



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# Need a Sign Program

- **How to Know When**
- **Getting Help**
- **Project Process**

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**Every Building Needs a Sign Program**

That common understanding starts with the fact that today's building codes require certain life safety signs for building occupancy. In addition, signs are needed for basic operational purposes, such as restroom signs.

Next, comes the need for labeling rooms. This allows for people to find rooms, its occupants and services, have things delivered, and get repairs made. When a building has more than one straight corridor the need for directional signs becomes apparent. Add another floor(s) and additional types of life safety signs and floor level designations are required.

So clearly every building needs signs. New buildings are easy because they can start with a fresh new sign program tailored to the initial occupancy of the building and to the requirements of the first users.

Older buildings, on the other hand, have existing signs, and unless the sign program has been regularly updated with every building remodel, modification, and change in informational use, the sign program is probably in need of replacement or at a minimum, updating for code compliance.

**Every Site Needs a Sign Program**

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Today's building codes require certain exterior signs for building occupancy such as the identification of handicapped entrances and parking. Additionally, VA directives require certain signs at the entry to the site and its buildings.

Next is the need for identifying buildings and entrances. This allows for people to find occupants and services and have things delivered. When a site has more than one building, directional signs become necessary. Add even more buildings, parking lots and roads, and directional information to drivers and pedestrians, directional signs become critically important for people to find their destination.

It is evident that every site needs exterior signs. New sites can start with a fresh new sign program, however, this is typically not the case.

Most sites have been in use and have added and removed buildings over the years, have relocated building entrances, and moved services from one building to another. Unless the exterior sign program has been regularly updated, the sign program may be in need of replacement.

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The following are some probable indicators that a site and facility need a new exterior sign program. Generally, the more of these that apply, the more pressing the need.

- Is the exterior sign program older than 10 years?
- Do the exterior signs have rust showing through the paint?
- Is the name on the main site identification sign correct?
- Does the exterior sign program contain signs that are leaning or falling over?
- Have changes been made to parking lots? (use and location)
- Have buildings closed or changed use?
- Is the paint or lettering peeling off signs?
- Have signs been vandalized and not repaired, or repaired poorly?
- Does the exterior sign program refer to buildings that are closed?

**Does the facility need a new exterior sign program?**

*(continued)*

- Are exterior signs faded and streaked?
  - Do visitors frequently ask for directions or become lost?
  - Are there plywood or temporary signs serving as directional or identification signs?
  - Are exterior signs covered or hidden by landscaping or trees?
  - Do the exterior signs refer to departments, entrances or services that are no longer available or have been relocated?
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**How does age affect the exterior sign program?**

If the sign program is 3 to 5 years old and the signs have been maintained and created or updated the necessary directional signs every time a department or service is moved, the sign program can be considered reasonably current and will function for many years to come.

If the sign program is 5 to 10 years old, more than likely the directional wayfinding program has mistakes, missing information and misleading directional information. During the 5 to 10 year period the paint finish on the signs is starting to show the effect of weather aging.

Also, over a 10-year period there has probably been remodeling or new construction projects that have created orphaned signs or signs that are incorrectly labeling buildings or services. Parking location and usage has also probably changed. And, sign programs that are 10 years old have had different people working to maintain them over the years.

At 15 years, a sign program has passed the threshold of being usable. Rust, corrosion, peeling and severely faded paint mean the signs have now reached point where they should be replaced like any other worn out or obsolete piece of equipment.

Exterior sign programs that are over 20 years old are past the point of usefulness. The physical condition of the signs is usually so bad they are actually “junk.” Other aspects with a sign program at this age is the information conveyed is probably so out of date that it provides little if any help to patients and visitors.

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**Does the facility need a new exterior sign program?**

Following are probable indicators that the facility needs a new interior sign program. Generally, the more of these that apply to the buildings, the more pressing the need for a replacement sign program.

- Is the sign program older than 15 years?
- Does staff constantly get asked for directions from confused or lost patients and visitors?
- Is the information counter overwhelmed with requests for directions?
- Have code and life safety signs been upgraded in the last 5 years?
- Are there home made or paper signs identifying rooms or functioning as directional signs?
- Are directional signs and graphics still directing people to departments that no longer exist or have moved?
- Are there interior signs in different colors, or materials, at the same door?

