

THE EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS INITIATIVE

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DESIGNING OUR FUTURE

Our public buildings reflect our values and aspirations in a way that will have lasting impact on the public's perception of government. The "Excellence in Public Buildings Initiative" has been designed by the Department of General Services (DGS) of the State of California to provide the leadership, education, and guidance to improve the outcomes of our capital building efforts.

The "Excellence in Public Buildings Initiative" grows out of a convergence of possibilities that currently exists as the state envisions the design and construction opportunities of the future. The Governor and other state officials have recently put forth policy initiatives that raise standards for public buildings. Technology is rapidly changing how agencies deliver services, a development that will have far reaching implications on how the state conducts business. At the same time, the California architecture and design community has demonstrated an increased willingness to participate in the process of supporting the state's commitment to excellence.

In preparing the "Excellence in Public Buildings Initiative," DGS has solicited the opinions and concerns of those parties most directly affected by the building process – citizens who use government services; agencies and their employees who occupy these buildings; teachers, students, and parents who want their schools to be safe, healthy environments; representatives of local communities who feel the impact of these buildings on their surroundings; the public that wants buildings that are lasting, cost effective, accessible for the disabled, environmentally sensitive, and sustainable; and the professional design community, who will implement the state's mandate for excellence in design and performance.

The "Excellence in Public Buildings Initiative" expresses the state's commitment to a set of policies, guidelines, procedures, and practices that will lead to sustained excellence in the planning, design, and evaluation of public buildings.

INTRODUCTION

The “Excellence in Public Buildings Initiative” will improve the process the state uses to design and construct public buildings. This initiative recognizes the strengths and accomplishments of California public buildings of the past, and will build upon that record of excellence by improving the process and outcomes of our capital building efforts. In addition, this initiative recognizes:

the **LEGACY** we are creating for the built environment and for public perceptions of government, as well as for local school districts.

the **IMPACT** these projects will have on local communities and their aspirations. There is a need to integrate them into communities and provide for more multi-use facilities.

the need to **ASSURE QUALITY** of design and achievement of building performance goals. By improving the attractiveness of doing business with the state, we will do a better job of tapping the full range of our talented design community.

the **PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY** we assume, given the extraordinary level of investment and multiple goals; to conserve energy and promote sustainability, assure access for the disabled, provide greater permanence, improve planning, assure quality design, improve citizen and customer service experience, and produce buildings that promote productivity and learning.

California has embarked upon an unprecedented building boom in both state facilities and local schools. The impact of these investments on citizens, employees, students, local communities, and the public are lasting and far-reaching:

The current state capital campaign commits \$2.7 billion and four hundred projects in fiscal year 2001-02 alone.

K-12 public school construction and modernization, involving substantial state oversight, is at its highest level ever.

State schools face an enrollment rate four times the national average, increasing at 120,000 children per year, requiring more than three new schools per week statewide, financed by a state bond measure of \$6.7 Billion (1998), plus similar amounts in local funding and other sources.

This report focuses primarily on the front end of the capital outlay process: building planning and design. The next phase of the ‘excellence’ initiative will address building construction.

THE EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS INITIATIVE

The state will launch a broad, system-wide *Excellence in Public Buildings* Initiative. Through this initiative, the State Architect, the Real Estate Services Division (RESA), and DGS leadership will promote quality and continuous improvement in the planning, design, and evaluation of public buildings.

The purpose of the Excellence in Public Buildings Initiative is to produce high performing public buildings and a positive architectural legacy that reflect the state's commitment to excellence.

