING ON: CHOOSING MEMBERS OF THE EVALUATION BOARD; ARTICULATING THE EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR STAGE I PORTFOLIOS AND DESIGN-TEAM INTERVIEWS; AND, IF NECESSARY, PLANNING A CHARRETTE OR VISION COMPETITION FOR SHORTLISTED ENTITIES.

4.1 COORDINATING WITH THE OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ARCHITECT

One method by which OCA supports every Design Excellence project is to propose a peer reviewer for the Evaluation Board. This one peer reviewer is also expected to participate in all design peer reviews, for a consistent independent perspective. Because identifying and inviting the most appropriate peer reviewer requires significant coordination of schedules, the GSA project manager and regional chief architect must inform OCA of a pending selection one month in advance of posting the SAM.gov announcement. A [peer-request form](#) is available to regional colleagues, to facilitate their communication with OCA.

4.2 CHOOSING AND APPOINTING THE EVALUATION BOARD

The functions and requirements of an Evaluation Board are set in FAR 36.602. The composition of the board is set in GSAM 536.602.

4.2.1 BALANCE, RESPECT, AND COLLABORATION

Each member of the Evaluation Board should be fluent in some of the disciplines that apply to the project. Indeed, these members are tapped for the Evaluation Board precisely for their relevant expertise. To ensure that they combine knowledge effectively, Evaluation Board members must enjoy similarly high standing in their fields. In addition, a spirit of collaboration and a collective vision of sustainability must encourage those members to respect the views of fellow board members and to learn from one another. Open, searching minds engaged in candid discussion will result in decisions that all can support.

4.2.2 THE EVALUATION BOARD

Evaluation Board members who are GSA employees must be experts in the fields of architecture, engineering, or related design disciplines such as landscape architecture, urban design, or interior design. An expert is someone who has earned licensure, certification, or another designation widely recognized as a professional credential within that discipline. The FAR establishes that the Evaluation Board be appointed from employees of GSA or other federal agencies, as well as private practitioners of architecture, engineering, or related professions. The majority of board members must be GSA employees, and all members must have expertise in construction, government, or related acquisition matters.

The GSA Selection Authority officially appoints the members of the Evaluation Board and its chairperson. The GSA Selection Authority must obtain the concurrence of GSA's chief architect on these appointments. Only a GSA employee may serve as chair of the Evaluation Board.

Based on the GSAM, the Design Excellence Program requires that the Evaluation Board shall be composed of no more than five members:

- One highly qualified licensed regional GSA architect or a related regional GSA design professional
 - One highly qualified licensed regional GSA engineer
 - One GSA representative recommended by OCA
 - One private-sector design professional from the National Register of Peer Professionals recommended by OCA
- * One customer representative. For federal courthouse projects, that representative must be a federal judge who will participate in the design process.

Because the regional project manager's focus is managing the process, he or she must not be a member of the board.

GSAM does allow two non-voting advisors: one from GSA and the other representing the customer. They may review submission materials and observe Stage II interviews. The advisors may not participate in the Evaluation Board's comparative deliberations or recommendations. In the case of courthouses, the customer-based advisor should be a representative of the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts.

Per GSAM, each Evaluation Board member and advisor must sign a Conflict of Interest Acknowledgement, as well as a Nondisclosure Agreement, before the board commences activity. No person may serve as a board member or advisor if that person or any member of that person's family has any direct financial or employment interest in any of the firms under consideration. Each board member and advisor is responsible for identifying any possible conflict of interest once firms are identified. Any conflict should be reported to the Design Excellence Program and the chief architect; another person will be selected, in turn.

Procurement-sensitive information is the responsibility of the contracting officer. As a general understanding, submission information and the names of Evaluation Board members, or of anyone serving on a charrette or vision competition jury, should not be distributed beyond the Evaluation Board prior to contracting with the firm.

The Evaluation Board typically convenes in the GSA regional office through all stages of selection.

4.2.3 EVALUATION BOARD FUNCTIONS

The Evaluation Board shall perform the functions as provided in FAR 36.602, in the following order:

- 1 Review each Stage I submission
- 2 Evaluate each Stage I submission according to criteria and weighted percentages posted in the SAM.gov announcement and templated in the Appendix
- 3 Provide a shortlist ranking of three of the most highly qualified firms that should advance to Stage II
- 4 Conduct Stage II interviews with the shortlisted firms. Evaluate the firms according to criteria posted in the SAM.gov announcement with special attention to how they are organized, how they work with clients and local communities, how they will work as a team, and how the lead designer will address a project's specific priorities and solutions. If firms propose alternative solutions for furnishing the required services, then interviews should also consider the creativity and effectiveness of those solutions.

5 Prepare a final Evaluation Board Report with rankings for submission to the GSA Selection Authority

Per GSAM, each Evaluation Board member individually rates and ranks each firm according to established evaluation criteria. The Evaluation Board chair must maintain the integrity of the process and ensure that the Evaluation Board Report is prepared and submitted to the GSA Selection Authority. Convening the Evaluation Board in person is best practice for ensuring the insightful and equitable exchange of ideas, but a virtual or hybrid meeting is acceptable under extenuating circumstances.

SELECTING THE FIRM

THIS CHAPTER SETS POLICY FOR FIRM SELECTION, ACCORDING TO THE MULTI-STAGE PROCESS SPECIFIED BY THE SAM.GOV ANNOUNCEMENT. THESE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES LARGELY INFORM DESIGN-BID-BUILD AND CMC DELIVERY; ADDITIONAL CHAPTERS ADDRESS THE SPECIFICS OF OTHER DELIVERY METHODS.

5.1 CONDUCTING THE SELECTION PROCESS

As a best practice, to convene any meeting of the Evaluation Board (or of a charrette or vision-competition jury, if required), all members must be in attendance to make a recommendation. The chair of the Evaluation Board, in consultation with the contracting officer, must make sure all board members have a common understanding of the selection process, the selection criteria, and how criteria should be evaluated.

Per GSAM 536.602-2, only the contracting officer, board members, and advisors are to participate in the official activities of the Evaluation Board. Advisors may provide insight about a potential firm's abilities, but they do not participate in the ranking by the Evaluation Board.

5.2 EVALUATING STAGE I SUBMISSIONS

The Evaluation Board evaluates Stage I submissions over the course of two to three days, generally inside a GSA regional office. Stage I submissions should identify a lead designer (which may comprise an individual or two people) and the affiliated design firm. The submission should include examples of work by the lead designer and design firm, as well as the lead designer's profile and statement of philosophy and design intent. Standard Form 330, Part II should be used as a portfolio cover sheet; the Standard Form 330 is not submitted in its entirety until Stage II.

5.2.1 STAGE I EVALUATION CRITERIA

Scoring must be based on the SAM.gov announcement using the following criteria and percentage weighting. Weighting cannot be changed without the approval of the chief architect.

PAST DESIGN PERFORMANCE (35%)

The design firm must include portfolio narratives for five projects of similar size, program, or significance, which describe architecture and engineering challenges and their design solutions. Each text should convey a thorough understanding of a project's physical location and social context, as well as site strategies, regional design and character, and environmental factors and sustainable-performance opportunities specific to the site. Past performance regarding cost control, quality of work, and performance schedules should be easily found within the narratives, as well. The firm must also show the personnel capacity, specialized experience, and technical competencies committed to the work described. In turn, the Evaluation Board must confirm that documented solutions address specific challenges, demonstrate creativity, indicate a clear design approach, and suit context. The board will also review any copies of certificates, awards, or other applicable evidence of peer recognition.

LEAD DESIGNER PORTFOLIO (25%)

The portfolio should demonstrate a thorough understanding of the issues that the GSA project must address. Individual exhibits should portray creative and appropriate responses to client criteria and needs,

site conditions, local community, regional character, and sustainable performance. The portfolio must also demonstrate leadership and an integrative approach whose vision is commensurate with the Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture.

PHILOSOPHY AND DESIGN INTENT (25%)

The lead designer's statement of philosophy and design intent should be characterized by insight and passion for the project. The statement must demonstrate an awareness of interdisciplinary collaboration, stakeholder engagement, and sustainability that is appropriate for the client agency and the project, and which champions both the project's goals and the Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture. The statement also should be clear in its prose, to demonstrate the lead designer's ability to communicate ideas. Additionally, Evaluation Board members should ascertain whether the statement originated from the lead designer in unique response to a project's challenges and opportunities.

LEAD DESIGNER PROFILE (15%)

The Evaluation Board will assess whether the lead designer's breadth and depth of education and work experience suits the project. The board will also confirm that the designer has exercised leadership in delivering works whose complexity and magnitude approximate those of the project.

5.2.2 SHORTLIST

After evaluation, the Evaluation Board members must provide an independent assessment of each proposal based on all available criteria. Each Evaluation Board member ranks the submissions according to the published criteria and weighted percentages, determining which qualified lead designers and affiliated design firms will be invited to participate in Stage II. The FAR requires the Stage II shortlist to include at least three firms. Notifications are sent to the shortlisted firms and to those not selected. The shortlisted firms must also be announced via SAM.gov. Sample notifications and SAM.gov announcements are located in the Appendix.

5.3 STAGE II - LEAD DESIGNER AND DESIGN FIRM INTERVIEWS

5.3.1 STAGE II PREPARATIONS

The Interview Notification

Shortly after sending shortlist notifications and posting the shortlist to SAM.gov, the contracting officer sends a detailed interview notification to shortlisted firms' designees. The notification must contain: the date and location of the interview; Standard Form 330 and other Stage II documentation as the contracting officer may require; the deadline and address for receipt of these documents; the interview time frame; and key presentation and interview issues. The notification must also underscore that only graphics may be presented (models and design proposals are not permitted) and that, at minimum, firms must circulate outlines of their presentation at the interview. The evaluation criteria and percentage weighting must be included in the interview notification. Sample notifications are included in the Appendix.

Firms and Subcontracting Goals

Each firm participating in Stage II must assemble a high-quality integrated team (sometimes referred to as the A/E team), whose expertise in multiple disciplines reflects the criteria of the interview notification. Firms must also document how their respective teams fulfill GSA's commitment to the socioeconomic initiatives of the notification—including subcontracting goals for small, women-owned, veteran-owned, and small disadvantaged businesses.

