

**2003 INNOVATIONS AWARDS PROGRAM  
Application Form**

- 1. Program Name                   Barrier-Free Checklist for Leased Facilities
  
- 2. Administering Agency       Washington State Department of General Administration  
  Division of State Services  
  Real Estate Services Group
  
- 3. Contact Person               Mark Lahaie, Manager, Real Estate Services Group
  
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**8. Please provide a two-sentence description of the program.**

The Barrier-Free Access Checklist is a tool used by Washington state government to make leased facilities more accessible to people with disabilities. It is used by General Administration and tenant agencies to assess accessibility when initially leasing space, renewing leases, evaluating accessibility in existing facilities and in planning barrier removal.

**9. How long has this program been operational (month and year)?**

The program started in 1994. It was revised significantly in 2001-2002.

**10. Why was the program created? (What problem[s] or issue[s] was it designed to address?)**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) makes it unlawful for employers to discriminate against people with disabilities. It also requires public employers to remove barriers that prevent access by the disabled to parking, building entrances, restrooms, elevators and, in some cases, the programs and services offered within facilities.

But the ADA and state laws have specific accessibility requirements that apply to some state facilities, including leased space, and not others. For example, a leased facility used by a state agency that provides services to the disabled must have automatic doors, drop-off areas and bus stops directly adjacent to the main entrance. On the other hand, state agencies that do not provide direct services to the public don't need this level of accessibility.

The Barrier-Free Access Checklist clarifies specific accessibility requirements for state agencies in leased facilities.

Before creation of the checklist, many state agencies assumed that their leased space needed to meet the most stringent requirements. To do so proved expensive for the agency and the lessor.

The checklist saves time and money by allowing agencies and lessors to identify specific access needs and barriers on a site-by-site basis prior to leasing or renewal.

Not all state agencies in Washington are required to use the leasing services provided by the Real Estate Services Group at General Administration, so some do not use the checklist. As a consequence, the State Barrier-Free Facilities program manager at General Administration receives three times the number of access complaints about these agencies compared to those that use the checklist.

#### **11. Describe the specific activities and operations of the program in chronological order.**

Creation of the checklist was a collaborative effort by the Real Estate Services Group in General Administration's Division of State Services, the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment, members of the disabled community and client agencies.

The checklist classifies the accessibility needs of an agency according to specific Levels of Access Needs. Those levels are defined as follows:

**Level 1** – A facility that houses public employees, but does not provide on-site services to the public or a segment of the public, for example the Sentencing Guidelines Commission.

**Level 2** – A facility that houses public employees and provides on-site services to the general public, such as the Department of Licensing.

**Level 3** – A facility that houses public employees and provides on-site services specifically to clients with disabilities, for example the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation within the Department of Social and Health Services.

Specific program criteria, adapted from the *Americans With Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines*, are then assigned to a specific classification level.

In applying the checklist, a program or agency is first evaluated to determine accessibility level. Next, the facility is evaluated to see if it meets the criteria for the assigned level. For example, a Level 1 agency does not need to have a bus stop within 600 feet of the primary entrance, but a Level 3 agency does.

#### **12. Why is the program a new and creative approach or method?**

The checklist approach allows individual facilities to be matched with site and program specific accessibility needs, instead of being designed to meet the "highest" and most costly standard.

#### **13. What were the program's start-up costs? (Provide detail about specific purchases for this program, staffing needs and other financial expenditures, as well as existing materials, technology and staff already in place.)**

There were some initial start-up costs, such as holding public meetings to design the form. But that and on-going expenses are minimal. In addition, use of the checklist requires very little time

on the part of the user. When the leasing agent first used the checklist it took, on average, about 30 minutes for a site evaluation. Even less time is now required by agents familiar with the checklist.

**14. What are the program's annual operational costs?**

General Administration uses this in the normal course of business, so there are no specific operating costs. It is difficult to evaluate costs for individual agencies. However, it is clear that the checklist increases access and does not increase the overall operating cost of leasing facilities.