Together, DGS leadership and the State Architect will promote quality public building design and construction by:

1. **EDUCATING AGENCIES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS** about the importance of program planning and the role of quality design in meeting building performance expectations. Assumptions about future business and capital needs should be re-examined in light of emerging technology and trends in public agency service delivery.
2. **IMPROVING 'PROGRAM PLANNING'**, i.e., the process of assessing the needs of the people who will use the building, taking into account staffing levels, service demand and delivery, work processes, and space planning. (DGS can implement these changes administratively. The current state Five-Year Strategic Planning process already addresses some of these issues.)
3. **SETTING GOALS AND PERFORMANCE STANDARDS** to pinpoint expectations about what the building is to provide, and then ensure that the design process results in a building that meets those expectations. This should include an integrated, 'whole building' approach that seeks to achieve low total costs over the life of the building by minimizing energy and resource consumption, simplifying operational and maintenance requirements, and extending building life.
4. **INCORPORATING THE LOCAL COMMUNITY'S NEEDS** into the site selection and design criteria for state buildings, creating public buildings that enhance their local communities, are sensitive to local circumstances and honor community development goals.
5. **UPGRADING THE SELECTION PROCESS** for architects and design professionals by streamlining the qualification process, reviewing the selection criteria to assure alignment of selection with specific building needs and performance goals, and providing peer professional input in the selection and the design process. We will encourage this effort by

articulating the *Excellence in Public Buildings* objectives and including them in all building advertisements and Requests for Qualifications, and by awarding contracts based on bidders' responsiveness to overall performance goals and policy outcomes (sustainability, smart buildings, energy conservation, etc.).

6. EVALUATING BUILDING PERFORMANCE by implementing the Post Occupancy Evaluation process, which evaluates the effectiveness of design and construction from the perspective of the building occupants, and uses that information to develop requirements for future buildings.
7. RECOGNIZING SUCCESS through a program of awards and recognition of staff, designer, and contractor contributions to the creation of exemplary public buildings. These may include a state-sponsored design competition, Governor's awards for schools and public buildings based on performance goals and staff recognition for outstanding contributions.

THE CHALLENGE

The “Excellence in Public Buildings Initiative” grows out the Department of General Service’s (DGS) commitment to the ongoing improvement of the state’s services in the design and construction of public buildings. To more fully assess the current system, the DGS sought responses from a wide range of individuals, representing the various stages in that process, including stakeholders, designers and architects, and the state agencies that utilize these buildings. Agencies whose opinions are reflected in this report include the DGS/Division of the State Architect, DGS/Real Estate Services Division, the California State Departments of Education, Finance, Motor Vehicles, and Employment Development, CalEPA, CalTrans, University of California, Legislative Analysis Office, Federal General Services Administration, as well as representatives of the professional design community. Their responses have contributed to the content and direction of the “Excellence in Public Buildings Initiative.” DGS acknowledges the importance of many divergent perceptions and the value of presenting them constructively to promote further dialogue and investigation. Along with the following assessment of the challenges we face, we include some of the comments we received from respondents.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

Among views expressed were concerns that “processes, resources and relationships” throughout the capital planning, design, and construction process pose significant barriers to producing excellent results.

“If more architecture firms believe they will have a real opportunity (to compete/succeed) in the selection process, they would participate.”

“There is too much focus on specific project type experience with the state vs. an assessment of the designer’s talent and complex problem solving ability.”

“It is not debatable; the state is not creating lasting buildings; there is no permanency; too little variety; too risk averse, project management driven. . .”

“State bureaucracy is a quagmire for local school districts for school construction, so districts need to select firms that know the bureaucracy.”

THE STATE BUILDING CAMPAIGN: AN OPPORTUNITY AND A RESPONSIBILITY

The scale of current needs and construction plans for state buildings and local public schools demand special attention to the outcomes of those investments in terms of their total perfor-

mance for owners and users, their architectural significance and sustainability, and their impacts on local communities:

\$1.4 billion in FY 01/02; 550 RESD projects

8-10 projects in excess of \$50M at any one time

\$40 billion total school construction needs

Over three new schools needed per week to keep up with annual public school enrollment increases

“We need a vision to produce 21st century buildings based on values we can agree on such as sustainability, respect for local context, pedestrian orientation, enhancement of the community, and designing places about people.”

“The goal should be to increase the staying power of buildings... with emphasis on timelessness of design.”

“We need a better marriage of (client department) program needs and community needs.”

“Too often designer selection is predicated on the visual, and not on how well they deal with the community.”

