

Building Solutions Facility Management Briefing

PREPARING FOR A FACILITY AUDIT

Summary: Once you have decided to conduct a facility audit of your campus or your facility, you can take steps that will help you get the most from your consultants and the best value for your money invested in this undertaking. Regardless of who performs your audit or how you intend to proceed, it is a major commitment of resources. With some careful preparation, the administrative leader or facility owner/operator who is the liaison for the audit can help the property owner gain the most benefit from the audit.

Background: A premise of this guide is that a team of specialists, not currently working on campus day-to-day, is being retained to perform a field investigation, and that it is in everyone's best interests to perform this work in a condensed period of time.

What will happen during the site visit: Typically, a team of engineers and other specialists will, together, visit the facility for a period of time, ranging from 1-3 days. The team will be comprised of trained professionals, such as a structural engineer, a mechanical engineer, perhaps an elevator consultant, and a roofing consultant. They will examine every facet of the building and grounds that were specified in their agreement with the property owner. Each will work at his own pace, examining systems in his area of expertise on the entire campus, and periodically coordinate with his counterparts on their findings. Some of the areas of expertise are related and overlap, so this coordination assures a more complete and concise report to you. Each will take photos and notes, and periodically go to the headquarters room to summarize data, review drawings and documents to compare with observations, calculate quantities, and discuss findings with peers. Each specialist writes his portion of the report and prepares cost estimate in the weeks following, after returning to his office.

Your preparation steps:

Documents

1. Ask for a complete document checklist from the auditor, and determine which items need to be copied and which can simply be provided for examination.
2. Construction plans and specifications are the most important kind of documents to provide, in as well-organized fashion as possible. Free and open access to these is a must. If you customarily work with a blueprinting service, provide their name and phone number to the auditor so that they can copy necessary documents and avoid having them removed from the premises. Alternatively, jointly make a list of documents that are loaned and ask that they be copied and returned ASAP they're valuable. Best yet, have them scanned to an electronic file. It's a little costly at the outset, but is an excellent protection and makes for easy document sharing.

3. A scaled composite drawing of the campus is very helpful for orientation and quantity estimating purposes. Have a site survey of your campus performed; it will be handy for lots of purposes in the future. A less desirable alternative: order an aerial photo of the campus or find one on the internet, possibly at no cost.
4. Provide a complete printed list of the buildings, using the names that should appear in the report (sometimes, this is politically sensitive: "Margot Jones Theatre" instead of just "Theater"). It is less cumbersome in the document if short names are used. Present them in the order in which you want them to appear in the report. To the extent you have it, provide square footage, insured value, year of construction completion, and original cost of construction (hard cost or general contract amount).
5. List of capital replacements or major repairs in the past 3-5 years (whatever time period is readily available); prepare to be interviewed as to what triggered the project, who were the consultants/contractors, etc. Especially if it was remediation of a problem (say, a structural failure), it will be helpful to see any available drawings or contracts.
6. History of refurbishment of carpet, paint, ceilings, lighting projects, cabinet replacements, or general building renovations. When, what was done, where?
7. Wish lists (yours and your facility director) for replacements, improvements; master plan for future campus development and major renovations planned.

Space and Logistics

8. Provide a "headquarters" room for the team, equipped with table(s) large enough for 2 or 3 to do paperwork, plus space to roll out drawings. It is desirable to have the drawings in this room or in the immediate area. Also, if possible, provide ability to secure the room overnight, equip with phone, as centrally located on campus as possible, etc. Access to copier nearby (billing code required to operate?).
9. Orient team on campus security, issue badges or whatever is normal on your campus for visitors/contractors, inform faculty/staff of the audit and that team will be accessing areas not normally open to visitors, will be taking photos, have 2-way radios, etc. Invite campus users to share facility problems/concerns with the team, if they wish.
10. If audit staff is not gender-diverse, plan on providing access and procedure for males (e.g.) to inspect female locker rooms, restrooms, etc. Also, plan schedule and escorts for visiting "Head's" home, dormitories, or other residences where access is naturally limited during certain hours. Provide keys (or full time escort) for locked mechanical rooms, ladders to reach roofs, access to other limited access spaces.
11. Plan on some extended hours access to campus, after your facility staff has left for the day. Especially if the team is on campus for limited period of time, they may be working some late nights.
12. Be sure systems (HVAC, electrical) are switched on and operating in all buildings, to facilitate proper examination. Turn on house lights in

auditoriums, theaters and other spaces that might ordinarily be shut down or dark.

13. On some campuses, golf carts are used for reaching remote areas and availability of same for certain team members may be useful and productive.
14. Provide cell phone numbers or means of reaching you and the facility director, and plan to keep team leader apprised of your availability during the time the team is on campus.

People

15. Arrange for head of facilities to be available, full-time, during the site visit. The business manager should plan to be on call, as well. Depending on procedure for escorts/keys, he will need to provide sufficient staff to allow access to spaces and critical information, history of facility repairs and maintenance, etc. The HVAC specialist on campus is also a key person to interview and guide the consultant through that system. Most consultants will not require an escort, unless you do for security reasons. Each consultant will be visiting spaces independently of one another, not as a group, so plan accordingly.
16. In a positive light, prepare all concerned persons— maintenance head, trustees, head of school— to receive the results of the effort and try to gain buy-in before the site visit. A facility audit can be a remarkably useful tool at all levels, because it will inform, organize, and serve as a common reference for administrators, trustees/stockholders, working staff, and other stakeholders. It will save time, separate truth from legend, and quickly get all decision makers focussed on the real issues. It is not a witch hunt, nor is it (usually) intended as a personnel evaluation. It is a training opportunity for working staff.
17. Allow for spontaneous interviews of any facility user during the site visit. In a school, students and teachers can be the best sources of information about what is not working. Prepare the users for these kinds of interaction that may take place.

Receiving and using the report: When the report is delivered, ask your consultant for an electronic copy and permission to distribute to those who will be responding to the findings, such as Facility Committee, Finance Committee, selected administrators, Facility Director, etc. Ask the key persons to review the material by a date certain; schedule a presentation meeting, which is attended by the audit team leader and perhaps one or more of his key specialists (if appropriate, depending on the findings).

In particular, review his prioritizing of deferred maintenance and discuss with him. The consultant's view of priorities may not be based on all of the information you have; or, he may have reasons for prioritizing that are valid, though different from yours. Try to reach consensus and amend the report accordingly, so that the pace of remedial work is consistent with what can realistically be accomplished.

Begin implementing immediately, budget permitting. Use the audit as a guide to your staff and facilities committee. Keep it visible in your office, refer to it often, and be sure

your facilities staff realizes that you take seriously the recommendations it contains. If you need assistance, ask your consultant to help develop an implementation plan.

A major benefit of many CMMS (software) programs is the ease with which you can group prospective remedial work. If available, utilize these tools.

Plan to update the audit on some regular basis. The best approach is to build into your annual operating budget a modest fee for re-inspecting certain systems annually (like HVAC) and others much less frequently. You may never again have to invest a significant sum for a complete audit, but through annual expenditures, continually update the one you have and maintain it as a useful tool in managing your facility.