**Does the facility need a new interior sign program?**

*(continued)*

- At the same door, are interior signs different types?
- Are room number signs mounted on the door or on the door frame above the door?
- Are signs mounted in the correct location?
- Are interior signs taped to the wall?
- Has remodeling or new construction changed the circulation routes in the building?
- Are there color stripes in the floor or on the wall that no longer lead to designated departments?
- Has the use of the rooms in building changed?
- Is the room numbering system confusing and are numbers being used out of sequence?
- Has there been a major relocation of services within the medical center?
- Are there repeated requests for updated wayfinding signs?
- At department entrances, are there 3 or 4 signs describing the occupant?

**How does age affect the interior sign program?**

If the sign program is 5 years old and the signs have been properly maintained and necessary directional signs have been updated every time a department has moved, the sign program can be considered reasonably current and will function for many years to come.

If the sign program is 10 years old, more than likely the directional wayfinding program has mistakes, missing information and misleading directional information. Also, over a 10-year period there have probably been remodeling projects that have created orphaned signs or signs that are incorrectly labeling rooms or services.

Sign programs that are 10 years old may have had different people working to maintain them over the years. As different individuals add or delete items to an existing sign program in an uncoordinated fashion, the logic and/or cohesive structure of that sign program becomes compromised. As a result, the sign program can become confusing and difficult for visitors to understand.

At 15 years a sign program has now past the threshold of being usable.

By now the original sign program is very likely so disconnected from what was originally implemented that there is no common thread of communication, look, finishes, placement or information.

Sign programs that are over 20 years old are totally broken, dysfunctional and should be replaced like any other obsolete piece of equipment.

**What does a new sign program bring to a facility?**

Implementing a new sign program has a positive impact on every individual that uses the facility, whether it is a patient, visitor or employee.

These are just a few of the things achieved.

- Improved patient satisfaction.
- Improved image of the VA to the patients and visitors.

- Improved employee morale.
  - Improved professional image in the medical community.
  - Reduced staff time in providing directions to patients and visitors.
  - Modernized appearance to older buildings.
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**Does the facility need room renumbering?**

Following are some probable indicators that a building needs to have the rooms renumbered and implement a new interior room identification sign program.

- Is the sign program older than 15 years?
- Has there been major remodeling with in the building?
- Are there duplicate room numbers within the building?
- Has there been additions to the building and were the new building room numbers coordinated with the existing building room numbers?
- Has there been the addition of several letters after a single room number to accommodate new rooms?
- Has the use of the rooms in a building changed?
- Has there been a major relocation of services within the building?
- If a patient or visitor is given a room number to go to, can they find it without asking someone for directions?

In a facility wide replacement sign project, it is important that improved patient wayfinding is not hindered by keeping an outdated and broken room renumbering systems in order to maintain current facility management systems. There are various ways to address new room numbering in facility management systems that maintain the database with current room renumbering.

Refer to the Room Renumbering section of this Guide for additional information.

Getting Help

It is recommended that an Environmental Graphic Design firm be hired for the development of large-scale interior and exterior sign programs. The contractual options are: (Option 1) Include services as a part of an overall Architect-Engineer (A-E) contract; (Option 2) Utilize existing "Open-Ended Architect-Engineer" contracts and engage the firm as a subcontractor; (Option 3) Hire an Environmental Graphic Design firm like any other A-E firm.

The following document is an example of a typical statement of work for engaging environmental graphic design programming services for a project. The statement of work can be used as a template. Also, following are samples of evaluation criteria and questions that can be used as an aid in the selection process for a qualified Environmental Graphic Design firm.

Sample Statement of Work figure 1

**SAMPLE STATEMENT OF WORK**

STATEMENT OF WORK

VAMC \_\_\_\_\_  
ENVIRONMENTAL GRAPHIC PLANNING SERVICES

This statement of work is to provide environmental graphic design services.

The project will plan, design and program an interior and exterior sign and graphics program for the VAMC \_\_\_\_\_ and Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) located in the \_\_\_\_\_ area. The exterior sign program will identify buildings and provide directional wayfinding. The interior sign program will develop a new room numbering system, provide for new code / life safety signs, new room identification and a directional wayfinding sign program.

During the course of the development of the directional wayfinding sign program for the interior, coordination will be conducted with the facility to identify architectural, interior design and communication issues at the facility that can be improved to provide better circulation and communication of services for patients and visitors. In the development of the directional wayfinding sign program for the exterior, coordination will be conducted to identify site circulation issues for both vehicles and pedestrians that can be improved to provide better circulation and parking for patients and visitors.