5.3.2 EVALUATING STAGE II SUBMISSIONS

The Evaluation Board begins its Stage II work by revisiting the shortlisted firms' Stage I submissions. The board members then review the Standard Form 330 descriptions of the firms' makeup and qualifications. The Evaluation Board must carefully evaluate the experience and qualifications of firms' individual members, as well as the leadership approach to project development. The Evaluation Board scores each firm's Standard Form 330 and other required Stage II submission materials against all available criteria; board members must provide these assessments independently, based on all available criteria.

Interviews

Interviews provide the opportunity to: clarify the leadership qualities of lead designers and their commitment to the project; observe the rapport and collaborative potential of firm and design-team members; and discover the experience of key personnel who will be GSA's daily points of contact. It is important to note that the interview process and schedule is highly structured. (A sample schedule is included in the Appendix.) Only the five members of the Evaluation Board and the contracting officer may ask questions during Stage II interviews.

Evaluation Board members must ask the same or similar questions of all firms except for questions of clarification, in order to make fair comparisons. Questions should detail strengths and probe weaknesses that parallel the selection criteria published in the SAM.gov announcement, as well as the evaluation criteria noted below.

No more than five representatives of a shortlisted firm may attend the interview. These individuals include the lead designer, whose attendance is mandatory. If the firm proposes an associated architect, then that person's attendance also is mandatory: while firms usually refer to the design firm's project lead as the associated architect, project conditions may lead a regional project management team to require that the firm place a key consultant (such as a seismic engineer or workplace designer in the case of a seismic retrofit or major modernization, respectively) in that slot instead. Additional attendees include the firm's project manager, as well as two optional team members, which may include key consultants whose contributions would reveal specific, unique strengths of the team or otherwise provide substantial insight into the firm's profile.

Whereas it is preferable for the Evaluation Board to conduct its Stage I duties in person, it is mandatory for Stage II activities to be conducted entirely in person unless urgent circumstances demand otherwise. The regional project management team must inform OCA of the Evaluation Board's meeting format as it is planning both Stage I and Stage II evaluations.

5.3.3 STAGE II EVALUATION CRITERIA

Scoring must be based on the SAM.gov announcement using the following criteria and percentage weighting:

DESIGN PERFORMANCE (50%)

The Evaluation Board must review portfolio narratives describing architecture and engineering challenges and confirm that documented solutions addressed those challenges. The Evaluation Board must also use the Standard Form 330 to determine whether the firm has experience with interview topics (e.g., community context, design image, function, sustainability, firm organization, and commitment of lead designer). It also confirms that the firm has experience with projects of similar size, complexity, and community impact, and that it can work together successfully. Evaluation Board members should expect oral presentations to validate a firm's narratives.

MANAGEMENT PLAN (30%)

Through the Standard Form 330 and the oral presentation, each firm should: identify key roles and lines of communication; describe methods for integrating client and community; explain quality and cost control; outline coordination for junior team members, consultants, and remote offices, including quality control of deliverables. In turn, Evaluation Board members should analyze each element and its place in the organization and plan.

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS (15%)

Standard Form 330 is the primary source of detailed information on key personnel. Evaluation Board members should expect to review the resumes of all key members of each firm.

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION (5%)

Each firm must demonstrate that at least 35% of contract services will be accomplished within geographic boundaries established for the project.

5.3.4 FINAL RECOMMENDATION

If there is no charrette or vision competition, then each Evaluation Board member will prepare a ranking of the firms with supporting documentation and recommendations. This ranking will be based on Stage II's submission materials and interviews. It will be officially recorded in an Evaluation Board Report submitted to the GSA Selection Authority.

The GSA Selection Authority will review the Evaluation Board Report. Upon the GSA Selection Authority's successful acceptance of the Evaluation Board Report, the contracting officer will enter into contract negotiations.

5.4 CHARRETTE OPTION

The charrette is a one-day exercise that informs the Stage II evaluation. The purpose of the charrette is to get a sense of design strategies and of each firm's approach to design problems. The charrette is held on the day immediately following interviews, and it is not to be used to solicit a concept design for the project. Each firm is compensated for participating in the charrette, and project funds must be allocated for this purpose. Activities are conducted entirely in person unless there are urgent extenuating circumstances, in which case all activities will be conducted virtually.

5.4.1 PROFESSIONAL ADVISOR AND THE CHARRETTE JURY

The charrette is managed by the contracting officer, supported by OCA, run by a professional advisor, and evaluated by a charrette jury. Prior to Stage II interviews, OCA and its professional advisor will attend a conference call with each of the shortlisted firms to field questions about the charrette.

The services of a professional advisor are contracted and paid for with project funds. Engaging a professional advisor is a mandatory element of the charrette process. The professional advisor is contracted for planning and organizing the charrette in conjunction with—but independent of—Stage II interviews. The advisor's specific duties include:

- Developing and advising on charrette documents, including announcements, rules, instructions, program information, and reports for review and approval by the contracting officer.
- Assisting in charrette integrity, managing the process so all firms receive fair and equitable treatment.

These duties require that the professional advisor be capable of approaching the charrette objectively, and with fairness in mind. The advisor must have no personal or financial interest in the project and must be

compensated for services; the amount of compensation will vary according to work required. The advisor cannot participate in the ranking of the charrette schemes or of the firms.

The results of the charrette are evaluated by an independent three-person charrette jury. OCA recommends the three jurors from the National Register of Peer Professionals. A proven jury composition features:

- A design educator
- An architecture critic
- A practicing architect who has expertise in the facility type

One of these three participants will serve as the jury chair.

5.4.2 CHARRETTE RULES AND PROGRAM

The professional advisor works in conjunction with OCA and the regional project management team to prepare written rules for the charrette. These include an overview of the process, the schedule, the submission requirements, the maximum number of participants, the allowable materials, and a summary of evaluation criteria.

The advisor will prepare the charrette program and convey it to GSA. This is a written document that describes a hypothetical site (never the actual project site), as well as functional performance requirements that include utilization rates, adjacency requirements, sustainability goals, local community impact, and security.

The GSA region covers general expenses related to holding the charrette (e.g., workrooms for each firm and related support, including the provision of boards for mounting the final submissions) and each firm covers its own travel and lodging expenses.

When the charrette has concluded, the professional advisor and the contracting officer collect schemes for jury review.

A sample charrette program is provided in the Appendix.

5.4.3 EVALUATING THE CHARRETTE SCHEMES

The charrette jury is a body whose individuals provide pivotal advice to the Evaluation Board. The charrette submissions must be received by GSA and deemed compliant by the contracting officer and professional advisor.

On the morning after the charrette, the charrette jury gathers to review the charrette evaluation criteria and to receive a debriefing from the professional advisor. Without knowledge of authorship, the jury proceeds to review and discuss the charrette schemes. Jurors then evaluate each of the design concepts individually. Only after the jurors finalize their evaluations are the names of the participating firms revealed.

Each juror will prepare a ranking of the charrette schemes that includes associated reasoning. The jury chair and professional advisor will assemble the individual rankings into a jury report. The written report is then delivered to the Evaluation Board; the jury chair and the professional advisor present the jury's findings to the Evaluation Board verbally, as well, so that they may convey the jury's decision making in the fullest possible detail. The Evaluation Board will weigh the jury report (40%) and incorporate its ranking into the Stage II interview results (60%), to determine a final ranking of firms for delivery to the GSA Selection Authority.

5.5 VISION COMPETITION

A vision competition is held in cases where a carefully developed “vision” for a project adds significant information to the firm selection. Like a charrette, the purpose of a vision competition is to get a sense of each firm’s approach to design problems. A competition does not solicit a concept design, but the competition program does utilize the project site and program as reference. The vision competition adds 30 to 40 days to selection. It also impacts a project’s design budget, as each firm is compensated for participating. Project funds must be allocated for this purpose.

If there is a vision competition, shortlisted firms are extended an invitation to participate in the competition; they are not obligated to accept that invitation.

5.5.1 PROFESSIONAL ADVISOR AND THE VISION COMPETITION JURY

The vision competition is managed by the contracting officer, supported by OCA, run by a professional advisor, and evaluated by a vision jury.

The services of a professional advisor are contracted and paid for with project funds. Engaging a professional advisor is a mandatory element of the vision process. The professional advisor is contracted for planning and organizing the vision competition in conjunction with—but independent of—Stage II interviews. The advisor’s specific duties include:

- Developing and advising on documents for the vision competition process, including announcements, rules, instructions, project program information, and reports for review and approval by the contracting officer.
- Collaborating with the GSA regional project management team to organize a vision competition briefing as well as a follow-up question-and-answer session.
- Ensuring that all firms receive fair and equitable treatment during the vision competition.

These duties require that the professional advisor be capable of approaching the vision competition objectively, and with fairness in mind. The advisor must have no personal or financial interest in the project and must be compensated for services; the amount of compensation will vary according to work required. The advisor cannot participate in the ranking of the competition schemes or of the firms.

The results are evaluated by an independent, three-person vision competition jury. OCA recommends the three jurors from the National Register of Peer Professionals. A proven jury composition features:

- A design educator
- An architecture critic
- A practicing architect who has expertise in the facility type

One of these three participants will serve as the jury chair.

5.5.2 VISION COMPETITION RULES AND PROGRAM

The professional advisor works in conjunction with OCA and the regional project management team to prepare written rules for the vision competition. These include an overview of the process, the schedule, submission requirements, the maximum number of participants, allowable materials, and a summary of evaluation criteria.

The advisor prepares the vision competition program, to convey to GSA. This is a written document that describes the actual project site, as well as functional performance requirements that include utilization rates, adjacency requirements, sustainability goals, local community impact, and security. Firms have a minimum of 30 calendar days to prepare their submissions.

A sample vision competition program is provided in the Appendix.

5.5.3 BRIEFING

Shortlisted firms will meet the vision competition professional advisor and the GSA project team in an open session to review procedures, design guidelines, space program, site information, and other specific project criteria. This session will be held in the city where the facility is to be located and attended by representatives of each firm including the lead designer; virtual attendance will be permitted only under the most extenuating circumstances and hybrid formats are not permitted. The GSA region is responsible for the costs of this briefing. The briefing should include presentations by the GSA project team, city officials, users, and other appropriate stakeholders. The professional advisor and the GSA project team can respond to questions from competition participants.

The Appendix includes a typical briefing agenda.

5.5.3 QUESTION-AND-ANSWER PERIOD

In the 10 business days that immediately follow the vision competition briefing, firms may submit written questions and requests for additional information to the GSA contracting officer. All questions will be answered promptly, and anonymized copies of questions and answers will be sent to each firm simultaneously.