THE SHIFT TO HIGH PERFORMANCE BUILDINGS AND SCHOOLS

The language of “high performance” for public and commercial buildings is strongly shaping expectations for building outcomes today. Design is an essential element to achieving high performance and requires a commitment to creative problem solving and innovation, as well as accommodation of the latest systems and technological improvements.

Within state government, the “blueprints” being developed highlight the importance of focusing on setting and achieving high performance standards for buildings that:

- produce spaces and environments conducive to greater worker productivity and student learning
- meet programmatic needs of users
- enhance safety, health, and accessibility
- improve energy, water conservation, and waste management
- minimize environmental impacts in construction methods and materials use
- reduce operational and maintenance costs.

“Our energy programs initially appealed for efficiency and cost savings. Now there is also greater appreciation of the connection to student performance, health, and safety... there is a call for more holistic systems integration in building design and construction... and a trend to see schools as ‘centers for community’, which requires more multi-use flexibility.”

“The state spends approximately \$2/year per square for energy costs and \$130/year per square foot in labor costs. So every 1-percentage increase in productivity would reduce costs by \$1.30/sq. Ft. While it is difficult to measure productivity improvements, there are surrogate measures such as the rate of attendance or “sick days” per each building.”

PROGRAM PLANNING - A CRITICAL COMPONENT

Program planning begins with the initial department concept of its capital need, and inclusion of that in the department’s five-year Strategic (Capital) plan. That is followed by development of a COBCP ‘budget package’ or Master Plan process where project scope, budget, and schedule are defined. A client department may hire its own space planners, get technical assistance directly from DGS staff (Project Management; Asset Planning & Enhancement; and/or Professional Services) or through A/E firms hired by DGS on retainer contracts or selected as Master Planner contractors.

Program planning typically includes a description of department mission, services and functions, number of staff by function, growth projections, open vs. private work space, space needs for program support, and special needs. It also considers the circulation of people in the building, adjacency needs by function and business processes, service demand projections, parking needs/requirements, and policy mandates (proximity to public transportation, on site childcare, etc).

Program planning does not routinely include an analysis of assumptions about business needs, projected service demands, and service delivery. The degree of integration of other mandated performance standards in planning is often dependent on the level of communication between the client department and DGS, and the specific knowledge of assigned staff.

Initial gross space estimates and costing are based on total/usable square feet projections, parking, local market data on land acquisition, construction and lease costs, inflation multipliers, project delivery methods, and financing scheme. In general, detailed space planning occurs after a project receives funding approval, with project scope and budget already set. The designer drafts preliminary plans or working drawings before the state bids the project for construction.

“We need education of our customers about the capital outlay process and the importance of being able to present program needs in a way that will be compelling to the Department of Finance.”

“Delays are often due to lack of up front planning, without considering changing how we do business.”

“Design should reflect the building’s needs (including integration of sustainability) and not just be a function of budget.”

“We need to re-examine the entire front-end planning process. . . and partner with designers and clients, chartering with clearer planning and performance goals.”

THE NEED FOR PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AND EVALUATION

The state process should articulate business program needs and prevailing policy mandates in the form of specific goals to shape the scope of the project and set the expectations for the design/construction process. This is intimately tied to the quality of strategic and program planning.

Goals address such issues as expected building life, occupant and flow capacities, design guidelines, accessibility, energy conservation, sustainability and reliability of materials and operational systems, maintenance costs, occupant productivity, air quality, acoustic quality, fire, life and seismic safety, adaptability of work space to changing needs, options for multi-use, accessibility, visual appeal, pedestrian comfort, congruity with surroundings, integration of emerging technologies, life cycle cost savings, and cost containment.

Goal setting coupled with a commitment to evaluation provides a basis to assess the validity of standards and guidelines over time, make operational adjustments as necessary, and learn from actual experience to inform planning for future projects. “Post Occupancy Evaluation” (POE) is one method that uses questionnaires, interviews, and on site tours to develop direct feedback from building users about how well the building is meeting performance expectations.

