

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS  
CORRECTIONS PROGRAM OFFICE**

**OVERVIEW AND OUTLINE FOR COMPLETING AN  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

The following is a general outline of information to be followed for an Environmental Assessment. This outline and the standard language are provided as guidance in document preparation and are based on the “Program Guidance on Environmental Protection Requirements” issued by the Office of Justice Programs, Corrections Program Office. This guidance should be used as the primary resource in document completion. All sections of this outline should be compared to those sections described in the guidance (much of the guidance is repeated verbatim in this outline).

**TITLE PAGE**

The title page must contain the following:

- Title of the project
- Location of the project (city, county, and state)
- Prepared by: (Insert name and address of contractor)
- Prepared for:  
    The U.S. Department of Justice  
    Office of Justice Programs  
    810 Seventh Street, N.W.  
    Washington, D.C. 20531

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Executive Summary should summarize the project, the potential environmental impacts, proposed mitigation, and any other relevant information pertaining to the impacts of the construction and operation of the proposed facility.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

The title and page number of all sections in the document must be included in the Table of Contents. The Table of Contents should be revised as the document is updated.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

This section should include an overview of the site characteristics and the planned site development. A regional and site location map should be included.

### **1.1 Purpose and Need**

This section should briefly describe what the project is, to include a description of its major components and their size or design capacities, and why the project is needed. It should include a discussion of the activities to be conducted by the inmates and indicate whether these are new activities or an increase/expansion of existing activities. The project description must include all related components such as all off-site projects to accommodate the needs of the proposed correctional facility (e.g., road and utility construction or expansion, projects offered to the affected community as an incentive to accept the correctional facility construction or expansion, and other reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency or third party undertakes such action). Reasonably foreseeable actions include future prison construction phases, especially when either current acreage requirements or design capacities for utilities are based on needs stemming from future phases.

- Brief statement on the purpose of the project (the goal). This is usually general in nature and defined in terms of the goals of the particular program under which the project will be funded.
- Brief statement on the need for the project (the problem). This is more specific and stated as a problem and not a solution.

NOTE: From this point on, everything ties back into the above stated Purpose and Need- be sure that the purpose and need are very solid.

## **2.0 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

An important part of the planning for a facility is an investigation and evaluation of alternatives to the proposed project or action to assist decisionmakers in selecting the best alternative. This section is the heart of the EA. It should describe all reasonable alternatives and their environmental impacts. The alternatives might include alternative locations, alternative designs, and alternative projects having similar benefits. Briefly describe alternatives, which were eliminated from detailed study and the reasons for their elimination. Consideration of a No Action alternative is mandated by the National Environmental Policy Act and provides a basis for comparison. The alternatives should be presented in comparative form, thus sharply defining the issues and providing a clear basis for choice among the options for decisionmakers and the public. Identify the agency's preferred alternative or alternatives, if one or more exists.

Introductory Paragraph must include the number and brief title of each alternative considered in addressing the stated purpose and need. The remaining sections should be presented in the

following order:

## **2.1 Alternatives Analyzed and Dismissed**

Provide a brief description of any alternative that was considered but dismissed from further consideration.

## **2.2 Alternatives Evaluated**

Provide a description of each alternative considered and carried forward for detailed analysis in the next section. Alternatives must be feasible, which means they would be used if the proposed alternative were found unavailable. They should be presented in the following order:

- **Alternative 1-No Action: should always be considered**
- Alternative 2- Title: Proposed Alternative
- Alternative 3- Title
- Alternative 4- Title
- Etc: As needed

**IT IS NECESSARY TO GIVE EQUAL TREATMENT TO ALL OF THE ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED TO THE EXTENT THAT INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE**

## **3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENTS AND POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF THE ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