5.5.4 SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Firms must fulfill the following vision competition requirements:

- 1 Submission criteria will be set by the professional advisor, reviewed and approved by OCA and the regional project management team, and communicated to firms during the briefing. Submission materials may be presented by board or electronic media but must be consistent for all firms. A submission may include four 30-by-40-inch presentation surfaces in portrait orientation mounted on rigid board, or their electronic equivalent. Presentation materials shall provide no indication of authorship. Firms' identities remain confidential until the jury has finalized and endorsed its evaluation of the entries.
- 2 No model will be accepted. Photos of study models or computer simulations may be attached to the presentation.
- 3 Below is a list of recommended drawings to include in the presentation:

Plans

- Site plan including surrounding context
- Detailed ground-floor plan indicating entry, lobby, and security checkpoint
- Typical tenant floor plan

Sections

- Longitudinal section
- Latitudinal section

Elevations

- Entry elevation
- Additional elevation

Perspectives

- Exterior perspective from the street
- Interior perspective (lobby view preferred)

The presentation should also include explanatory text. The narrative should be minimal but sufficient for a reviewer to understand the design concept's fundamental principles. At a minimum, the text or diagrams should illustrate:

- Response to community context
- Proposed circulation systems
- Innovations or design elements addressing sustainable design

Color may be utilized for any diagrams. Additional graphics and narratives may be included at the discretion of the firm, as long as the mandatory drawings are included and the maximum number of presentation surfaces is not exceeded.

- 4 Each firm will provide a statement describing how the submission does not exceed the program and how it will meet the project's budget.

All presentations will be delivered to the contracting officer and professional advisor no later than 3:00 pm on the date set forth in the vision competition rules.

5.5.5 EVALUATING THE VISION COMPETITION SCHEMES

Upon the vision competition's completion, submissions must be deemed compliant by the contracting officer and professional advisor. Each jury member will review the competition schemes, to evaluate firms' design strategies and approaches to design problems. The jurors' individual rankings will inform the Evaluation Board's ranking of firms.

On the morning of the vision competition jury, the three jury members gather for the first time at a debriefing organized by the professional advisor. Without knowledge of authorship, the jury proceeds to review and discuss the competition schemes and jurors individually evaluate each of the design concepts; evaluation criteria are summarized in the vision competition rules. Only after the jurors finalize their evaluations are the names of the participating firms revealed.

Typical vision competition jury agenda and ranking forms are available in the Appendix.

Each juror will prepare a ranking of the competition schemes. The jury chair and professional advisor will assemble the individual rankings into a jury report. The written report is then delivered to the Evaluation Board; the jury chair and the professional advisor present the jury's findings to the Evaluation Board verbally, as well, so that they may convey the jury's decision making in the fullest possible detail. The Evaluation Board will weigh the jury report (40%) and incorporate its ranking into the Stage II interview results (60%), to determine a final ranking of firms for delivery to the GSA Selection Authority.

5.6 CONTRACTING WITH THE FIRM - SELECTED ISSUES

Once the firm has been selected, the following issues must be addressed in contract negotiations:

- The contract must include language that assures GSA's ownership of all deliverables, which includes all electronic data used to create the deliverables (e.g., site scans, photogrammetry, point clouds, and BIM models).
- The contract (and the GSA Division 01 supplement to the master specifications, if any) must include a requirement securing GSA's rights to portfolio-quality interior and exterior photographs of the completed project in both printed and electronic formats.

EXCELLENCE IN CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

GSA RECOGNIZES THAT QUALITY OUTCOMES ARE DETERMINED IN A PROJECT'S EARLY PHASES. PHRASED IN TERMS OF DESIGN-BID-BUILD AND CMC DELIVERY METHODS: DECISIONS MADE DURING A PROJECT'S CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT CONSOLIDATE CREATIVE IDEAS INTO A WHOLE WHILE INTEGRATING FUNCTIONAL CRITERIA LIKE COMFORT, FLEXIBILITY, HIGH PERFORMANCE, CONSTRUCTABILITY, BUDGET, AND SCHEDULE. THIS IS PRECISELY WHY DESIGN EXCELLENCE INCLUDES CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS. THESE VITAL MEETINGS FOSTER PROFESSIONAL DIALOGUE REGARDING FORM, DETAIL, SUSTAINABILITY, BUDGET, AND TIMELY DELIVERY.

6.1 TYPES OF CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS

OCA will convene a minimum of two concept-development peer reviews as well as the commissioner's concept presentation, with support from the project manager and regional chief architect. All three of these meetings must also be preceded by Integrated Design Reviews (IDRs). Additional peer reviews may be scheduled in response to a project's unique challenges and design-development needs.

6.1.1 CONCEPT PREVIEWS

As the three required concept options are being developed, there shall be at least one meeting including the lead designer, the regional project management team, and the chief architect or designee to preview the concepts and ensure their viability. Once it has been determined that all three options are viable, those concepts must be presented to the customer. The project manager and regional chief architect will work with OCA to schedule the separate preview meetings. These preview meetings must happen before the first IDR, which precedes the first peer review.

6.1.2 INTEGRATED DESIGN REVIEW (IDR)

IDRs take place before each peer review and before the commissioner's concept presentation. IDRs leverage GSA's considerable in-house knowledge and institutional memory to assure a project's quality; they verify that concept options are compelling and viable from the perspectives of siting, design, programming, engineering systems, performance, budget, and schedule. IDRs further provide GSA with the opportunity to consider and document how design choices may affect building functionality. In all, they assure that peer reviewers and GSA's partner agencies are presented with design solutions that are as principled as they are executable.

Each IDR is composed of two parts: an initial presentation by the GSA project manager outlining the project, followed by a time for review and comments. An IDR convenes stakeholders from ODC, the Office of Facilities Management (as part of [Operational Excellence](#)), the Office of Portfolio Management & Customer Engagement, the GSA region, and other internal business lines. IDRs may be attended in person or virtually, and participants review the design to determine whether the project is ready for the peer review or commissioner's concept presentation. The IDR presentation should include live views of the project model, in which the GSA project manager can 'fly' through the model and switch between 2- and 3-dimensional views to best illustrate topics of concern and discussion.

Within a week of the IDR's conclusion, the subject matter experts who had attended the meeting submit their comments to the regional project management team and the chief architect, who may determine that the project is not ready for a peer review or for the commissioner's concept presentation. The chief architect may postpone those meetings until issues can be resolved. Comments from the IDR must be

addressed satisfactorily before the subsequent peer review or commissioner's concept presentation can be held. Outstanding substantive comments will be listed in the Commissioner's Readiness Checklist to be addressed by the chief architect and the assistant commissioner for project delivery.

Step-by-step guidance for scheduling IDRs is available to project teams on GSA's internal [Integrated Review Process site](#). The portal covers multiple project types.

6.1.3 INITIAL PEER REVIEW OF THREE CONCEPT OPTIONS

The purpose of this review is to have three members of the National Register of Peer Professionals help GSA critique three distinctive and viable concept designs, with corresponding engineering systems, that are within budget. Complementing the peer who participated in firm selection, OCA invites two additional members of the National Register of Peer Professionals to participate in concept development reviews. The goal of the initial peer review is not final endorsement, nor specific problem resolution. Rather, the initial peer review is a candid professional conversation identifying design directions that will best meet the needs and objectives of GSA and the customer.

As in all design reviews, the schedule should be handled by the regional project manager and regional chief architect, who will liaise with OCA via [peer-request form](#) sent to the GSA's Design Excellence Program. The regional colleagues must provide six weeks' advance notice, as well as a range of possible meeting dates, to OCA during this process. Doing so will ensure the participation of the peer reviewer who participated in firm selection, and it will allow OCA to identify and confirm the availability of the two additional peer reviewers who are best suited to consider the project.

The initial peer review should be held in person, in the community where the existing facility is located, so that peers may gain firsthand knowledge of the site. (See the Appendix for a sample peer review agenda.) Subsequent meetings may take place virtually, or through a combination of in-person and virtual participation.

Participants in the initial peer review should include the chief architect or designee, regional project manager, regional chief architect, a client representative, and others as approved by the chief architect. Observers should be kept to an absolute minimum. The schedule should include time for project presenters to step away from the conversation, so that peer reviewers may organize and expand upon their comments more freely.

The chief architect or designee will moderate the peer review. After the peers have been dismissed, government and firm representatives should remain in the meeting to discuss the project's next steps. Throughout the meeting, the regional chief architect (or a predetermined representative of OCA) will document peer reviewers' comments, other salient comments, and the concept chosen to advance to the next phase of development. These minutes must include the insights that had circulated among the peers and other meeting participants during the design team's absence. All documentation of comments will be distributed to the meeting's GSA and firm participants within a week of the initial peer review, so that the integrated team can address them in preparation for the final concept review; the peer reviewers do not receive these notes.

6.1.4 FINAL CONCEPT PEER REVIEWS

The goal of the final concept peer review is to understand how the chosen concept has evolved and to identify opportunities for additional improvement. This final review may concern urban design and community impact, security and entrance issues, architectural forms and spatial sequences, and the fabric and materiality of the design. It also welcomes insights regarding engineering, sustainability, budget, efficiency, and workplace design. Like the initial concept review, the purpose of this review is not to mandate solutions, but to highlight pathways for strengthening the design and fulfilling project requirements.

The final concept peer review should be scheduled as the design concept's form, structure, systems, and materials come into focus—yet before such decisions are locked in. Its timing should allow for peer reviewers' input to effect changes to the concept design prior to the commissioner's concept presentation. If significant changes are needed, then the chief architect can recommend additional peer reviews prior to the commissioner's concept presentation.

Using [peer-request form](#), the GSA project manager and regional chief architect will liaise with OCA to schedule the final concept peer review six weeks in advance of the meeting. They should provide several mutually agreeable dates to ensure the consistent participation of the three peer reviewers.

The location of the final concept review may be the GSA regional office, the community where the existing facility is located, or the firm's office. Virtual or hybrid meetings are acceptable formats for discussion.

Peer reviewers' comments will be documented and distributed to GSA and firm stakeholders no more than a week after the final concept peer review, so that the firm can address them in preparation for the commissioner's concept presentation. For consistent subject emphasis and narration, these comments should be documented by the same person who had taken minutes throughout the initial peer review.