The focus of Post Occupancy Evaluation is to rationalize decision-making and enhance organizational learning by encouraging performance-based decision making, agreed upon evaluation criteria, consolidating lessons-learned, and fostering a climate of experimentation and shared learning.

POE can be initiated several months after building occupancy, and periodically thereafter, generating an ongoing knowledge base of data that can be used for quick response remedies to some building problems, the creation of design guidelines, input into specific planning or programming decisions, improvements in project delivery and building management processes, and testing innovations in technology, design, and office space schemes.

THE IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY DESIGN

Feedback underscores the significance of design far beyond its aesthetic contribution to a building’s value.

“It is important that people not see design as fluff and only about aesthetics. Good architecture [in public buildings] equates to value...in permanence, stability, sustainability, and in

economic value to the local community.”

“The quality of the design depends on the skillfulness of the designer in solving the problems and their ability to offer choices. . . Design Excellence should be an enabling attitude.”

“Simply give me a building that is within my allotted budget, is functional and meets the operational needs of my organization or unit. I am not interested in experimenting with new designs.”

LIMITED RECOGNITION FOR EXEMPLARY PROJECTS

The professional design community underscores the value of government recognition of contributions made to our communities by quality design.

“We don’t get enough recognition now for the good work we do. . . DSA would be an appropriate awards sponsor. . . Awards could be given for various types of projects, announced by the Governor at annual meetings.”

“Beginning an awards program would require coming to agreement about the criteria, which might provide a safe way to generate a dialogue throughout DGS about ‘excellence’ . . . Awards could also be tied to the feedback from Post Occupancy Evaluations.”

“In the past, AIA helped the State Department of Rehabilitation create an awards program for excellence in design that met the needs of persons with disabilities. . . The state could have categories of awards for excellence in courts, office buildings, and schools.”

“Recognition is important, but award programs can be controversial. They are within AIA. They raise values issues. The public and architects may have different views about what a ‘legacy’ building is.”

DIFFICULTY IN ATTRACTING DESIGN FIRMS

Views reflect various assessments of the challenge of attracting design firms to compete for public building contracts.

“We are getting fewer firms submitting proposals while the number of projects is growing.”

“The success of a project often depends on the luck of the people you draw. . . so I always make a point now of knowing who is assigned as the project manager and that will influence my decision on whether to bid.”

“Use of peer professionals in selection helps because they are more likely to see the transferability of skills and abilities.”

“You attract great people [if you are clear about what you want] and you let them do great work...”

THE NEED TO COMMIT TO EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS

There is a need for an initiative to commit the State of California to a set of policies, guidelines, procedures, and practices that would lead to sustained excellence in the planning, design, and evaluation of public buildings. It will require leadership from DGS and specifically the State Architect, a commitment of resources and staffing to establish and manage an ongoing excellence program, and a high degree of collaboration among state agencies.

“State facilities are obsolete too soon.”

“The state has a responsibility to present itself at the highest possible level and to high standards, not just ‘cheap and fast’... State’s customers need buildings that are not threatening and have nicer aesthetics... As our need for greater flexibility in building use increases, state ownership of the buildings becomes more desirable.”

“The goal to be ‘cutting edge’ is not necessarily appropriate for public buildings. The work of boutique ‘signature’ designers that we see in magazines may be attractive now but may not have ‘staying power’.”

“California is ripe for design excellence because of its preeminence in design, particularly in the LA Basin and San Francisco Bay Area... Use local peer professionals on selection and design review panels who are sensitive to local community concerns... Leadership is the key issue; select architects who are talented AND can work well with the local community.”

THE OPPORTUNITY

The convergence of several events creates a unique moment-in-time opportunity to launch the “Excellence in Public Buildings” Initiative:

URGENCY: THE IMPENDING BOOM IN STATE BUILDING

The urgency posed by the “legacy impacts” of the impending state building boom on local communities and public perceptions of government.

The state building boom provides an opportunity to target a variety of specific building projects (e.g., CalTrans/LA, small building prototypes, and public schools) as “pilots” and case studies for exploratory efforts.