The sign program "design look" will be developed to coordinate with the VA Signage Design Guide utilizing a component base sign system.

A. QUALIFICATIONS FOR SCOPE OF WORK

The Environmental Graphic Design firm shall have experience in providing design services specifically for the development of interior and exterior signage for health care facilities. The environmental graphic designer's activities and experience requirements are:

1. Primary business activity (70%) is in the field of Environmental Graphic Design performing the work of sign programming and design.
2. Project Manager assigned to signage planning, wayfinding and programming must have extensive experience with programming the room and informational signing for the interior and exterior of large medical centers. Included are the development of a wayfinding (directional) sign programs, room number and life safety signing, the development of pedestrian and vehicle wayfinding sign programs, building and entrance identification and traffic/regulatory signing. Extensive experience refers to

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## Sample Statement of Work

(continued)  
figure 1

### SAMPLE STATEMENT OF WORK

having worked on and managed multiple large sized (250+bed) medical centers as well as mental health facilities, community living centers and outpatient clinics.

3. Ability to provide sign location plans in AutoCAD (if AutoCAD files are available from the VA for the buildings and sites involved).
4. Professional member of the Society for Environmental Graphic Design.
5. Thorough familiarity with the VA's Signage Design Guide.
6. Knowledge of medical terminology and operational characteristics of medical centers and clinics.
7. Selected firm will be excluded from bidding the sign product and installation.
8. Project manager assigned to the project must have experience in developing new room numbering systems for medical centers.

#### B. PROJECT SCOPE OF WORK

##### 1. INTERIOR TASKS

- a. The Environmental Graphic Design firm will review the existing room numbering system and advise the medical center if it needs to be replaced. If the existing room numbering system is "broken", the Environmental Graphic Design firm will develop a new room numbering system for all rooms and all floors of the selected medical center/clinic. This room numbering system is one that is to be directed toward visitors and staff. Proposed options for new room numbering system will be reviewed with facility Engineering and Interior Design.
- b. The Environmental Graphic Design firm will design and program an interior room identification sign program. This will involve programming and sign location plans being prepared for all of the room identification signs throughout the selected medical center/ facility. This will include a complete sign message schedule identifying each sign, its message and its type. Sign location plans will be prepared showing the placement/location and mounting method of the signs.
- c. The Environmental Graphic Design firm will design and program a life safety, code and regulatory sign program. This will involve programming and sign location plans being prepared for all of the regulatory, code and life safety signs throughout the selected medical center/facility. This will include a complete sign message schedule identifying each sign, its message and its type. Sign location plans will be prepared showing the placement/location and mounting method of regulatory, code and life safety signs.
- d. The Environmental Graphic Design firm will design and program a directional wayfinding sign program. This will involve programming and sign location plans being prepared for all of the directional signs throughout the selected medical center/facility. This will include a complete sign message schedule identifying each sign, its message and its type. Sign location plans will be prepared showing the placement/location and mounting method of directional signs.
- e. The Environmental Graphic Design Specialist will develop a report identifying architectural, interior design and communication problems at the facilities that need to be changed and improved to provide better identification, circulation and communication of services for patients and visitors.



## Sample Statement of Work

(continued)