6.2 PEER REVIEWERS' CONTRIBUTION TO CONCEPT REVIEWS

Peer reviewers are noted private-sector professionals who have no stake in the GSA project under consideration, and as such they inject objective voices into the concept development discussion. They address and critique projects with a perspective that maintains emphasis on Design Excellence objectives and the Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture. The peer reviewers provide a broad spectrum of expertise, which suits GSA's multidimensional understanding of excellence and the goals of GSA's federal-agency client and any concerns unique to the project. Peer reviewers may represent architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, preservation, interior design, engineering, and other design disciplines accordingly. The regional project management team must confer with OCA about a project's specific opportunities and challenges, so that OCA can choose peer reviewers whose insights are most appropriately suited to that project and client.

Peer reviewers act in the following capacities:

As a Colleague Among Professionals

Peer reviewers offer advice and critique with respect. Critiquing a project simply for criticism's sake is frowned upon. Peer reviewers interact collegially with the design team and customer to identify the project's best path forward.

As a Sounding Board

Peer reviewers validate promising directions and point out missed opportunities. They engage the firm in a conversation about ways to improve each project and suggest scenarios for developing different options further.

As Experts on a Broad Range of Issues

Peer reviewers should comment without hesitation on issues such as urban design and siting, circulation and other spatial strategies, materials, and systems. They are also encouraged to champion emerging best practices in preservation, sustainability, interior and workplace design, and other topics.

6.3 PEER REVIEW AGENDA

Peer reviews generally last three hours, although it should be anticipated that in-person reviews involving site visits require a whole business day. The regional chief architect prepares the agenda, which should include the following headings:

- 1 Site Visit (if applicable)
- 2 Project and Firm Introductions
- 3 Design Presentation (including information about engineering systems, energy performance, and other sustainability strategies)
- 4 Peer Questions
- 5 Private Discussion Among Peer Reviewers
- 6 Peer Recommendations and Further Discussion
- 7 Summary of Conclusions
- 8 Peers Dismissed
- 9 Next Steps Discussion (government representatives and firm only)

The agenda should serve as a framework for taking minutes. As detailed in the description of the initial peer review, minutes should document peers' and others' salient comments during all parts of the review, including any discussion from which the design team has been excused.

6.4 COMMISSIONER'S CONCEPT PRESENTATION

An in-person or virtual presentation to the PBS commissioner serves as a final concept approval before the project moves into the design development phase. By the time this meeting is organized, the general design, spatial qualities and calculations, materials, and general performance capabilities must be clearly defined; when applicable, the artists for the Art in Architecture commissions should be identified, as well. Independent estimates must confirm that project costs are within budget, and a timeline must indicate how the building can be delivered on schedule. The customer agency should feel that its needs and priorities have been addressed and should be prepared to agree to the final concept. Moreover, information regarding engineering systems as well as energy modeling should be thoroughly resolved, to demonstrate that the project aligns with GSA's sustainability ambitions. The GSA project manager and regional chief architect will work with OCA with six weeks' advance notice and a range of dates to ensure the commissioner's attendance.

The Commissioner's Readiness Checklist is used to evaluate project readiness prior to the commissioner's concept presentation. To ensure that the commissioner's review and approval is well-informed, questions raised during concept design must be resolved. Before the presentation, the checklist must be completed by the region and certified by the PBS regional commissioner. The certified checklist will be received by the chief architect and OCA at least 10 working days prior to the commissioner's concept presentation. Questions still undergoing resolution must be noted in this checklist. Receipt by OCA represents a key decision point, so designated Central Office leaders—which should include representatives of Facilities Management and Portfolio—will review the checklist and unresolved questions in their respective areas of expertise. The checklist must be signed by Central Office signatories prior to the commissioner's concept presentation, or the presentation risks being rescheduled to a later date.

Attendees of the commissioner's concept presentation include the commissioner of PBS, chief architect, assistant commissioner for project delivery, the firm (mandatory for the lead designer), the regional project management team, representatives from the GSA region, key GSA managers, and customer representatives. Peer reviewers do not attend the commissioner's concept presentation. The presentation is

expected to affirm that the project embodies the Design Excellence Program's high standards, incorporates project requirements, and has the support of the customer. The commissioner will approve the concept design or provide comments for further development. With assistance from the GSA project manager, the regional chief architect will document comments and send them to the GSA region, which must address them before progressing to design development.

EXCELLENCE IN LATER DESIGN PHASES

PURSuing DESIGN EXCELLENCE AFTER A PROJECT HAS EARNED THE PBS COMMISSIONER'S APPROVAL LARGELY ENTAILS CONDUCTING INTEGRATED DESIGN REVIEW (IDRS) AS NEEDED IN PARALLEL WITH KEY DELIVERY MILESTONES. IDRS ALLOW GSA'S SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS TO SUPPORT THE HIGH-QUALITY OUTCOMES THAT WERE DETERMINED IN THE EARLY PHASES OF DESIGN, AND TO REVIEW KEY ASPECTS OF A PROJECT'S PERFORMANCE THAT WERE CODIFIED IN INITIAL PLANNING DOCUMENTS, THE SOURCE SELECTION PLAN, AND SAM. GOV ANNOUNCEMENTS. IN THE CASE OF FAST-CHANGING DISCIPLINES LIKE SUSTAINABLE BUILDING PERFORMANCE, IDRS ALSO REPRESENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR A PROJECT TO EXCEED ITS ORIGINALLY STATED GOALS. OVERALL, IDRS HELP A PROJECT REALIZE THE PRINCIPLES, GOALS, AND SOLUTIONS CONFIRMED BY THE COMMISSIONER'S CONCEPT PRESENTATION.

7.1 INTEGRATED DESIGN REVIEWS

Continuous good planning is a best practice throughout the construction and project-management industries, and its benefits—such as increased stakeholder involvement and improved project performance—are well documented. IDRs provide a forum by which GSA's national and regional colleagues can stay apprised of project development synchronously. IDRs also represent an organized process by which these stakeholders can provide input and align project goals during phases of development. Because they commence prior to the initial peer review and continue through a project's handoff to Construction Excellence, IDRs represent consistent quality assurance through all phases of the design process. The IDR should include live views of the project model, in which the presenter can toggle between 2-dimensional, construction-document, and 3-dimensional views to best illustrate topics of concern and discussion.

The project manager will schedule IDRs at contractual milestones, working with the regional chief architect to maximize the attendance of subject matter experts. These IDRs will focus on the project development that immediately precedes each delivery milestone and will ensure that the concept approved at the commissioner's concept presentation remains intact, constructible, on budget, and in compliance with performance requirements. The contracted firm must satisfactorily address comments before moving on to the next phase of design. Working with GSA commenters, the regional project manager determines that a contractor's response resolves a given issue as part of normal due diligence; the GSA project manager keeps a comment open in the case of an insufficient response.

Step-by-step guidance is available on GSA's internal [Integrated Review Process site](#) to help project teams plan and schedule IDRs.

CHAPTER 8

EXCELLENCE IN LEASING

DESIGN EXCELLENCE IN LEASING IS A COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE OFFICE OF LEASING AND THE DESIGN EXCELLENCE IN LEASING PROGRAM WITHIN ODC. THE DESIGN EXCELLENCE IN LEASING PROGRAM INTEGRATES DESIGN EXCELLENCE METHODS OF FIRM SELECTION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE INTO APPLICABLE LEASE ACQUISITIONS INVOLVING NEW BUILDING CONSTRUCTION, SO THAT THESE FEDERAL WORKPLACES EMBODY THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR FEDERAL ARCHITECTURE. THE PROGRAM'S GOAL IS TO WORK WITHIN LEASING DELIVERY'S VARIOUS CONSTRAINTS TO ACHIEVE BEST VALUE FOR THE AMERICAN TAXPAYER.

FOR SPECIFIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROGRAM, PLEASE CONTACT THE DESIGN EXCELLENCE IN LEASING PROGRAM MANAGER. A COMPLETE VERSION OF THIS CHAPTER IS UNDER DEVELOPMENT AND WILL BE RELEASED AT A LATER TIME.

EXCELLENCE IN DESIGN-BUILD

THE ORIGINAL VERSION OF DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION EXCELLENCE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES WAS INTENDED FOR CAPITAL PROJECTS DELIVERED VIA DESIGN-BID-BUILD. THIS CHAPTER PROVIDES ENTERPRISE-WIDE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR DESIGN-BUILD (DB) DELIVERY, SO THAT GSA MAY STEWARD THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR FEDERAL ARCHITECTURE THROUGH THIS METHOD.

9.0 INTRODUCTION, OVERVIEW, AND APPLICABILITY

When GSA issued the first edition of Design and Construction Excellence Policies and Procedures in 1994, the federal government rarely used design-build (DB) as a delivery method. Instead, most construction projects employed the design-bid-build delivery model and the government procured design and construction services pursuant to the Brooks Act and its implementing regulations. Since that original publication, federal use of DB has expanded considerably, especially at GSA.

While much existing literature explains the DB process and its advantages and disadvantages over other delivery methods, a few introductory points here are necessary. DB is a method for delivering a project in which the owner contracts with a single entity (commonly referred to as the design-build firm) to provide design and construction services; two-stage selection of that entity is the only authorized DB procurement process according to the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR). In contrast to GSA's awarding separate contracts to the design firm and construction contractor under design-bid-build or CMc, DB relies on a single point of responsibility, which can minimize risks, foster innovative design and construction solutions, manage cost, and reduce project-related delays. DB does, however, limit GSA's ability to exercise full control over the design process: although project outcomes are contractually defined by a combination of prescriptive and performance-based specifications, the path to those outcomes is primarily left to the design-build firm.

In drafting this chapter, GSA performed outreach to various industry partners and other Executive-branch agencies that rely on DB as a delivery model. This chapter represents what GSA believes to be consistent with leading best practices across government and private industry. Although GSA professionals may refer solely to these directives for DB projects, it is recommended that they read Design and Construction Excellence Policies and Procedures in its entirety to understand this chapter in wider context.

Highlights of this chapter include:

Stipends shall be paid on a sliding scale to unsuccessful Offerors that advance to Stage II. (Please note that this chapter employs the terms "Phase 1" and "Phase 2" in lieu of "Stage I" and "Stage II" for consistency with FAR; concomitantly, "Phase 1" and "Phase 2" often appear in GSA legal documents, as well. Design and Construction Excellence Policies and Procedures outside of Chapter 9 continues to use the terms "Stage I" and "Stage II" to avoid confusion with the term "phase," which private industry associates with a project's phases of conceptualization, schematic design, design development, construction documentation, and construction and closeout. Chapter 9 also employs the term "Offeror" in lieu of "firm" as seen elsewhere in this document.) Stipends increase competition as well as the likelihood of attracting high-quality design-build firms to GSA and the field of public building.