**15. How is the program funded?**

See above.

**16. Did this program require the passage of legislation, executive order or regulations? If YES, please indicate the citation number.**

No.

**17. What equipment, technology and software are used to operate and administer this program?**

N/A

**18. To the best of your knowledge, did this program originate in your state? If YES, please indicate the innovator's name, present address and telephone number.**

Yes.

- Ted Cohen, Department of General Administration, Division of State Services (DSS), (360) 902-7380
- Dave Brown, Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), (360) 586-4024
- Revised (2002) by Carol Maher, Department of General Administration, Division of Engineering and Architectural Services (360) 902-7210
- Revised (2002) Catherine Fahoum, Department of General Administration, Division of State Services. (360) 902-7370

**19. Are you aware of similar programs in other states? If YES, which ones and how does this program differ?**

No.

**20. Has the program been fully implemented? If NO, what actions remain to be taken?**

Yes.

**21. Briefly evaluate (pro and con) the program's effectiveness in addressing the defined problem[s] or issue[s]. Provide tangible examples.**

Using the Barrier-Free Access Checklist avoids unnecessary requirements and costs. Since Level 1 agencies require fewer accessible features than a Level 3 agency, the negotiated costs for the leases are often lower. Tenant improvements and maintenance costs are less. There are significant differences in lease costs (approximately 20 percent) as well as installation and

maintenance costs when comparing a Level 3 agency program, such as the Department of Social and Health Services to a Level 1 agency program, such as the Department of Agriculture. Estimated cost savings can be extrapolated by comparing the costs of providing a Level 1 facility to a Level 3. Less than one-third of leased facilities are classified as Level 3.

In 1995, the Aging and Adult Services Division of the Department of Social and Health Services used the checklist to determine its level of accessibility as it applied to a new leased facility. It was determined that Level 3 requirements were necessary. Additional handicapped parking spaces, larger elevators and 22 automatic opening doors were needed to accommodate employees and clients. Proximity readers were also installed. The total lease cost was approximately 25 percent more than a Level 2 agency program on the same street.

The Department of Agriculture needed office space in a rural area for its grain and fruit inspectors in Eastern Washington. No existing building was able to meet the full requirements of ADA. However, after an assessment using the checklist, it was determined that the agency would only require a Level 1 facility. Based on this assessment, a building was selected that, with minimal improvements, proved adequate for accessibility. A ramp was constructed of compact gravel surface rather than a paved surface. No handrails were required and the front door opened with less than 10 pounds of pressure, so an automatic door was not required. One of the two unisex restrooms was remodeled to make it more accessible. It was determined that the existing conference room met accessibility requirements, so modifications were unnecessary. The lease cost of \$8 per square foot is 27 percent less than the lease cost of a comparable Level 2 building in the same area.

## **22. How has the program grown and/or changed since its inception?**

The checklist was designed in 1994 and updated in 2002. It is used on an almost daily basis by the Real Estate Services Group. In fact, most of the Group's leasing agents are so familiar with the checklist that they automatically note accessible features prior to using the formal checklist in site evaluations. Tenant agencies use it regularly for renewing leases and for evaluations of leased space.

## **23. What limitations or obstacles might other states expect to encounter if they attempt to adopt this program?**

Using the checklist criteria does not ensure that tenant agency programs, employment and facilities are in full compliance with the ADA and other applicable laws. And, although General Administration assists in assessing and achieving program accessibility in leased facilities, the tenant agency is ultimately responsible.

Currently, the ADA is being revised. When these changes become law, the checklist will be updated. This should happen within the next two years.

This tool can easily be used by other states. The U.S. Access Board has reviewed this checklist and recommended it to other states.

Add space as appropriate to this form. When complete, return to:

**CSG Innovations Awards 2003**

The Council of State Governments

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DEADLINE: All original applications must be postmarked or e-mailed by April 11, 2003, to be considered for an Innovations Award for 2003.