figure 1

### SAMPLE STATEMENT OF WORK

- f. The Environmental Graphic Design firm will develop the design scheme for the “look” of the interior sign program. The design will generally define the various types of signs that will be used throughout the project along with issues of image, materials and finishes, typography and layout, and color. Terminology, names and titles, flexibility of the system, form and scale, and legibility will also be considerations in developing the design scheme. The design documents will identify material finishes, trims, sign construction, installation and other design details. The documents will include elevation drawing of each sign type with applicable size and layout dimensions and any necessary side, top and back views.
  - g. The Environmental Graphic Design firm will prepare complete specifications for the product(s) being specified for the project.
  - h. The Environmental Graphic Design firm will prepare suitable documentation necessary for the VA to obtain pricing/quotations for the demolition of existing signs and the installation of new signs. The Environmental Graphics Design firm will be required to prepare any of the VAs bidding documentation, excluding VAs standard forms.
  - i. The Environmental Graphic Design firm will prepare a pre-construction budget for product, demolition and installation.
  - j. The Environmental Graphic Design firm will provide construction implementation services which include reviewing submittal and shop drawings submissions and perform a pre-installation walk thru with contractor. At completion of installation, the Environmental Graphic Design firm will make a final inspection walk through and prepare a “punch list” report noting deficiencies and corrections necessary for the contractor to complete the project.
  - k. The interior signs will be designed with consideration given to the ATBCB’s guideline for accessible signage related to the Americans with Disabilities Act.
  - l. Examples of the types of interior signs that will be included in the scope of work are: Primary room/department identification signs; Patient room signs; Secondary room identification signs; Informational signs; Wall and ceiling mounted directional signs; Entrance lobby signs; VISN identification signage; Regulatory, life safety code and restrictive signs.
2. EXTERIOR TASKS
- a. The Environmental Graphic Design firm will design and program an exterior wayfinding/directional sign program. This will involve programming and sign location plans being prepared showing the placement of the signs and their respective messages. This will include a complete sign message schedule identifying each sign, its message and its type. Sign location plans and photographs will be prepared showing the exact placement/location and installation method of the directional signs.
  - b. The Environmental Graphic Design firm will design and program an exterior building identification sign program. This will involve programming and sign location plans being prepared showing the placement of the signs and their respective messages. This will include a complete sign message schedule identifying each sign, its message and its type. Sign location plans and photographs will be prepared showing the exact placement/location and installation method of the building identification signs. The signs on the building may be augmented with

## Sample Statement of Work

(continued)  
figure 1

### SAMPLE STATEMENT OF WORK

freestanding signs as necessary to assist in identifying buildings.

- c. The Environmental Graphic Design Specialist will develop a report identifying site circulation issues for both vehicles and pedestrians that can be improved to provide better access, circulation and parking for patients and visitors.
- d. The Environmental Graphic Design firm will develop the design scheme for the “look” of the exterior sign program. The design will generally define the various types of signs that will be used throughout the project along with issues of image, materials, finishes, typography and layout, and color. Terminology, names and titles, flexibility of the system, form and scale, and legibility will also be considerations in developing the design scheme. The design documents will identify material finishes, trims, sign construction, installation and other design details. The documents will include an elevation drawing of each sign type with applicable size and layout dimensions and any necessary side, top and back views.
- e. The Environmental Graphic Design firm will prepare complete specifications for the product being specified for the project.
- f. The Environmental Graphic Design firm will prepare suitable documentation necessary for the VA to obtain pricing/quotations for the demolition of existing signs and the installation of new signs. The design firm will not be required to prepare any of the VA's bidding documentation.
- g. The Environmental Graphic Design firm will provide construction implementation services which include reviewing submittal and shop drawings submissions and perform a pre-installation walk thru with contractor. At completion of installation, the Environmental Graphic Design firm will make a final inspection walk through and prepare a “punch list” report noting deficiencies and corrections necessary for the contractor to complete the project.
- h. The Environmental Graphic Design firm will prepare a pre-construction budget for product, demolition and installation.
- i. Examples of the types of exterior signs that will be included in the scope of work are: Freestanding, wall or building mounted identification signs; Freestanding, wall or building mounted directional signs; Parking lot identification and parking stall signs; Traffic signs; Site identification signs.

### 3. AREA OF WORK

- a. The interior sign area of work at VAMC \_\_\_\_\_ is defined as the interior of the medical center complex and \_\_\_\_\_ community based outpatient clinics (CBOCs).
- b. The exterior sign area of work at VAMC \_\_\_\_\_ is defined as the traffic and parking lot signs and building identification signage.

### 4. PHASES OF WORK

#### a. Phase 1 - PLANNING

Project begins with an initial meeting with the Environmental Graphic Design firm, the network planner, the medical center/facility project coordinator, and appropriate VAMC staff. It begins by defining and refining the scope of the project in greater detail and reviewing the responsibilities of the Environmental

## Sample Statement of Work

(continued)

figure 1

### SAMPLE STATEMENT OF WORK

Graphic Design firm and facility staff regarding input, design, documentation, coordination, direction and approvals. A project schedule will be established which relates to the project's sequence of events and priorities of importance. Functional relationships will be discussed regarding design character, implementation phasing, document submissions and purchasing/bidding procedures.

Deliverables: 3 hard copies and 1 electronic file (PDF format); A project schedule.

#### b. Phase 2 - NEW ROOM NUMBER PROGRAMMING

The Environmental Graphic Design firm will survey and review the selected medical center/facility buildings and develop a new room numbering system. The room numbering scheme will be presented to the Facility Director and appropriate staff for their review, comment and approval.