Publishing the shortlist (after the completion of Phase 2) increases opportunities for small and midsize architecture, construction, and engineering firms to partner or subcontract with the larger firms that are often selected to proceed to Phase 2I.

Shortlisting to three firms becomes the default standard, to increase competition among DB firms; it also increases the likelihood of attracting the highest-quality design-builders to GSA and leveraging the talent of America's best designers and artists.

Phase 2 places a greater emphasis on advancing the most suitable design-build firms to Phase 2. This shifts the selection of key personnel to Phase 2, to avoid 'tying up' those individuals during a lengthy procurement process.

Phase 2 places a greater emphasis on concept submission and key personnel, allowing for multiple rounds of discussions, peer reviews, reviews by GSA's subject matter experts, and oral presentations.

9.0.1 APPLICABILITY

This chapter describes Design Excellence policies and procedures for all capital projects delivered via DB. Any project that exceeds the prospectus threshold must comply with Design Excellence policies and procedures. In some instances, a DB project's scope may limit the applicability of Design Excellence procedures; the project sponsor shall request a waiver from the chief architect in these cases.

For the avoidance of doubt, this chapter applies to DB indefinite-delivery contracts whose task or delivery orders may exceed the prospectus threshold.

9.1 BASIC FRAMEWORK

To understand how Design Excellence merges with DB, it is important to recap the way in which A/E services are traditionally procured. In 1972 Congress passed the Brooks Act, which established the statutory requirement to utilize a qualifications-based selection (QBS) process for A/E contracting. The Brooks Act is currently codified at 40 U.S.C. 1101-1104 and implemented through regulations found at FAR Subpart 36.6 and GSAM Subpart 536.6.

When acquiring DB services, Executive-branch agencies must follow the two-phase DB selection procedures authorized by 41 U.S.C. 3309 and the implementing regulations at FAR 36.3. In this process, Phase 1 establishes a procedure that is akin to the QBS as presented in the Brooks Act; no price evaluation occurs during Phase 1, as no pricing is submitted. After evaluating the Phase 1 proposals, the contracting officer selects no more than three of the most highly rated Offerors to proceed to Phase 2 in accordance with GSA's Design Excellence Program. It is important to note that Phase 1 evaluation processes afford great flexibility in selecting the most highly qualified Offerors to proceed to Phase 2. Phase 2 is conducted as a FAR Part 15 negotiated procurement.

By regulation, the contracting officer is charged with selecting the most highly qualified Offerors during Phase 1. During Phase 2, the contracting officer is designated as the Source Selection Authority (SSA) pursuant to FAR Part 15 (see FAR 15.303(a)). This is different from a design firm procurement conducted under the Brooks Act and FAR 36.6 because, in accordance with internal delegations of authority, the regional commissioner of the Public Buildings Service (PBS) or their designee serves as the selection authority in a Brooks Act procurement. Irrespective of approach, OCA will participate in a substantive manner during the selection of a design-build firm. OCA will also play a crucial role in ensuring that DB projects incorporate Design Excellence processes.

It is with this underlying framework that GSA developed the policies and procedures contained in this chapter.

9.1.1 PLANNING PRIOR TO RELEASE OF THE PRE-SOLICITATION ANNOUNCEMENT

Incorporating Design Excellence into any project begins in early phases and continues through its life

cycle. OCA supports every capital project by providing national peers and GSA subject matter experts to advise selection panels and to conduct independent reviews. It is crucial for GSA's acquisition, design, construction, budget, and legal divisions to discuss roles, responsibilities, and schedule early in the acquisition process. For additional information about pre-planning processes, refer to the [Regional Office Central Office Alignment Process \(RoCo\) internal site](#).

The project manager shall develop a project schedule at least 90 days in advance of posting the pre-solicitation announcement on SAM.gov, so that peers can be selected to participate as:

- Advisors of the Phase 1 Evaluation Panel
- Advisors of the Phase 2 Source Selection Evaluation Board (SSEB)
- Post-award reviewers

A Roles and Responsibility Matrix included in the Appendix details these and other project milestones. The matrix organizes milestones sequentially and cites the personnel that should participate in each activity.

9.1.2 PBS-P100 REQUIREMENTS FOR DESIGN-BUILD

All submissions must comply with the prescriptive and baseline performance requirements of the PBS-P100, Facilities Standards for the Public Buildings Service. Project teams must establish minimum performance requirements in planning. They must also consider possible performance enhancements that benefit the mission, sustainability, and ownership cost of the specific facility or of GSA's portfolio in general. If such opportunities exist, then a project team amends and/or supplements the PBS-P100 and identifies additional project requirements in the Owner's Project Requirements (OPR) in the Request For Proposal (RFP).

Any anticipated departures below the minimum requirements of the PBS-P100 must be submitted by the project team in a P100 waiver and approved by the chief architect and the assistant commissioner for project delivery prior to submission of Phase 2 proposals. The contracting officer must include any such waiver in the initial Phase 2 RFP, or as an amendment to that RFP.

9.2 ANNOUNCING THE OPPORTUNITY

9.2.1 EXCHANGES WITH INDUSTRY

Prior to issuing the pre-solicitation announcement on SAM.gov, project teams should consider conducting industry exchanges (see example in the Appendix) or similar types of market research (see FAR Part 10 and FAR Subpart 15.201) for large or technically complex projects. Exchanges with industry should begin early and continue throughout the planning process; they enable the project team to understand prevailing market conditions and create an effective acquisition strategy. Exchanges also provide an opportunity to establish Design Excellence objectives with potential Offerors and to promote teaming well in advance of the pre-solicitation announcement.

Exchanges with industry should be open to all interested members of the general-contractor, subcontractor, and A/E communities. A combination of in-person and virtual exchanges maximizes entities' access to GSA's regional project team and, more generally, to the opportunity to do business with GSA.

The contracting officer shall run this meeting and will be assisted by the project manager and a Central Office-based representative of GSA's Design Excellence Program.

9.2.2 THE PRE-SOLICITATION ANNOUNCEMENT

The pre-solicitation announcement notifies the industry of the pending opportunity for a Design Excellence/Design-Build project. The announcement also provides a general overview of: the project; the two-phase DB selection process; anticipated dates for the pre-proposal meeting and the release of the Phase 1 Request for Qualifications (RFQ).

9.2.3 ARTICULATE DESIGN EXCELLENCE GOALS

The SAM.gov pre-solicitation notice must identify each prospectus-level DB project as a Design Excellence opportunity. See Chapter 3 for specific introductory language to be used in announcing a Design Excellence project.

9.2.4 DESCRIBE THE PROJECT

The pre-solicitation announcement must accurately describe the project and its nature. The accuracy of the description is critical, as Offerors use it to identify potential business opportunities.

See the Appendix for sample language.

9.2.5 DESCRIBE THE TWO-PHASE DB PROCESS

The pre-solicitation announcement must provide a brief overview of the procurement process. In addition to fulfilling the synopsis requirements mandated by FAR 5.207, the announcement must describe the following:

- Stipends
- Publication of the shortlist
- Maximum number of firms to be shortlisted

9.2.6 INDUSTRY DAY (PRE-SUBMITTAL MEETING)

After issuing the pre-solicitation announcement on SAM.gov, it is often useful to convene a pre-submittal meeting for private-sector professionals interested in a particular project. The place and time of this meeting shall be included in the pre-solicitation announcement, and the meeting may be conducted virtually if circumstances do not allow in-person meeting; in the interest of creating a level playing field, a hybrid meeting format is not recommended at present. The contracting officer will run this meeting, with assistance from the project manager and a representative of the Design Excellence Program. The purpose is to clarify Design Excellence, the procurement process, and the nature of the project.

See the Appendix for a typical agenda and pre-submittal packet.

9.3 PHASE 1

9.3.1 OVERVIEW

The Phase 1 evaluation factors (FAR 36.303-1) must include technical approach and technical qualifications; GSA's subject matter experts should advise project teams as they write these qualifications into the Phase 1 RFQ. It is important to note that Phase 1 is not conducted in accordance with FAR Part 15. Rather, all that Phase 1 requires of the contracting officer is "select[ing] the most highly qualified Offerors" to participate in Phase 2. The contracting officer must still fully document and justify the selection using the evaluation factors and standards set forth in the Phase 1 RFQ. The Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture are part of the technical evaluation, which is further informed by the Design Excellence objectives stated in the pre-solicitation announcement.

9.3.2 GOAL

The purpose of Phase 1 is to shortlist the most highly qualified Offerors based on the factors set forth in the Phase 1 RFQ. This is fundamentally different from Brooks Act or design-bid-build procurement, which focuses on an architect, engineer, or general contractor. Because GSA enters into a single contract with a DB firm for DB delivery, Phase 1 relies on Offerors to provide information and materials about their firm. By streamlining Phase 2 to focus primarily on the shortlisted firms, GSA also intends to decrease the costs of participating in the Phase 2 process.

9.3.3 MAXIMUM NUMBER OF HIGHLY QUALIFIED OFFERORS

While the FAR permits the contracting officer to select up to five Offerors to proceed to Phase 2, current best practices suggest that permitting no more than three firms to advance to Phase 2 is beneficial to GSA. Industry has consistently stated that firms often avoid opportunities that shortlist more than three firms.

As a matter of policy, GSA is mandating that the Phase 1 RFQ restrict the maximum number of highly qualified Offerors to no more than three. This shortlist maximum may be increased only with the written approval of the chief architect and the PBS regional commissioner. Any such approval must be obtained before responses to the Phase 1 RFQ are received.

9.3.4 ANNOUNCING THE SHORTLIST

Design and Construction Excellence Policies and Procedures requires publishing of the firms that are shortlisted to Phase 2. GSA has determined that announcing the shortlist via SAM.gov provides opportunities for small and medium-size firms and businesses to team with the larger contractors that will ultimately submit Phase 2 proposals.