If the potential of impacting a particular environment is obviously nonexistent, that section can be left out. If the lack of impact is not obvious, a short explanation as to why there is no impact may be included under that heading. CEQ regulations specify that issues that are not significant should only be discussed briefly to reduce excessive paperwork (40 CFR 1500.4(c)). Always address endangered species, wetlands, floodplains, historic preservation, and environmental justice whether or not impacts exist. **ALL RESOURCE SECTIONS SHOULD CONSIDER THE AFFECTS (INCLUDING SHORT-TERM) OF CONSTRUCTION.**

This section should contain:

- An introductory paragraph(s) on the general setting of the project area.
- A concise description of each affected environmental at the project site and any laws that may apply to that affected environment.
- The impact of each alternative on that environment (this can also include positive impacts if applicable).
- Measures to mitigate the negative impacts (if necessary).

The following is a SUGGESTED format for each environment in this section:

***Heading (such as “3.9.2 Threatened or Endangered Species”)***

*Describe the Endangered Species Act (this paragraph is listed in the standard language portion of this outline)*

***Affected Environment***

*Describe the environment in the project area.*

***Potential Impacts of Alternatives***

*Describe the potential impacts of ALL of the alternatives including No Action.*

Each affected environment should:

- Be presented in the order listed below.
- Be consistent in format.
- Be easy to follow for comparison throughout the various affected environments.

### **3.1 Geology and Soils**

- Brief description of the geology and soils at the proposed area and site.
- **Farmland Protection Policy Act:** In consultation with the local office of the Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, indicate whether the project would either directly or indirectly convert an important farmland identified in the Farmland Protection Policy Act and as further defined by the Department of Agriculture in 7 CFR Part 658. If a conversion may result, determine if there is a practicable alternative to avoiding it. If there is no such alternative, determine whether all practicable mitigation measures are included in the project. Document as an attachment these determinations and the steps taken to inform the public, locate alternatives, and mitigate potential adverse impacts.
- How Alternative 1 would impact (and/or be impacted by) the geology and soils.
- How Alternative 2 would impact (and/or be impacted by) the geology and soils.
- Continue for the rest of the alternatives if applicable.
- If applicable, describe any measures that can be undertaken to mitigate the anticipated impacts from implementing the various alternatives described above.

### **3.2 Land Use**

Paragraph(s) on the general description of existing land use and planning in the area and

project site. Provide the following information on the environmental settings listed:

### **3.2.1 Zoning**

- Brief description of the zoning and/or land use planning at the proposed project area and site.
- How Alternative 1 would impact (and/or be impacted by) the zoning and/or planning.
- How Alternative 2 would impact (and/or be impacted by) the zoning and/or planning.
- Would the alternatives be consistent with planning and zoning in the project area?
- Continue for the rest of the alternatives if applicable.
- If applicable, describe any measures that can be implemented to mitigate the anticipated impacts described above.

### **3.2.2 Floodplains Encroachment**

- Brief description of E.O. 11988 and floodplains.
- Cite agency consultation if applicable.
- Brief description of the floodplains at the project site (if any).
- Is the community in the National Flood Insurance Program (NIP) and if so, would the project impact the Federal Insurance Rate maps (include in documentation)?
- How Alternative 1 would impact (and/or be impacted by) the floodplains.
- How Alternative 2 would impact (and/or be impacted by) the floodplains.
- Continue for the rest of the alternatives if applicable.
- If applicable, describe any measures that can be implemented to mitigate the anticipated impacts described above. If there are no practicable alternatives to development in a floodplains, determine whether all practicable mitigation measures are included in the project and document as an attachment these determinations and the steps taken to inform the public, locate alternatives, and mitigate potential adverse impacts.

### **3.2.3 Coastal Barrier Resources (Complete only if the project is in a state with components of the Coastal Barrier Resources System).**

- Indicate whether the project is located within the Coastal Barrier Resources System. If so, indicate whether or not the project meets an exception criteria under the Coastal Barrier Resources Act and the results of any consultation with the appropriate regional office of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior regarding the project's qualification as an exception.