Deliverables: 3 hard copies and 1 electronic file (PDF and DWG format). Drawings illustrating the proposed room numbering scheme. A conversion table listing new and old room numbers.

#### c. Phase 3 - PRELIMINARY PROGRAMMING and DESIGN

The Environmental Graphic Design firm will revise the new room numbering system based upon comments received from the facility. When the room numbering revisions are complete, the Environmental Graphic Design firm will issue the final documentation to the facility project coordinator that will consist of floor plans, which list both the new and the old number. This documentation will be incorporated into the new room identification sign program.

The Environmental Graphic Design firm will survey and review the project for sign locations, text and placements. With the exterior signs, evaluations will be made regarding sign illumination requirements. For the exterior directional signs, evaluations will involve analyzing public, employee and vehicular circulation and traffic flow patterns around the project site. On the basis of information gathered in these activities and in the Planning Phase, the Environmental Graphic Design firm will develop the schematic design scheme for the "look" of the sign program. The Environmental Graphic Design firm will identify finishes, trims, types of signs and other design details. This will all be based upon a component based sign system as identified in the VA Sign Design Guide, created for the Department of Veterans Affairs. Emphasis will be placed on developing a sign program that provides the facility with a progressive professional look, coordinated with the building's interior design and architecture, re-cycle element of the existing exterior sign program, if possible, and address the facility's maintenance requirements. For both the interior of the buildings and the exterior signs for the campus, a preliminary sign location plan will be prepared along with a preliminary sign message schedule.

The schematic design scheme, preliminary sign location plan and preliminary message schedule will be presented to Facility Management, coordinated by the facility project manager, for their review and comment. The Environmental Graphic Design Specialist will assist the facility in the review of the documents and the assembly of the facilities review comments.

Deliverables: 3 hard copies and 1 electronic file (PDF); Drawings illustrating the proposed look, color, trim, etc. of the interior and exterior sign program;

## Sample Statement of Work

(continued)

figure 1

### SAMPLE STATEMENT OF WORK

Preliminary sign location plan and message schedule.

#### d. Phase 4 - FINAL PROGRAMMING and DESIGN

After the schematic design of the sign program and the preliminary sign location plan and message schedule has been reviewed and approved by the medical center/facility, the Environmental Graphic Design firm will proceed to develop the draft of the sign project documents involving the sign type drawings and specifications.

These documents will show preliminary illustrations of all interior and exterior sign types in the sign program. A preliminary draft of the specifications and budget will be developed that will define the cost of implementing the program. The Environmental Graphic Design firm will revise the sign location plan and message schedule. These documents will be presented to appropriate facility staff for review and comment.

Deliverables: 3 hard copies and 1 electronic file (PDF); Preliminary version of the sign project manual showing all of the sign types, revised sign location plans and message schedule; Preliminary specifications and budget.

#### e. Phase 5 - CONTRACT DOCUMENTS

In this phase, the Environmental Graphic Design firm refines and finalizes the physical design of the signs, based upon client input from design development documents. The facility project coordinator will return the design development sign type drawings, sign location plan and message schedule to the Environmental Graphic Design firm with final comments and final revisions. The Environmental Graphic Design firm will prepare the final sign project manual. The sign project manual will follow the general format of detailed sign type drawings, defining all of the signs in the hierarchy of the sign program, selected sign construction details, sign installation details and specifications. The sign type drawings will include elevation drawings of each sign type with applicable size and layout dimensions and any necessary side, top and back views. It will also contain the interior and exterior sign message schedule, which defines the wording of each sign, referenced to the particular sign type and location. Final specifications will be provided for both the interior and exterior signs. Final sign location plans, in the form of AUTOCAD files will be provided for both the interior and exterior sign locations. A pre-construction budget estimate will be developed for implementing the program.

Deliverables: 3 hard copies and 1 electronic file (PDF and DWG format); Sign Project Manual/Document containing – Specifications, Sign Type Elevation, Layout, Detail and Mounting Drawings, Sign Message Schedule and Sign Location Drawings, pre-construction budget.

#### f. Phase 6 - CONSTRUCTION / IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

The Environmental Graphic Design firm is to assist the facility project coordinator with the following services.

- i. The Environmental Graphic Design firm will provide advice and direction to the VA in matters related to the contractors and suppliers during the course of the implementation of the project. The Environmental Graphic Design firm will have no direct or indirect affiliation with any of the contractors or suppliers involved with the implementation of the project.