9.3.5 PHASE 1 EVALUATION PANEL

As noted above, the contracting officer is held responsible by regulation for selecting the most highly qualified Offerors to advance from Phase 1 to Phase 2. Much like other procurements, the contracting officer is assisted by numerous voting and non-voting members. This chapter section specifies certain requirements for the composition of the Evaluation Panel that convenes for Phase 1.

The regional chief architect liaises between OCA and the GSA region for determining the proper composition of the Phase 1 Evaluation Panel.

9.3.6 MAKEUP OF THE EVALUATION PANEL

The members of the Evaluation Panel should be selected based on the expertise needed for a particular project; the contracting officer should ensure that each member is highly knowledgeable in relevant disciplines. Members who are GSA employees must have expertise in the design and construction disciplines associated with the project, and the participation of licensed professionals (e.g., registered architect, engineer, landscape architect) is preferred where possible. By convening experts from multiple disciplines, the Evaluation Panel has a balance that allows each member to learn from the others.

9.3.7 MANDATORY MEMBERS

For each Design Excellence/Design-Build project, the Evaluation Panel should have no more than four voting members.

OCA will appoint the following member:

- A designee of the chief architect

The regional chief architect will recommend the following two members to the chief architect and the contracting officer:

- Regional architect
- Regional engineer

If a customer representative will serve as a fourth voting member, then the customer will recommend that voting member to the chief architect and contracting officer. If the customer does not want to serve as a voting member, then the contracting officer may decide to add a different fourth voting member, such as someone with expertise in a given engineering or architectural discipline, based on the particular needs of a given project. (“The customer” refers to the primary customer of the facility, or to a singular representative that has been selected by the agencies to participate in the Evaluation Panel and Source Selection Evaluation Board.)

The contracting officer may reject recommendations. In such an event, the contracting officer must request recommendations for replacements. The Head of the Contracting Authority (HCA) will resolve any disagreements; in the regions, the HCA is the regional commissioner of PBS.

9.3.8 MANDATORY PEER ADVISOR

Much like the Design Excellence process in a Brooks Act procurement, OCA will support each Design Excellence/Design-Build project with the most appropriate national peers. During Phase 1, the Evaluation Panel shall have at least one private-sector design and/or construction professional proposed from the National Register of Peer Professionals. This peer shall participate in a non-voting capacity and serve as a peer throughout the life cycle of the project. The GSA project manager and regional chief architect will submit a [peer-request form](#) to the Design Excellence Program at least six weeks prior to convening the Evaluation Panel, and OCA will appoint a peer in turn.

9.3.9 SUGGESTED NON-VOTING ADVISORS

At the discretion of the contracting officer and based on the complexities of the project, it may be advisable that additional non-voting advisors participate in Phase 1 evaluation, including:

- Customer agencies and representatives
- GSA subject matter experts as recommended by the regional chief architect
- Construction Manager as Advisor (as recommended by the project manager; CMA should already be under contract with PBS)

9.3.10 MANDATORY EVALUATION FACTORS

As noted several times, this chapter aims to merge design-build delivery with Design Excellence. An important element of the Design Excellence Program’s success has been the uniform application of evaluation criteria and the weighting of those factors. An exception may be granted only with the written approval of the chief architect and the PBS regional commissioner. To establish uniformity for DB projects, evaluation of Phase 1 must be based on the criteria and percentage weighting of the following factors:

Technical Qualifications (60%)

Approach to Design-Build (20%)

Lead Designer (20%)

See the Appendix for a complete description of mandatory Phase 1 evaluation factors, standards for evaluation, and factor/sub-factor weighting.

9.4 PHASE 2

It is imperative for site selection to take place prior to issuance of the Phase 2 RFP, and for that RFP to provide as much precise detail of site, program, and design goals as deemed necessary.

9.4.1 OVERVIEW

Phase 2 is conducted per FAR Part 15 procurement. As such, shortlisted Offerors must submit technical and price proposals. This is a marked and clear distinction from Brooks Act procurement, because price must be a factor in the second stage of DB selection procedures. While the two-phase process is not merely qualifications-based, there is a great deal of flexibility in the evaluation factors that GSA can use in Phase 2. Because the Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture notes, “The Government should be willing to pay some additional cost to avoid excessive uniformity in design of Federal buildings” and the FAR suggests that Offerors submit “design concepts” and “proposed technical solutions” in Phase 2, then the design concept will account for the highest weighted technical factor. For purposes of clarity, “design concept” for design-build procurement refers to technical specification and drawings, period of performance, and the OPR.

Key personnel comprises the second most important technical evaluation factor during Phase 2. GSA experience has shown that projects have a higher likelihood of success when the Offerors rely on their “A” team to manage, deliver, and execute the work described in the RFP and the accompanying documents.

Phase 2 also mandates and makes greater use of oral presentations and discussion than may be typical in design-bid-build and CMc projects. Industry input and best practices suggest that GSA and Offerors should engage in early and active discussions about concept submissions prior to contract award.

9.4.2 SPECIAL PRICING CONSIDERATIONS

Based on the Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture, the Phase 2 RFP must state that all evaluation factors other than cost or price, when combined, are significantly more important than cost or price. See FAR 15.101-1(b)(2). The contracting officer may provide for a different prioritization of technical and price factors only with the approval of the HCA and chief architect.

The Phase 2 RFP must also notify Offerors that GSA intends to perform a price realism analysis. Among other things, this analysis assesses whether an Offeror’s low price reflects a lack of understanding of the contract requirements or risk inherent in an Offeror’s proposal.

9.4.3 SOURCE SELECTION EVALUATION BOARD (SSEB)

As a procurement conducted pursuant to FAR Part 15, the contracting officer serves as the Source Selection Authority (SSA) and is responsible for selecting members and advisors of the Source Selection Evaluation Board (see FAR 15.303). The fundamental role of the Phase 2 SSEB is the same as in any other FAR Part 15 procurement.

In addition to the peer who participated in Phase 1, the contracting officer shall select at least two additional peers to serve as non-voting advisors during Phase 2. Identification of these peers is requested via the [peer-request form](#), and OCA’s appointments must be finalized and implemented prior to the due date for the submission of Phase 1 proposals. (Refer to section 9.3.8 for procedures.)

9.4.4 SSEB MAKEUP

As a general matter, the contracting officer should ensure that the members and advisors who participated in the Phase 1 Evaluation Panel assume the same voting and non-voting roles in Phase 2. If for some reason changes are needed, then the contracting officer shall follow the same procedures and approvals as

outlined in Section 9.3.7. If additional members or advisors are required (beyond the two additional peers appointed by OCA to serve as technical advisors to the SSEB), then the contracting officer shall request a recommendation from OCA. All Phase 2 voting members must be federal employees.

9.4.5 MANDATORY EVALUATION CRITERIA

For the reasons articulated in 9.3.10, the evaluation of Phase 2 must be based on the criteria and percentage weighting of the factors below. An exception may be granted only with the written approval of the chief architect and the PBS regional commissioner.

Design Concept (50%)

Key Personnel (25%)

Management Plan (15%)

Project Labor Agreement (10%)

See the Appendix for a complete description of Phase 2 source selection factors, standards for evaluation, and factor/sub-factor weighting. Please also note that, upon resolution of FAR Case 2022-003, Use of Project Labor Agreements for Federal Construction Projects, Design and Construction Excellence Policies and Procedures will be amended, as necessary, according to new regulations addressing PLAs in large-scale construction projects.

9.4.6 STIPEND

Design-build competitions are expensive, due to the time and level of effort with which Offerors develop a concept design and technical submission, as well as the cost-estimating effort Offerors must undertake to support a price proposal.

As a matter of policy, GSA is mandating that stipends shall be provided to unsuccessful Phase 2 Offerors. An exception may be granted only with written approval of the chief architect and the PBS regional commissioner.

Offerors that submit incomplete or unacceptable Phase 2 proposals will not be eligible for a stipend. For the avoidance of doubt, no stipend is paid during Phase 1.

The contract will provide that as a condition of submitting a Phase 2 technical proposal, and notwithstanding the conditions of any notice appearing thereon, the federal government shall have unlimited rights (as defined in the “Drawings and Other Data to Become Property of Government” clause contained in the Agreement) to the technical data contained in the proposal.

A stipend tool has been integrated within the professional services lookup tool available at [GSA Insite](#). This tool must be used by the project manager to determine the amount of stipend to be paid to each unsuccessful Offeror.

9.4.7 ORAL PRESENTATIONS: AN OVERVIEW

As permitted in FAR 15.102, GSA will provide each Phase 2 Offeror with the opportunity to engage in at least two one-on-one discussions with government evaluators—an Initial Oral Presentation prior to the submittal of Phase 2 proposals, as well as a Second Oral Presentation that follows submittal. The discussions will provide parties with the opportunity for dialogue during the Phase 2 process.

See the Appendix for the Initial Oral Presentation and the Second Oral Presentation procedures.

9.4.8 INITIAL ORAL PRESENTATION: SCOPE AND CONTENT

Based on experience and industry feedback, it is beneficial to allow Phase 2 Offerors to interact with the potential client (virtually or in person) prior to formal submittal of written technical and price proposals. GSA believes that this over-the-shoulder review, often referred to as the Initial Oral Presentation, permits government evaluators to better understand an Offeror's particular vision and preliminary concepts at early development. This informal, collegial discussion allows both sides to quickly determine whether there are errors, defects, or similar misunderstandings related to the RFP. In such instances, the government or Offeror can seek resolution of an issue well in advance of the due date for submitting formal written technical and price proposals.

As a general rule of thumb, a "preliminary concept" is a 15%–20% version of what the Offeror intends to submit, as per the PBS–P100. While it will differ slightly by project, the term essentially refers to drawings, schematics, and similar architectural or engineering drawings and renderings that the Offeror prepares in response to the Phase 2 RFP. GSA anticipates that Initial Oral Presentation–associated discussions will enable Phase 2 Offerors to provide more complete and accurate proposal submissions.

9.4.9 INITIAL ORAL PRESENTATION: PARTICIPANTS AND AGENDA

The Offeror is free to choose the people who will attend the one-on-one discussion(s), and to prepare a meeting agenda. Offerors are limited to a maximum of eight people. From GSA, the following individuals should be present: voting members of the SSEB; regional project manager; contracting officer; and all peer advisors to the SSEB. The following additional advisors are recommended: GSA subject matter experts and the CMA. The Offeror may ask questions of GSA's participants.