### **3.2.4 Coastal Zone Management Act (Complete only if the project is in a coastal or Great Lakes State).**

- Indicate if the project is within or would impact a coastal area defined as such by the state's approved Coastal Zone Management Program. If so, consult with the state agency responsible for the program to determine the project's consistency with it. The results of this coordination shall be described.

### **3.2.5 Wild and Scenic Rivers**

- Indicate whether the project would affect a river or portion thereof which is either included in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System or designated for potential addition to the system. This analysis shall be conducted through discussions with the appropriate regional office of the National Park Service or the Forest Service when its lands are involved, as well as the appropriate state agencies having implementation authorities. A summary of discussions held or any required formal coordination must be included in the assessment and considered in completing the environmental impact determination for the project.

### **3.3 Traffic Circulation and Parking Access to Residential and Commercial Areas**

- Brief description of the traffic and circulation at the proposed project area and site. Describe how new traffic patterns may affect land uses such as residential, hospitals, schools, and recreational.
- How Alternative 1 would impact (and/or be impacted by) the floodplains.
- How Alternative 2 would impact (and/or be impacted by) the traffic and circulation.
- Continue for the rest of the alternatives if applicable.
- If applicable, describe any measures that can be implemented to mitigate the anticipated impacts described above.

### **3.4 Public Health and Safety (also include hazardous waste and solid waste management)**

- Brief description of any health and safety issues involved in the proposed project.
- Description of hazardous waste issues for the proposed project.
- Solid waste management: Indicate all aspects of the project and known indirect effects, which would necessitate the disposal of solid wastes. Indicate the kinds and expected quantities of solid wastes involved and the disposal techniques to be used. Evaluate the adequacy of these techniques especially in relationship to air and water quality. Indicate if recycling or resource recovery programs are or would be used. Specify if any of the wastes are hazardous, toxic, or radioactive.
- How Alternative 1 would impact (and/or be impacted by) those issues.
- How Alternative 2 would impact (and/or be impacted by) those issues.

- Continue for the rest of the alternatives if applicable.
- If applicable, describe any measures that can be implemented to mitigate the anticipated impacts described.

### **3.5 Socioeconomic/Human Population Issues**

- Brief description of affected populations in the project area. This should include descriptions (if any) of minority, elderly, or low-income population(s) or Indian Tribe(s). Indicate the number of people to be relocated and arrangements being made for this relocation. Discuss how impacts resulting from the project such as changes in land use, transportation changes, air emissions, noise, odor, etc. would affect nearby residents and users of the project area and surrounding areas. Discuss whether the proposal would accommodate any population increases and, if so, describe the potential impacts of these increases on the area's public and community services such as schools, health care, social services, and fire protection. Cite contacts with appropriate experts.

#### **3.5.1 E.O. 12898 Environmental Justice**

- Describe E.O. 12898 (Environmental Justice) requirements.
- How Alternative 1 would impact populations described above. This should include impacts from noise, traffic, displacement, etc.
- How Alternative 2 would impact populations described above.
- Continue, if applicable, for the rest of the alternatives.
- If applicable, describe any measures that can be implemented to mitigate the anticipated impacts described above.

### **3.6 Air Quality**

- Brief description of air quality standards in the project area (or state if applicable).
- Indicate whether silvicultural, agricultural, or other operations would employ open burning. If so, discuss whether local or state requirements exist for permitting such burning and generally discuss their content. If no permit requirements exist, discuss the type and quantity of burning to be undertaken and the methods to reduce smoke and to mitigate its adverse impacts.
- Cite agency consultation if applicable.
- How Alternative 1 would impact air quality in the project area.
- How Alternative 2 would impact air quality in the project area.
- Continue for the rest of the alternatives if applicable.
- If applicable, describe any measures that can be implemented to mitigate the anticipated impacts described above.
- Impacts should address short (during construction) and long term impacts on air quality.