POLICY ISSUES: DRIVING THE STATE TO BUILD BETTER BUILDINGS

Energy, sustainability, accessibility, e-government, and education policy issues are of primary importance to the Governor and the people of California— and public buildings need to be designed to address these concerns and policies.

The Governor’s Sustainable Buildings Task Force is issuing its Blueprint action report to implement the Governor’s Executive Order D-16-00. It contains many proposals relevant to the goal of promoting overall excellence in public buildings (e.g., energy performance standards, life cycle costing studies, whole building concepts, design guidelines).

The Governor’s mandate to develop e-government technology and services is driving changes in the way state agencies conduct business, that in turn affects space needs and design requirements for public buildings.

The state’s commitment to universal design for schools and public buildings for disabled access.

A number of education policies and initiatives are driving improvements in the design of public schools. These include:

The Education Reform efforts of the CDE, the Collaborative for High Performance Schools (CHPS) — of which DSA is already an active participant, and the California Energy Commission (CEC) Bright Schools program.

Exploration of DSA, Office of Public School Construction (OPSC), and CDE’s “One stop”

approach to expedite construction and promote high performance school buildings.

DSA review of the scope of its school plan check and code enforcement services to possibly assume a greater role in encouraging high performance school design and construction.

CHANGES WITHIN THE DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES

DGS has undergone re-organization as recommended by the 1996 Arthur Andersen report on organizational structure and processes for real estate and architectural operations. New leadership has improved collaboration within the Department, customer service, and interest in improving the building design process. The reorganization led to some specific business-process improvements. While some tensions and divisions remain, by all accounts working relationships are improving. Examples of major changes include:

The “One DGS” Vision is (a) seamless operations (one operation from all perspectives); (b) provider of an integrated suite of services; and (c) a shared attitude of wanting to help our customers (and each other). The theme: “ Services, Solutions and Customer Success”.

The Policy Executive Committee provides an opportunity to integrate new policy mandates (such as the Governor’s Executive Order on sustainable buildings) into the building planning process.

DGS has initiated a program to develop a Post-Occupancy Evaluation process that evaluates the effectiveness of design and construction from the perspective of the building occupants and uses the information learned to improve future buildings.

DGS is working to integrate “Smart Building” elements in the design of new buildings, providing an opportunity to combine state of the art energy efficient equipment, life/safety systems, telecommunications systems, and workplace automation with skillful management—creating user friendly buildings with a capacity for growth, the ability to upgrade quickly and economically, and the flexibility to handle change efficiently.

Several major state building projects are often cited as examples of excellence and commendable efforts (e.g., the Broadway Building in Los Angeles; San Francisco Civic Center court/office building, the Harris office building in Oakland, the Butterfield Building, the Capital Area East End Complex, and the Los Angeles CalTrans district headquarters building). These can serve as examples for future projects and increase recognition for these projects and DGS staff who worked on them. There is also an opportunity to apply ‘excellence’ principles to smaller projects (e.g. by developing prototypes for repetitive projects such as Department of Motor Vehicles offices and California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection fire stations).

OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN FROM THE GSA “DESIGN EXCELLENCE” EXPERIENCE

The federal General Services Administration (GSA) experience is encouraging and provides a useful framework to explore opportunities for improvement in California at this time of significant growth in public building construction.

Key Elements of the GSA Design Excellence Program include:

The importance of strong leadership.

A commitment to design excellence reinforced in language of all RFQ advertisements.

An awards program, using prominent design professionals as jury.

Quality Based Selection (QBS)/portfolio approach to selection with peer professional input, short list of finalists required to submit three design options, subject to peer professional review.

Peer processes, including establishment of an annual professional peer panel where peers volunteer as public service and get benefit of prestige and a greater awareness of the government decision-making process.

Incorporation of significant contemporary public art in federal building projects.

Complementary focus on quality project management and “construction excellence”.

OTHER OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN GOVERNMENT

We have an opportunity for synergy of state and federal GSA sponsored projects sited in the same localities (e.g., Los Angeles Civic Center: CalTrans Building and federal Courthouse).