As noted in FAR 15.306(e), government personnel are not permitted to engage in certain conduct that includes favoring one Offeror over another. Personnel are also forbidden from revealing an Offeror's technical solution, unique technology, innovative and unique uses of commercial items, or any information that would compromise an Offeror's intellectual property to another Offeror.

9.4.10 INITIAL ORAL PRESENTATION: TIMING AND SCHEDULING

Within 30 calendar days of the Evaluation Panel's completion of a Phase 2 shortlist, the Offeror is notified of advancement to Phase 2. GSA will contact each Offeror to schedule the Initial Oral Presentation. The Offerors are given sufficient time prior to the Initial Oral Presentation so that they may incorporate best environmental practices into preparation, yet that lead time should not normally exceed eight weeks.

9.4.11 INITIAL ORAL PRESENTATION: TECHNICAL EQUIPMENT AND SUPPORT

Offerors are responsible for providing their own audiovisual, computing, and other technical equipment. In the case of in-person discussion, and as worked out in advance, GSA may permit each Offeror to use equipment available at the location site to the extent that it is available.

9.4.12 INITIAL ORAL PRESENTATIONS: RECORDING

GSA may record the meeting and, if requested, will provide a copy of that recording to the respective Offeror.

9.4.13 INITIAL ORAL PRESENTATION: WRITTEN MATERIALS

Offerors may not leave any materials with GSA.

9.4.14 INITIAL ORAL PRESENTATION: NO SCORING OR EVALUATION

There will be no scoring or evaluation of the Initial Oral Presentation.

9.4.15 SUBMISSION OF TECHNICAL AND PRICE PROPOSALS

After the Initial Oral Presentation, each Offeror will submit technical and price proposals within the time specified in the Phase 2 RFP.

9.4.16 REVIEW OF THE TECHNICAL PROPOSAL

The contracting officer will distribute technical proposals and conduct reviews of those proposals with two groups simultaneously: one with the SSEB's peer advisors (hereafter referred to as "Peer Review #1") and one with GSA's subject matter experts. Contracting officers are responsible for the safekeeping of source selection information.

Peer Review #1

- The peers convene at the GSA regional office; if time permits the peers to visit the construction site, then the Design Excellence Program shall arrange for such a visit to take place prior to peers' convening at GSA.
- The contracting officer must provide a secure room for the peers to meet.
- The peers review the technical proposal to assess its quality in satisfying the OPR, PBS-P100, and the Guiding Principles of Federal Architecture, prior to Phase 2 evaluation.
- The peers will discuss the strengths, weaknesses, and deficiencies of each of the proposals in accordance with evaluation criteria set forth in the Phase 2 RFP. If necessary, the contracting officer may appoint an advisor to the SSEB for the purpose of assisting the peers with developing a written summary. The peers will convey the written summary of their feedback to the SSEB's members and advisors, and provide a verbal debriefing to those participants, all prior to the Second Oral Presentation.
- The chief architect will be given the option to attend and moderate this peer review; the chief architect may also decide to assign a regional chief architect as proxy.

Subject Matter Experts

The review by in-house subject matter experts shall focus on the strengths, weaknesses, and deficiencies of proposed system selections to satisfy the performance criteria set forth in the Phase 2 RFP. The project manager will present the subject matter experts' comments in writing to the members and advisors of the SSEB prior to the Second Oral Presentation.

9.4.17 SSEB REVIEW OF PHASE 2 TECHNICAL PROPOSALS

Concurrent to peers' and subject matter experts' review of Offerors' technical proposals, the contracting officer will provide those technical proposals to the voting members of the SSEB and to SSEB advisors who did not participate in the peer or subject-matter-expert reviews. Each member and advisor will then individually review the technical proposals for strengths, weaknesses, and deficiencies, but they will hold off scoring the proposals until the Second Oral Presentation has concluded. When these evaluators are finished reviewing the technical submissions, the peers and the project manager will present the findings from the peer and subject-matter-expert reviews to the SSEB, pursuant to Section 9.4.16.

At this point, the voting members of the SSEB meet to discuss the strengths, weaknesses, and deficiencies that will inform and shape the nature of discussions during the Second Oral Presentation. The SSA then moderates the Second Oral Presentation with each Offeror.

9.4.18 PHASE 2 - SECOND ORAL PRESENTATION

GSA requires each Phase 2 Offeror to make a Second Oral Presentation. The Second Oral Presentation is a formal discussion about the design concept an Offeror had submitted in response to the Phase 2 RFP. Much like the Initial Oral Presentation, the Second Oral Presentation provides the opportunity for dialogue between parties, although this second meeting is conducted in a more rigorous fashion. For purposes of the oral presentation, the procurement proceeds in the manner as provided in FAR Subpart 15.306(d). Unlike the Initial Oral Presentation, the government will use this oral presentation as an element in its overall evaluation of Offerors. In-person discussion is mandatory, unless extenuating circumstances demand a virtual or hybrid meeting format.

9.4.19 CONCLUDING THE EVALUATIONS

After conclusion of the Second Oral Presentation, the procurement continues to proceed in the manner as provided in FAR Subpart 15.3. The contracting officer: instructs the SSEB to evaluate and score the proposals; provides each Offeror with deficiencies and significant weaknesses (see FAR 15.306); requests final proposal revisions; concludes the discussions; and makes the final selection decision (see FAR 15.308).

9.5 ADDITIONAL PROCEDURES GOVERNING PHASE 1 AND PHASE 2

In addition to other requirements set forth by law or regulation, the following procedures govern the conduct of the two-phase DB selection process. The contracting officer may obtain a waiver with the concurrence of the regional chief architect, ODC regional director, and the HCA.

- All members of the Phase 1 Evaluation Panel and its advisors, as well as Phase 2 SSEB members and advisors, must sign and adhere to GSA conflict of interest and nondisclosure policies.
- The names of individuals on or advising the Evaluation Panel and SSEB may not be documented for public record in advance of the final selection and contract award.
- Once deliberation and voting begin, only the members of the Evaluation Panel/SSEB and the contracting officer may be present. Participants may reach out to advisors with questions or requests for clarification during the evaluation process.
- The Evaluation Panel and SSEB meet in the GSA regional office, except for rare circumstances that prohibit members from meeting in person.
- Review by GSA's subject matter experts may be conducted in the manner that the contracting officer deems most expeditious: reviews may take place asynchronously, and any necessary conversation may be held virtually or via other forms of electronic media.
- The Initial Oral Presentation and the Second Oral Presentation occur in the GSA regional office; project teams must prioritize in-person meeting as conditions allow.
- The GSA project executive and project manager may not be voting members.

9.6 PEER ADVISORS

9.6.1 EVALUATION AND SOURCE SELECTION PROCESS

As highly regarded private-sector professionals with unique knowledge of their respective disciplines, peers are invaluable sources of advice and insight. Peers are essential to successfully selecting the most appropriate design-build firm, and they are deeply involved in that process.

Peers can help an Evaluation Panel's or SSEB's voting members to better understand proposals that contain unique, complex, or cutting-edge design and construction strategies. Some voting members may

not be architects or designers and, as a result, may not be familiar with design language or the evolutionary nature of the design process; by sharing their expertise and helping non-designers interpret design proposals and identify potential design options, peers can facilitate a full, open, and constructive evaluation. The peers can also offer insights as to whether and how a proposal will embody and advance the Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture, which is part of the technical evaluation.

9.6.2 PEER REVIEWS

After the Initial Oral Presentation, peers participate as critics in two design peer reviews. The peer review is convened by the chief architect and involves at least three national peers—which includes the design peer who had advised the Evaluation Panel. Observers, if any, should be kept to a minimum. Peer review is intended as a constructive discussion among professional stakeholders. The excessive presence of observers discourages candid dialogue. The chief architect must designate one GSA-employed attendee to take minutes of this dialogue, including any points resolved by the group; this role is different from the contracting officer–appointed SSEB advisor who supports the written summation of Peer Review #1.

Whereas Peer Review #1 takes place after Phase 2 RFP submissions and before the Second Oral Presentation (as per 9.4.16), the second peer review (also known as “Peer Review #2”) should be scheduled after contract award. The timing should allow for the design-build firm to make further changes and refinements according to existing peer input. The goal of the second peer review is to understand how the chosen concept has evolved since contract award, to verify that the DB firm’s design has satisfied all requirements and to identify areas and pathways for additional improvements. Such improvements may involve urban design and community benefit, security and entrance issues, architectural forms and spatial sequence, and the fabric and materiality of the design, as well as a project’s engineering, sustainability, efficiency, and workplace-design elements. The purpose of the review is not to mandate solutions but to highlight opportunities to strengthen the design and fulfill project requirements. If significant changes are needed, then the chief architect can recommend additional peer reviews in the concept development process.

For new construction, the venue for Peer Review #2 is usually the lead designer’s office. For major modernization and preservation projects, this review can be held in regional GSA headquarters or in the community where the existing facility is located (to accommodate a site visit). Because it yields the most comprehensive feedback, the regional project management team should insist on an in-person peer review whenever possible.

9.7 MISCELLANEOUS POST-AWARD ACTIVITIES

9.7.1 GUIDING PRINCIPLES CHECKLIST

GSA uses its Guiding Principles Checklist (GPC) to promote and track compliance with the federally mandated Guiding Principles for Federal Leadership in High Performance and Sustainable Buildings. These sustainable-design best practices are required per the PBS P-100. GSA’s 39-item GPC is posted on [GSA Insite](#), available upon request from gbuild@gsa.gov or from the project manager, and housed in PBS’s gBUILD project sustainability system. For DB projects, the GPC must be completed and submitted to the GSA project manager at least three weeks prior to the commissioner’s concept presentation.

9.7.2 INTEGRATED DESIGN REVIEWS

IDRs verify that the submitted concept fulfills RFP criteria, and they document any changes that may ultimately be required to satisfy the RFP. An IDR convenes stakeholders from ODC, the Office of Facilities Management (as part of [Operational Excellence](#)), the Office of Portfolio Management

& Customer Engagement, the GSA region, and other internal business lines. The first IDR shall be conducted within four weeks of the contracting officer's issuance of the notice to proceed (NTP) to the winning DB firm.

