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OVERVIEW

# EXCELLENCE

IN DIPLOMATIC FACILITIES

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
BUREAU OF OVERSEAS BUILDINGS OPERATIONS

EMBASSIES AND CONSULATES SERVE AS THE FRONT DOOR FOR U.S. DIPLOMACY. THE SAFETY AND SECURITY THEY PROVIDE TO OUR PERSONNEL ARE THE FIRST PRIORITY, BUT THEY MUST ALSO REFLECT OUR NATIONAL VALUES OF OPENNESS AND INGENUITY. IN ADDITION, EMBASSIES AND CONSULATES MUST EXEMPLIFY THE BEST OF AMERICAN ARCHITECTURE, ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP, AND INNOVATION. CHAMPIONING EXCELLENT DESIGN AND EFFICIENT TECHNOLOGIES BENEFITS BOTH THE AMERICAN TAXPAYER AND THOSE OVERSEAS WE SEEK TO SERVE.

SECRETARY OF STATE

JOHN F. KERRY,

NOVEMBER 2013





# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Concerned that the caliber of federal construction was declining, in 1962, President Kennedy convened an ad hoc committee to ensure that federal architecture continued to represent American ideals—from dignity, stability, and vigor to embodying the finest architecture of its time. That ad hoc committee set forth guiding principles for federal architecture, authored by Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Those guiding principles are just as relevant today as they were nearly 50 years ago—although today they would very likely be expanded to include the importance of security, sustainability, and flexibility in our resource-constrained and rapidly changing world.

The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations (OBO)—following in the footsteps of the General Services Administration (GSA) and the Design Excellence program it developed nearly 16 years ago—has renewed its commitment to excellence and implemented an Excellence program for U.S. embassy and consulate facilities. The Guiding Principles of this Department of State program, based on the 1962 Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture, are the foundation of this initiative and guide the work of each person and office in OBO as we pursue our mission to provide secure, safe, and functional facilities that represent the U.S. government to the host nation and support our staff in the achievement of U.S. foreign policy objectives.

Delivering excellence is a comprehensive process that seeks to utilize the best methods, technologies, and staff abilities. Each office, person, and action in OBO contributes to the realization of this goal. OBO project teams are challenged to apply these principles, coordinate their efforts, and deliver built embassy complexes that represent the best of American architecture, engineering, technology, art, and culture.

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U.S. CONSULATE GENERAL  
GUANGZHOU, CHINA

Skidmore, Owings and Merrill,  
Architect

Skidmore, Owings & Merrill ©2013,  
Photograph

**PURPOSE AND FUNCTION** Embassies and consulates have two essential purposes: to be safe, secure, functional, and inspiring places for the conduct of diplomacy, and to physically represent the U.S. government to the host nation. A facility that represents the best of American architecture, design, engineering, and construction will be an appropriate workspace, contextually appropriate, and a respected landmark—representing the best of American government, enterprise, and culture—in the host nation.

**SITE** The site and location of an embassy have practical as well as symbolic implications. OBO will develop sites that best represent the U.S. government and its goals, and enhance the conduct of diplomacy. Whenever possible, sites will be selected in urban areas, allowing U.S. embassies and consulates to contribute to the civic and urban fabric of host cities. Special attention will be paid to the general ensemble of surrounding buildings, streets, and public spaces of which embassies and consulates will form a part.

**DESIGN** The design of buildings and sites is a comprehensive process of understanding and balancing requirements and incorporating them into a thoughtfully conceived, cohesive, and inspiring whole. OBO will evaluate designs on the basis of their success in skillfully balancing requirements, and on how well the design represents the United States to the host nation. Designs are to be functionally simple and spatially flexible to meet changing needs and be enduring over time. An official embassy style will be avoided. Buildings are to be welcoming, while representing dignity, stability, innovation, humanity, and openness. Ostentation is not appropriate. Designs will be cost-effective, employing an economy of means and methods. Each design will be responsive to its context, to include the site, its surroundings, and the local culture and

climate. The designs will make use of contextually appropriate and durable materials and incorporate the latest in security and safety features.

The grounds and landscaping will complement and engage the architecture, and together are to be conceived as an integrated whole. The grounds should be functional and representational spaces. They will be sustainable, include indigenous plantings, and incorporate existing site resources, such as mature trees, wherever possible.

**ENGINEERING** The engineering of facilities will incorporate the most advanced methods, systems, technologies, and materials appropriate to the facility and local conditions, including the site, climate, natural hazards, security, and the practical reality of construction, operations, and maintenance in the host nation.

**SAFETY AND SECURITY** The safety and security of staff and visitors is paramount. Designs and construction will meet or exceed all security and safety standards and specifications. Architects and engineers will be challenged to develop ever-improving methods, materials, and solutions and to thoughtfully integrate these into overall designs.

**SUSTAINABILITY** Buildings and grounds will incorporate sustainable design and energy efficiency, and these features will be integrated into their design. Construction, maintenance, and operations practices will be sustainable. Particular attention will be given to the climate, context, and site conditions.

**ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES** OBO will hire leading American architects and engineers. Their selection will be based on the quality of their design achievements and portfolio of work. The selection methodology will be open, competitive, and transparent.

**CONSTRUCTION AND CRAFTSMANSHIP**

Construction professionals will be engaged throughout the process to ensure the best possible design and implementation. OBO is committed to using the best construction practices and craftsmanship possible and to selecting the most qualified building contractors with a record of delivering high quality projects.

**OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE** Operations and maintenance professionals will be engaged throughout the design and construction process for new construction and renovation projects. Buildings and sites will be economical to operate and maintain and will utilize equipment and materials that are durable, dependable, and suitable. Designs will be based on life-cycle analysis of options that take into account long-term operations and maintenance concerns. Design intent and features will be maintained throughout the life of the facility, using the best stewardship practices.

**ART** Embassy buildings and grounds are an opportunity to showcase the best of American and host nation art and culture. OBO is committed to integrating art into its facilities such that each property will be both an individual expression of Excellence and part of a larger body of work representing the best that America's designers and artists can leave to later generations.

**HISTORICALLY, ARCHITECTURALLY, OR CULTURALLY SIGNIFICANT PROPERTIES AND COLLECTIONS** OBO is committed to preserving the Department's historical, cultural, and architectural legacy. The Secretary of State's Register of Culturally Significant Property is the official listing of important diplomatic architecture overseas and properties that figure prominently in our country's international heritage. OBO has established a world class stewardship program dedicated to the proper conservation and maintenance of the Department's culturally significant historical properties and assets.



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U.S. EMBASSY  
ATHENS, GREECE

Walter Gropius,  
Architect

Elizabeth Gill Lui, Photographer



# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

ARCHITECTURE IS INESCAPABLY A  
POLITICAL ART, AND IT REPORTS FAITHFULLY  
FOR AGES TO COME WHAT THE POLITICAL  
VALUES OF A PARTICULAR AGE WERE.  
SURELY OURS MUST BE OPENNESS AND  
FEARLESSNESS IN THE FACE OF THOSE WHO  
HIDE IN THE DARKNESS.

SENATOR DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN,  
MARCH 25, 1999

OBO began the process of developing its Excellence program with the “Guiding Principles of Excellence in Diplomatic Facilities.” It was important to start with broad and timeless goals that would guide us; but it was only the first step. OBO established seven internal Working Groups and asked them to examine Bureau policies and procedures and to provide a steering committee with concrete recommendations as to how best to integrate Design Excellence—now the more broadly named Excellence Initiative—into all of OBO’s activities.

These multidisciplinary teams, with membership across OBO and other Department offices, covered the following areas: Overall Program Planning and Execution; Site Planning; Programming; Project Planning and Development; Design Goals and Standards; Project Construction; and Operations and Maintenance. The Steering Committee included the core leadership of OBO, as well as the chairs of the Working Groups and the GSA’s Director of Design Excellence & the Arts. The development of these recommendations provided an invaluable forum for colleagues to discuss goals, ideas and experiences; and to look at our work and organization in ways in which we rarely have the opportunity. More importantly, we were able to participate in shaping the direction of the organization for years to come. The Steering Committee referred over 60 recommendations to the Director of OBO for approval. The Director then established a multidisciplinary Implementation Committee to execute these recommendations and strategies, and OBO continues to put them into practice today. Below are highlights of these recommendations and strategies to achieve Excellence.

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U.S. EMBASSY  
LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM

KieranTimberlake,  
Architect

©KieranTimberlake/Studio amd.,  
Rendering

### **HOLISTIC APPROACH TO PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND DELIVERY**

Team collaboration and commitment are essential to achieving Excellence. Project teams are envisioned broadly and include all key stakeholders such as users, tenant agencies, and OBO disciplines, as well as members of the architectural, engineering, and construction contractor teams. A holistic and multidisciplinary approach to project development and execution is critical in the development of high-performance facilities.

**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT)** OBO's comprehensive IT platform integrates and makes available all project information, promoting effective review, communication, and decision-making during project development and construction, as well as supporting maintenance and operations of completed facilities.

**PROJECT DELIVERY METHODS** OBO uses two principal project delivery methods for the design and construction of diplomatic and consular facilities. OBO uses either Design/Build (D/B) or Design/Bid/Build (D/B/B). Neither delivery method is a default. Context, complexity, construction environment, and urgency are

evaluated when selecting the delivery method for each project. In addition to D/B/B and D/B, OBO is exploring the use of a third option, such as integrated project delivery.

**SITES** OBO recognizes the representational and symbolic importance of the location of diplomatic facilities and the need to facilitate mission operations and support sustainability. In order to meet these goals, OBO has developed a number of new tools that help the Department acquire sites in central urban areas. OBO has introduced more flexibility in its space programming to encourage the use of smaller sites, increasing the opportunity for central locations, and established "tiers" to focus searches in preferred areas. OBO explores the redevelopment of strategically-located U.S. government owned sites, and has revised the site-scoring tool to support the Bureau's objectives.