### **3.7 Noise**

- Brief description of any noise ordinances that may exist in the project area.
- How Alternative 1 would impact ambient noise levels in the project area.
- How Alternative 2 would impact ambient noise levels in the project area.
- Continue for the rest of the alternatives if applicable.
- If applicable, describe any measures that can be implemented to mitigate the anticipated impacts described above.
- Impacts should address short (during construction) and long-term impacts on noise levels.

### **3.8 Public Services and Utilities/Energy Impacts**

- Brief description of the public services and utilities provided (and by whom) at the project site. This should include water, sanitary sewer, storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, telephone service, police protection, fire protection, and emergency medical services.
- How Alternative 1 would impact public services and utilities in the project area.
- How Alternative 2 would impact public services and utilities in the project area.
- Continue for the rest of the alternatives if applicable.
- 
- If applicable, describe any measures that can be implemented to mitigate the anticipated impacts described above.
- Impacts should address short (during construction) and long term impacts on public services and utilities. It should also include demands of the proposed project on public services and utilities, if any.

### **3.9 Water Resources/Water Quality**

- Brief description of any water resources/quality issues relative to the project site.
- If applicable, description of the Clean Water Act requirements.
- If the project lies within or would affect a sole source aquifer recharge area as designated by EPA, contact the appropriate EPA regional office to determine if its review is necessary. If it is, attach the results of its review.
- Indicate the source and available supply of raw water and the extent to which the additional demand would affect the raw water supply. Describe the wastewater treatment system(s) to be used and indicate their capacity and their adequacy in terms of the degree of treatment provided. Discuss the characteristics and uses of the receiving waters for any sources of discharge. If the treatment system(s) are or would be inadequate or overloaded, describe the steps being taken for necessary improvements and their completion dates. Analyze the impacts on the receiving



- water during any estimated period of inadequate treatment.
  - Discuss the project's consistency with the water quality planning for the area, such as EPA's Section 208 areawide waste treatment management plan. Discuss the project's consistency with applicable state water quality standards to include a discussion of whether the project would either impair any such standard or fail to meet antidegradation requirements for point or nonpoint sources. Describe how surface runoff is to be handled and the effect of erosion on streams.
  - Evaluate the extent to which the project may create shortages for or otherwise adversely affect the withdrawal capabilities of other present users of the raw water supply, particularly in terms of possible human health, safety, or welfare problems.
  - For projects utilizing a groundwater supply, evaluate the potential for the project to exceed the safe pumping rate for the aquifer to the extent that it would (1) adversely affect the pumping capability of present users, (2) increase the likelihood of brackish or saltwater intrusion, thereby decreasing water quality, or (3) substantially increase surface subsidence risks. For projects utilizing a surface water supply, evaluate the potential for the project to (1) reduce flows below the minimum required for the protection of fish and wildlife, or (2) reduce water quality standards below those established for the stream classification at the point of withdraw or the adjacent downstream section.
  - Cite agency consultation if applicable.
  - How Alternative 1 would impact water resources/quality in the project area.
  - How Alternative 2 would impact water resources/quality in the project area.
  - Continue for the rest of the alternatives if applicable.
  - If applicable, describe any measures that can be implemented to mitigate the anticipated impacts described above.
- Impacts should address short (during construction) and long term impacts on water resources/quality.

### **3.10 Biological Resources**

#### **3.10.1 Wetlands**

- Brief description of EO 11990 and requirements and if applicable;
- Describe wetlands (if any) at the project site.
- Cite agency consultation if applicable.
- How Alternative 1 would impact wetlands in the project area.
- How Alternative 2 would impact wetlands in the project area.
- Continue for the rest of the alternatives if applicable.
- If applicable, describe any measures that can be implemented to mitigate the anticipated impacts described above.
- Impacts should address short (during construction) and long-term impacts on wetlands. If there are no practicable alternatives to development in wetland areas, determine whether all practicable mitigation measures are included in the project and document as an attachment these determinations and the steps taken to inform the public, locate

alternatives, and mitigate potential adverse impacts.