The Division of the State Architect has entrée to local public schools given its role in code enforcement and review of school construction plans.

There is existing legal authority to revise the criteria for “quality based selection” of design professionals.

The Department of Finance has increased funding to improve the quality of the five year strategic planning process for capital needs, with the incentive of single allocation funding for approved plans and discretion to apply project savings to other planned projects (first offered this year for higher education).

Potential funding opportunities PUC's "Savings by Design" program, existing commitments to implementation of the Governor's sustainability and energy conservation goals, and potential redirection of existing DGS resources.

THE DESIGN COMMUNITY

California has a wealth of talent and opportunities to expand participation for emerging firms in public building projects by focusing on projects of varied scale and uniqueness.

There is strong design community support for greater commitment by the State to create "lasting" state buildings, and a willingness to work with the State to make it happen.

Prominent designers in California have an interest in playing a peer professional role in selection and design review; and there is potential for linkage with GSA's Peer Professional Panel.

The State Architect's standing and credibility among design professionals is high.

IMPLEMENTATION

We recommend these initial steps in the implementation of the Initiative:

Finalize and solidify agreement on the goals and objectives of the *Excellence in Public Buildings* program through focus groups with the design community and forums within DGS.

Begin an education and awareness campaign to articulate building excellence goals, increase understanding of the value of design, and educate client agencies about their role in the planning process to ensure that buildings designs meet their current and future program needs.

Begin to incorporate the *Excellence in Public Buildings* goals in announcements and RFQ's for approved capital projects in FY 01/02.

Enhance the current program planning process, making it more timely and comprehensive, with up-front linkage to performance standards and policy goals.

Align architect/designer selection criteria with the specific needs and performance goals for each building, and consider architect/designer knowledge of and ability to work with the local community.

Review the submittal process for design professionals and expand the list of pre-qualified design professionals for retainer contracts.

Expand "peer professional" input in architect/designer selection and design review.

Establish design guidelines for specific types of buildings.

Integrate public policy initiative elements into public building standards and guidelines. Examples include the Sustainable Buildings Task Force recommendations, the standards and incentives generated by the Collaborative for High Performance Schools, "Smart Buildings" (design elements that combines state of the art technology with the capacity to accommodate growth, upgrade efficiently, and assure flexibility to effectively handle change), and universal design to assure full access for the disabled.

Identify target project(s) for case study to address program planning, project delivery method, design review, building performance goals, etc.

Implement a Post-Occupancy Evaluation process for buildings to assess outcomes for occupants and users, enable greater use of performance incentives for contractors, and promote greater recognition of staff for exemplary work.

Explore securing a portion of the Public Goods Charge (PGC) funding to support administration of the “Savings by Design” program by the DSA.

Establish an Excellence in Public Buildings Recognition Program, including a state-sponsored design competition, Governor’s award for schools and public buildings based on performance goals, and staff recognition awards for outstanding contributions to the achievement of “Excellence in Public Buildings.”

DGS can implement these changes administratively under current legal authority.

CONCLUSION

As the Excellence in Public Initiative is brought into daily practice, the potential benefits include:

Explicit linkage of the state's building campaign to pressing public policy goals in energy and education.

Recognition of the state as a leader in creating a legacy of lasting, high performing buildings for the citizens of California and their communities.

Enhanced design/construction contractor selection through clearer performance expectations regarding program and policy goals.

Attraction of a broader pool of exceptionally talented design consultants.

Greater participation by the professional design community in state building projects (design review, design professional selection, recognition and awards).

Reinforcement of Sustainable Buildings Executive Order D-16-00, Collaborative for High Performing Schools initiative, and Universal Design principles.

Increased organizational capacity of DGS and DSA through a comprehensive approach that fosters team development and improved customer service, project management, program planning, and policy direction.

The Department of General Services/Division of the State Architect encourages the State of California to commit to an ongoing, system-wide set of policies, guidelines, procedures and practices that will lead to sustained excellence in the planning, design, and evaluation of public buildings.