## Sample Statement of Work

(continued)

figure 1

### SAMPLE STATEMENT OF WORK

- ii. Review all design submissions at the medical center with VAMC project coordinator and other appropriate staff.
- iii. Review the fabricator/sign contractors' submittals, shop drawings and samples to ensure compliance with the Bid/Project Design Documents. The review could consist of one complete submittal and one revised submittal.
- iv. The Environmental Graphic Design firm will visit the project site with the facility project coordinator and the sign contractor and perform a pre-installation walk through for both the interior and exterior sign project.
- v. At the completion of all fabrication and installation, the Environmental Graphic Design firm will make a final inspection walk through of the project and prepare a report noting deficiencies and corrections necessary for the sign contractor to complete both the interior and the exterior sign projects.
- vi. At the completion of final inspection corrections, the Environmental Graphic Design firm will make a final inspection walk through of the project and prepare a report noting if there are still any outstanding deficiencies and corrections necessary for the sign contractor to complete both the interior and the exterior sign projects.

#### 5. PRELIMINARY PROJECT SCHEDULE

Phase 1: \_\_\_\_ weeks; Phase 2: \_\_\_\_ weeks; Phase 3: \_\_\_\_ weeks;

Phase 4: \_\_\_\_ weeks; Phase 5: \_\_\_\_ weeks

#### 6. EXCLUSIONS

The fabrication and installation of signs, site electrical and the engineering within signs is by others. Interior signs not included in the scope of work are: illuminated fire safety exit signs, signs related to or on equipment or fixtures, and signs relating to employee operational matters. Exterior signs not included in the scope of work are: parking stall identification, signs related to or on equipment or fixtures and striping and pavement markings.

#### 7. PROJECT COORDINATOR

\_\_\_\_\_

#### NOTE

This statement of work is a general guide to assist in the development of a scope for a project and facility. Close coordination with a Contracting Officer will help tailor the document to meet current contracting requirements and procedures.

**Sample  
Federal Business  
Opportunity Ad**

figure 2

**SAMPLE FEDERAL BUSINESS OPPORTUNITY AD**

DESCRIPTION: IDENTIFINITE DELIVERY CONTRACT (OPEN-END) FOR ENVIRONMENTAL GRAPHIC DESIGN PROGRAMMING SERVICES

The project will provide professional services necessary for various environmental graphic design services for VA medical centers located in the VA Integrated Service Network (VISN) \_\_\_\_\_. The VISN \_\_\_\_\_ facilities will include VAMC \_\_\_\_\_. Also included will be various Community Based Outpatient Clinics in the VISN \_\_\_\_ catchment area. Services include design and program of interior and exterior signage, directional wayfinding signage, new room numbering system directed towards visitors and staff, life safety, code and regulatory signage, traffic regulatory signs. This will involve programming and sign location plans for all signs throughout the medical center/facility. Area of consideration is within the continental United States. The environmental graphic design firm shall perform work on an indefinite quantity (Open-Ended) basis. When services are required, a work order will be issued. Work orders will be issued by the Contracting Officer and will detail the scope of work. The environmental graphic designer, VA and Contracting Officer will review the scope of work and negotiate the amount of hours required and the completion schedule. VA intends to award an open-ended Environmental Graphic Design contract. The Government is uncertain as to the number of task orders that will be placed against the contract during the term of the contract. Award of individual task orders is contingent upon project funding. Selection criteria will be based on: (1) Primary business activity (70%) is in the field of Environmental Graphic Design performing the work of signage programming and design. (2) Project Manager assigned signage programming must have extensive experience with programming the room and informational signing for the interior of large medical centers including the development of a wayfinding (directional) sign program and life safety signing. Extensive experience refers to having worked on and managed multiple large sized (250+ bed) medical centers as well as psychiatric hospitals, nursing homes, and outpatient clinics. Be familiar with hospital departments and their interaction with one another. (3) Project Manager assigned signage programming must have extensive experience with programming the signing for the exterior of large medical centers. This includes the development of pedestrian and vehicle wayfinding (directional) signs program, building and entrance identification and traffic/regulatory signing. Extensive experience refers to having worked on exterior sign programs for multiple medical centers in rural, suburban, and urban locations. (4) Ability to provide sign location plans in AutoCAD (if AutoCAD files are available from the VA for the buildings and sites involved). (5) Professional member of the Society for Environmental Graphic Design. (6) Thorough familiarity with the VA's Environmental Graphic Design Program Guide. (7) Knowledge of medical terminology and operational characteristics of hospitals, psychiatric hospitals, nursing homes, and outpatient clinics. (8) Selected firm will be excluded from bidding the sign product, demolition and installation. (9) Project manager assigned to the project must have experience in developing new room numbering systems for medical centers. Environmental Graphic Design firms that meet the requirements listed in this announcement are invited to submit two (2) copies of the completed Standard Forms (SF) 254 and 255 by \_\_\_\_\_. SIC code 8711 applies. No bid packages are available. This is not a Request for Proposal (RFP).