**ARCHITECT AND ENGINEER (A-E) SELECTION** OBO has renewed its efforts to work with the most talented A-E firms, whether long-established or emerging new firms. The focus on design and delivery of high-quality projects necessitates the strongest and most incisive designers to meet the myriad requirements of contemporary diplomatic

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### **U.S. EMBASSY JAKARTA, INDONESIA**

Davis Brody Bond  
Architects and Planners,  
Concept Design Architect

Davis Brody Bond Architects and  
Planners, Rendering



missions and to produce outstanding results. The selection process focuses on the portfolio of work, team members, and past performance.

**DESIGN PROCESS** OBO applies a full range of design management tools to effectuate high-quality and fully integrated design results. Methodologies include on-site design charrettes, on-board working sessions, user feedback forums, constructability and maintainability reviews, senior management approvals, and peer reviews. Best practices for improved design processes are developed through feedback from all parties.

**DESIGN GOALS** The Guiding Principles outline the fundamental design goals of all of our projects. These include the integration of purpose, function, security, safety, flexibility, sustainability, maintainability, and art.

**ENSURING LONG-TERM VALUE** OBO uses sustainability principles and life-cycle cost analysis to ensure that facilities provide the lowest overall long-term cost of ownership, consistent with quality and function. Low capital costs will not be traded for high operating costs.

**CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTOR SELECTION** The Department is recruiting construction contractors committed to the best D/B/B and D/B practices with verifiable records of consistent success with owners. OBO is working to expand the pool of contractors and reach out to new emerging firms to promote competition and ensure the best outcome for the U.S. government.

**BEST VALUE CONTRACT AWARD** The Department is using the Best Value method, which includes factors such as past performance and team qualifications, as well as consideration of life-cycle costs in the evaluation process.

**EARLY CONTRACTOR INVOLVEMENT (ECI)** OBO involves construction contractors in early stages, in particular on long-term and complex projects,

to ensure the best possible overall outcome and reduce risk. ECI encourages the establishment of good-faith and cooperation by bringing different stakeholders to the table earlier in the process.

**OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE** Reference guides and training programs are developed for each major project. The guide includes information such as design intent, systems information, maintenance requirements, and troubleshooting. This ensures that facilities are operated and maintained consistent with the goal of long-term use and asset protection, and that future modifications to the building are in keeping with the original design intent. This program includes special guidance on the preservation of historic assets.

**GUIDE TO EXCELLENCE** A Guide to Excellence in Diplomatic Facilities for OBO has been released on the OBO website ([www.state.gov/obo](http://www.state.gov/obo)). The guide is comprehensive and provides an overview of the different programs and processes in OBO and highlights how Excellence goals and priorities will be achieved in each phase of a project. The Guide is a basic “how to” manual, but also includes references or links to more detailed documents in each subject area.

**REVISED ARCHITECTURAL AND ENGINEERING DESIGN GUIDELINES** This existing multi-volume collection of design requirements has been revised in light of the Excellence initiative. The updated requirements emphasize high-performance buildings, focusing on flexibility and best design practices, while moving away from a fixed solution.

**RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE** An Excellence awards program, modeled on GSA's highly regarded one, is in development. The program will recognize work, commissioned by OBO, that exemplifies Excellence in a number of different disciplines. Urbanism, architecture, landscape architecture, interior design, art, engineering, preservation, and construction craftsmanship will be recognized in a public ceremony.

I HAVE SPOKEN FREQUENTLY ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF DIPLOMACY IN ADVANCING OUR NATION'S FOREIGN POLICY. I MEAN DIPLOMACY IN THE BROADEST SENSE— DIPLOMACY THAT REACHES BEYOND GOVERNMENT POLICIES, BEYOND THE HALLS OF FOREIGN MINISTRIES AND PRESIDENTIAL PALACES. DIPLOMACY THAT DIRECTLY TOUCHES THE LIVES OF EVERYDAY PEOPLE. THAT EVOKES OUR UNIVERSAL ASPIRATIONS AS HUMAN BEINGS.

THE WORKS OF OUR ARTISTS, ARCHITECTS, AND PRESERVATIONISTS PROVIDE US WITH ANOTHER LANGUAGE OF DIPLOMACY. A TRANSCENDENT LANGUAGE THAT ALLOWS US TO CONVEY VALUES THAT ARE AT ONCE DISTINCTLY AMERICAN YET SPEAK TO ALL OF HUMANITY. INCREASINGLY IN THIS WORLD, ART AND ARCHITECTURE HELPS US MAINTAIN OUR SENSE OF OPENNESS AND LIBERATION.

**FORMER SECRETARY OF STATE  
HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON,**

APRIL 12, 2010

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**U.S. EMBASSY  
BEIJING, CHINA**

Skidmore, Owings and Merrill,  
Architect

Tulips, Jeff Koons, Artist  
Timothy Hursley, Photographer





美国大使馆



饭店

行人



U.S.  
DEPARTMENT  
OF STATE

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BUREAU OF  
OVERSEAS BUILDINGS  
OPERATIONS

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FEBRUARY 2014