### **3.10.2 Threatened or Endangered Species (animal, plant, aquatic)**

- Brief description of applicable laws and regulations relating to threatened or endangered species and their habitat.
- Determination and description of any threatened or endangered species, and their habitat in the project area.
- Cite agency consultation to include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- How Alternative 1 would impact any threatened or endangered species, and their habitat, in the project area.
- How Alternative 2 would impact any threatened or endangered species, and their habitat, in the project area.
- Continue for the rest of the alternatives if applicable.
- If applicable, describe any measures that can be implemented to mitigate the anticipated impacts described above.
- Impacts should address short (during construction) and long term impacts on threatened and endangered species and their habitat.

## **3.11 Cultural Resources**

### **3.11.1 Historic Properties**

- Cite consultation with SHPO
- 
- Brief description of the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and implementing regulations contained in 36 CFR 800.
- Identification of any historic properties in the project area.
- How Alternative 1 would impact those historic properties in the project area.
- How Alternative 2 would impact those historic properties in the project area.
- Continue for the rest of the alternatives if applicable.
- If applicable, describe any measures that can be implemented to mitigate the anticipated impacts described above.

### **3.11.2 Archaeological Resources**

- Cite consultation with SHPO.
- Identification of any potential archeological resources in the project area.
- How Alternative 1 would impact those archeological resources in the project area.
- How Alternative 2 would impact those archeological resources in the project area.
- Continue for the rest of the alternatives if applicable.
- If applicable, describe any measures that can be implemented to mitigate the anticipated impacts described above.

- Impacts should address short (during construction) and long term impacts on archeological resources.

### **3.12 Cumulative Impacts**

This is a description of the cumulative impacts (if any) on the environment. It should be a brief summary of the incremental impacts of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions within the geographical area and/or project area.

### **3.13 Coordination and Permits**

This is a description of permits typically required for this type of action. This includes such things as building codes and requirements, storm water and sediment and erosion control requirements, etc. If a particular alternative requires a specific federal or state permit (i.e. 404 permit), then the requirements of that permit should be discussed in that particular affected environment. Also included in this section should be the following:

**State Environmental Policy Act:** Indicate if the proposed project is subject to a state environmental policy act or similar regulation. Summarize the results of compliance with these requirements and attach available documentation.

**Intergovernmental Review:** Attach the comments of state, regional, or local agencies (if this review process is required for the project) and responses to all comments that deal with the subject matters discussed in this assessment or are otherwise of an environmental nature.

**Other Federal Agency Reaction to Project:** Indicate if another federal agency is participating in the project either through the provision of additional funds, a companion project, or a permit review authority. Summarize the results of the involved agency's environmental impact analysis and attach available documentation. The Office of Justice Programs, Corrections Program Office and the grantee would work jointly or cooperatively with all projects for which another federal agency serves as the lead agency.

## **4.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES CONSULTED AND REFERENCES**

The preparer should consult with appropriate experts from federal, state, and local agencies, universities, and other organizations or groups whose views could be helpful in the assessment of potential impacts. In so doing, each discussion related to the degree of an impact should be summarized in the assessment as accurately as possible and include the name, title, phone number, and organization of the individual contacted, plus the date of contact. Related correspondence should be attached to the assessment. Discuss any negative

comments or public views raised about the project and the consideration given to these comments. Indicate whether a public hearing or public information meeting has been held and include a summary of the results and any objections raised. Indicate any other examples of the community's awareness of the project, such as newspaper articles or public notifications.

## **5.0 LIST OF PREPARERS**

This is a list of all individuals that participated in the preparation of this EA. The list should include the name, address, phone number, and agency or firm affiliation if applicable.

### **APPENDICES**

Appendix A: Figures, Maps and/or Photographs

Appendix B: Memorandum of Agreement

Appendix C: Agency Correspondence

Appendix D: Anything else that may be applicable