9.7.3 PROJECT READINESS CHECKLIST

The Commissioner's Readiness Checklist is intended to evaluate project readiness prior to the commissioner's concept presentation. The evaluation must make certain that issues raised during government-Of-feror discussions, IDRs, and peer and subject-matter-expert reviews are resolved before the winning design-build firm's concept design is considered by the PBS commissioner to ensure that the commissioner's review and approval are well informed. The checklist must be completed and received by OCA at least 10 working days prior to the requested presentation date. Unresolved issues must be noted in this checklist by the relevant reviewers. When a project has unresolved design issues or uncertainty at this junction, the project can take one of two courses:

- 1) If project readiness is of significant concern to OCA, then the project's concept presentation will be canceled until the issues are resolved. This decision will be made by the chief architect in consultation with the assistant commissioner for project delivery and the relevant regional commissioner.
- 2) If project readiness issues can be appropriately resolved in later design phases, then the chief architect may allow the concept presentation to proceed. In that case, the issues must be captured in the Project Readiness Checklist; the PBS commissioner also must be made aware of the issues and of plans to address them prior to the review of the project.

It is highly recommended that OCA and the project team begin using the checklist to track issues as early in the design process as possible, rather than as a final check before the commissioner's concept presentation.

9.7.4 COMMISSIONER'S CONCEPT PRESENTATION

The concept presentation to the commissioner of PBS takes place before a project moves into design development. By the time this meeting is organized, GSA has selected a design concept and awarded a firm fixed price contract to the selected Offeror. GSA will have also conducted peer, IDR, and other post-award technical reviews—and the DB firm will have satisfactorily responded to those reviews' comments—prior to the commissioner's concept presentation. Timing will not negatively impact the project's period of performance; large and technically complex projects like courthouses should require no more than three months' lead time between the NTP and the commissioner's concept presentation.

Attendees to the meeting shall include the DB firm's project principal, lead designer, and project manager; key GSA regional stakeholders that include the regional commissioner, regional chief architect, and project manager; and GSA Central Office representatives including the PBS commissioner, chief architect, and other managers. SSEB peer advisors do not attend this presentation, as their insights have already been incorporated. Unlike other project delivery methods, artists typically have not been selected at this point in the project schedule.

While the commissioner's concept presentation always allows for the exchange of questions and comments, the gathering by its nature affirms a project's alignment with GSA's Design Excellence standards, so that the commissioner can endorse the concept design and the project may move forward. The presentation may take place virtually. If any of the commissioner's comments require further development, then these items will be included in a Chief Architect's Approval Letter that is delivered to the regional commissioner. Follow-on reviews by the chief architect may be required to review the implementation of commissioner comments. See the Appendix for a sample Chief Architect's Approval Letter.

9.7.54 SUBJECT MATTER EXPERT ROLLING REVIEWS

The project manager will establish a series of document packages (which may be based on the sequence of construction) as well as a schedule of review submissions. The regional chief architect will distribute the packages to GSA subject matter experts. Whereas the regional chief architect distributes RFP submissions so that subject matter experts may share comments with the SSEB prior to its Phase 2 review, subject matter experts share their comments with the regional project manager after the NTP. Subject matter experts typically review technical submissions for concurrence with PBS-P100 at this point in the project's life.

9.7.6 CONSTRUCTION EXCELLENCE PEER REVIEW

See Chapter 12 for more information about the Construction Excellence process.

CHAPTER 10

EXCELLENCE IN DESIGN-BUILD-BRIDGING

THE ORIGINAL VERSION OF DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION EXCELLENCE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES WAS INTENDED FOR CAPITAL PROJECTS USING DESIGN-BID-BUILD DELIVERY. WHILE THIS PUBLICATION NOW INCLUDES A CHAPTER CODIFYING PROCEDURES FOR DESIGN-BUILD DELIVERY, THE INCREASING POPULARITY OF DESIGN-BUILD-BRIDGING REQUIRES FURTHER EXPANSION OF THE DOCUMENT. COMPARED TO DESIGN-BUILD AND DESIGN-BID-BUILD, RESPECTIVELY, DESIGN-BUILD-BRIDGING PERMITS GSA GREATER CREATIVE CONTROL OF THE END PRODUCT WHILE ASSIGNING MORE CONSTRUCTION RESPONSIBILITY TO THE BUILDING CONTRACTOR. A NEW DESIGN-BUILD-BRIDGING CHAPTER IS UNDER DEVELOPMENT AND WILL BE RELEASED AT A LATER TIME.

CHAPTER 11

DESIGN EXCELLENCE-INTEGRATED IDIQS

THIS CHAPTER CONTINUES TO EXPAND UPON THE ORIGINAL VERSION OF DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION EXCELLENCE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES, WHICH HAD BEEN WRITTEN FOR CAPITAL PROJECTS CONTRACTED IN A STANDALONE FASHION. THE FOLLOWING ENTERPRISE-WIDE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR INDEFINITE DELIVERY, INDEFINITE QUANTITY (IDIQ) CONTRACTS CONSOLIDATES IDIQ INSTRUCTIONS PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED IN THIS PUBLICATION AND EXPANDS UPON THEM IN DETAIL. THEY ENSURE THAT THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR FEDERAL ARCHITECTURE ARE MANIFESTED IN PROSPECTUS-LEVEL PROJECTS THAT ARE ORDERED VIA IDIQ CONTRACT. THE COMPLETE CHAPTER WILL BE RELEASED AT A LATER DATE.

CONSTRUCTION EXCELLENCE

CONSTRUCTION EXCELLENCE FOLLOWS ON THE HEELS OF THE DESIGN EXCELLENCE PROGRAM AND IS MODELED AFTER DESIGN EXCELLENCE PROCEDURES. THE CONSTRUCTION EXCELLENCE PROGRAM IMPROVES DELIVERY BY IDENTIFYING TRENDS AND NATIONAL ISSUES THAT HAVE BEARING ON CONSTRUCTION AND APPLYING THEM TO GSA PROJECTS.

THE BENEFITS OF THE CONSTRUCTION EXCELLENCE PROGRAM INCLUDE: IMPROVING ON-TIME, ON-BUDGET DELIVERY; IMPROVING STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS; ASSISTING WITH IDENTIFICATION AND MITIGATION OF RISKS; INCREASING EFFICIENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS OF PROCESSES; REDUCING POTENTIAL FOR CLAIMS AND LITIGATION; IMPROVING COST MANAGEMENT; ENHANCING SITE SAFETY; CREATING GREATER UNIFORMITY OF RESULTS WITHIN THE GSA INVENTORY; INCREASING EFFICIENCY FOR STAKEHOLDERS DOING BUSINESS WITH GSA.

12.1 CONSTRUCTION EXCELLENCE PEER REVIEWS

In addition to partnering with the construction industry and monitoring individual projects, the Construction Excellence Program oversees two peer reviews for every major project (construction budget \$25 million or higher) as well as a lessons learned session. Conducted in parallel with key delivery milestones, these two peer reviews assess the overall performance and quality of construction management and provide feedback that increases the probability of successful outcomes. The lessons learned session takes place upon the project's substantial completion. In general, the priorities of Construction Excellence reviews are:

- Clear communication
- Mitigation of risks
- Increased efficiency
- Site safety
- Reduced claims
- Cost management
- On time, on budget
- Consistent results

Peer reviews apply the expertise of independent, senior-level construction executives to major GSA projects at two phases of construction. During each of these phases, two members of the National Register of Peer Professionals who specialize in construction will visit the project site. A third peer chosen from the Design Excellence peer reviewers should be present for the initial construction review, to maintain continuity between design and construction phases. An ODC representative will act as facilitator for these reviews; the ODC representative and regional project manager will work in tandem with the Office of Project Delivery to schedule a peer review six weeks in advance of that meeting. Virtual or hybrid meeting formats should be considered in lieu of in-person attendance only in extenuating circumstances.

At every review, the peers conduct independent interviews with representatives of each entity of the construction team—GSA personnel, design firm, CMA, general contractor, and major customers—as appropriate. Each interview should take no more than 90 minutes. Through these interviews, the peers

gain an understanding of construction team dynamics and the health of the project. The peers identify risks and unresolved issues that must be addressed to increase the probability of a project's success.

After interviews, peer reviewers meet with the construction team collectively and provide a debriefing regarding the opportunities and challenges they have identified in the project's delivery. They also provide supporting recommendations for the construction team to consider. Following each peer review, the facilitator writes a report summarizing those findings and recommendations, and distributes it to all participants; the facilitator (i.e., the ODC representative) also sends a copy of the report to the GSA regional director of project management or that position's equivalent. The regional project management team is encouraged to utilize this report to identify and implement changes that address peer reviewers' concerns. The project team has 30 days to respond to the ODC facilitator's report; the facilitator will distribute responses to the peers.

12.1.1 15% CONSTRUCTION EXCELLENCE PEER REVIEW

At 15% construction completion, an initial construction peer review evaluates whether processes for successful project delivery have been established from the outset of construction. Two Construction Excellence peer reviewers and one Design Excellence peer tour the project site and conduct interviews with each stakeholder group. Candid feedback and discussions are encouraged. This peer review typically does not focus on construction quality, unless stakeholders identify such issues as a concern. The 15% peer review centers on effectiveness of processes, relationships, staffing levels, and communication between the construction team members.

12.1.2 65% CONSTRUCTION EXCELLENCE PEER REVIEW

This review includes the two Construction Excellence peer reviewers; attendance of the Design Excellence peer is not mandatory, although in-person attendance of all stakeholders is still strongly encouraged. The meeting reiterates questions from the 15% review and follows up on concerns documented in the 15% report. This peer review looks at how well the project is being executed and may address more detailed design and construction issues. The review will also look forward to closeout issues and any potential risks that may impact successful completion. Upon the review's conclusion, the ODC facilitator produces and distributes a written report that lists the salient observations—both residual concerns and newly exposed issues—that require immediate attention.

12.1.3 LESSONS LEARNED

At or near the completion of a project, the construction team and ODC facilitator conduct an in-person or virtual session for identifying and documenting lessons learned. Construction Excellence peer reviewers are not involved in this session. A lessons learned discussion looks back at the successes and challenges that occurred from project planning through construction completion. These issues may include project planning, project communication, working relationships, and design and construction quality, among others. As in previous meetings, candor is encouraged. Documentation of the session informs future project teams. With the assistance of the ODC facilitator, the project manager is responsible for documenting the session and then completing the appropriate form for the [National Lessons-Learned Database](#).

A GSA region may ask the Construction Excellence Program to conduct peer reviews for projects that do not meet the \$25 million threshold. The region should issue this request according to a project's scope, complexity, political concerns, or other conditions whose resolution would benefit from an independent expert review.