**Sample  
Rating Factors**

The following are some rating factors that can be used in the selection process for an Environmental Graphic Design firm.

1. Primary business activity (70%) is in the field of Environmental Graphic Design performing the work of signage programming and design.
2. Project Manager assigned signage programming must have extensive experience with programming the room and informational signing for the interior of large medical centers including the development of a wayfinding (directional) sign program and life safety signing. Extensive experience refers to having worked on and managed multiple large sized (250+ bed) medical centers as well as psychiatric hospitals nursing homes, and outpatient clinics.
3. Project Manager assigned to signage programming must have extensive experience with programming the signing for the exterior of large medical centers. This includes the development of pedestrian and vehicle wayfinding (directional) signs program, building and entrance identification and traffic/regulatory signing. Extensive experience refers to having worked on exterior sign programs for multiple medical centers in rural, suburban, and urban locations.
4. Ability to provide sign location plans in AutoCAD (if AutoCAD files are available from the VA for the buildings and sites involved).
5. Professional member of the Society for Environmental Graphic Design.
6. Thorough familiarity with the VA's Signage Design Guide.
7. Knowledge of medical terminology and operational characteristics of hospitals, psychiatric hospitals, community living centers, and outpatient clinics.
8. Selected firm will be excluded from bidding the sign product, demolition and installation.
9. Project manager assigned to the project must have experience in developing new room numbering systems for medical centers.
10. Provide 5 client references (past projects) that can be contacted for background and performance information on the Environmental Graphic Design firm.

**Sample  
Questions for  
Environmental Graphic  
Design Firm During  
Interview**

The following are some interview questions that can be used in the selection process for evaluating an Environmental Graphic Design firm.

1. What type of firm is \_\_\_\_\_?
2. How long has the firm been in business?
3. Is the firm affiliated with, or a division of, another firm or sign company?
4. Does the firm sell signs or any other manufactured product?
5. How long has the firm been designing sign programs for medical centers?
6. How many interior and exterior sign programs has the firm designed for medical centers?
7. What is the largest medical center that the firm has designed a sign program for?
8. How many VA Medical Centers has the firm designed and programmed? And, what are the names of those facilities?
9. Does the firm have any VA projects currently underway?
10. What comprises the firm's staff and what is their experience in the field of Environmental Graphic Design?
11. What is the educational background of the staff?
12. How many people typically work on a project?
13. Who works on the Design Phase of a project and then who works on the Construction Phase?
14. What are the 5 most recent projects bid?
15. What are the 5 most recent projects completed? (fabricated and installed)
16. What are the 5 most recent medical facility projects?
17. What are 5 projects currently in design at the firm?
18. Has the firm received any awards for design excellence?
19. Has the firm had any litigation involvement in the last 5 years?  
If so, what was the outcome?
20. Is the firm a Veteran owned firm?
21. How familiar is the firm with the sign products available?
22. Is the firm familiar with GSA sign manufacturers?



**The Project Process**

The process to develop a new sign program for a medical center, a site or a building, can take several months or even a year to complete.

Programming the signage requirements for a facility first requires a definition of the project to be undertaken.

Interior sign programs are generally best undertaken with projects that involve remodeling, repainting or refurbishing. When an old sign program is removed there is generally considerable refurbishment needed to walls. A new interior sign program sign quantity will generally be two thirds of the signs that are removed, so there is considerable patching, repairs and painting involved.

An exterior sign program may require repairs to landscaping, new electrical, repairing walks, walls and paved surfaces. It is best to undertake an exterior sign program for the entire medical campus rather than attempting to do it piecemeal. Doing just a portion of a campus will lead to confusion on the part of patients and visitors because when they see new signs they will not be sure that the information on an old sign is correct.

The following is a sign program project template that outlines the various tasks, documentation and events in a sign project for a building or a site. This overview can also function as a “project road map” to keep a sign project on track for milestones and deliverables.

**Phase 1**

**Engaging an Environmental Graphic Design Firm**

<p><b>Objective</b> <i>Determine what needs to be accomplished.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection of a qualified firm to provide sign programming and design services.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Environmental Graphic Design Firm Tasks</b> <i>Verify what will be done by the Environmental Graphic Design firm.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submitting profile and qualifications.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Documentation</b> <i>Establish what will be delivered.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GSA Form 330</li> </ul>
<p><b>VA Project Management Tasks</b> <i>Identify what will be done by the VA.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordination of the review and approval process with Contracting.</li> <li>• Assembly of the personnel that will be involved in the selection review process.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Approvals</b> <i>Determine what approvals need to be achieved.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinated by Contracting.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Time</b> <i>Determine how much time will be required.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 to 16 weeks</li> </ul>

**Phase 2**

**Establishing the Project Team**

<p><b>Objective</b> <i>Determine what needs to be accomplished.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of project milestones.</li> <li>• Development of the review and approval process.</li> <li>• Assembly of the personnel that will be involved in the project.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Environmental Graphic Design Firm Tasks</b> <i>Verify what will be done by the Environmental Graphic Design firm.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project manager and design team staff finalized.</li> <li>• Prepare a project time line.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Documentation</b> <i>Establish what will be delivered.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project time line</li> </ul>
<p><b>VA Project Management Tasks</b> <i>Identify what will be done by the VA.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the core committee that will function as the project lead.</li> <li>• Develop a process for reviewing the project documentation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Approvals</b> <i>Determine what approvals need to be achieved.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a project document review time line.</li> <li>• Develop the channel of approvals that will be utilized for the project.</li> </ul>

**Phase 3**

**Programming**

Defining the scope of the project, the criteria for the design and any special requirements.

<p><b>Objective</b> <i>Determine what needs to be accomplished.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defining the project.</li> <li>• Defining the influences.</li> <li>• Identifying the coordinating elements.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Environmental Graphic Design Firm Tasks</b> <i>Verify what will be done by the Environmental Graphic Design firm.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine where signs are needed.</li> <li>• Determine the types of signs required.</li> <li>• Determine the circulation system and decision points.</li> <li>• Develop a preliminary message schedule of text for the signs.</li> <li>• Identify specific site and/or architectural conditions.</li> <li>• Define special requirements for lighting, installation and maintenance.</li> <li>• Identify coordination issues with architect, landscape architect and interior designer.</li> <li>• Establish budget objectives.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Documentation</b> <i>Establish what will be delivered.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sign message schedule and location plan.</li> </ul>
<p><b>VA Project Management Tasks</b> <i>Identify what will be done by the VA</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the sign message schedule and location plan providing comment and revisions.</li> <li>• Provide input and direction on budgets.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Approvals</b> <i>Determine what approvals need to be achieved.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documents being developed so there are no approvals.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Time</b> <i>Determine how much time will be required.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depending on the overall size of the project, this can take 2 to 12 weeks.</li> </ul>

**Phase 4**

**Design Development**

Creating the design look of the sign and graphics program and resolving issues.

<p><b>Objective</b> <i>Determine what needs to be accomplished.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defining the look, image and design character.</li> <li>• Applying the image and design character to the needs defined in the Programming Phase.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Environmental Graphic Design Firm Tasks</b> <i>Verify what will be done by the Environmental Graphic Design firm.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define the various types of signs to be used.</li> <li>• Define issues of image, finishes, layout, and color.</li> <li>• Define terminology, names and titles.</li> <li>• Drawings of all the interior and exterior sign types that will be included in the sign program.</li> <li>• Revise sign location plan and message schedule.</li> <li>• Develop preliminary budget.</li> <li>• Coordinate with other design consultants.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Documentation</b> <i>Establish what will be delivered.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation drawings of the proposed design look.</li> <li>• Drawings showing all sign types.</li> <li>• Revised sign location plans and message schedule.</li> <li>• Preliminary budget.</li> </ul>
<p><b>VA Project Management Tasks</b> <i>Identify what will be done by the VA.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review design concepts and drawings and provide comments.</li> <li>• Review sign message schedule and location plan providing comment and revision.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Approvals</b> <i>Determine what approvals need to be achieved.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VA approval of Design Development documents.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Time</b> <i>Determine the amount of time required.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Starting during Programming, this phase will take 5 to 10 weeks.</li> </ul>

**Phase 5**

**Final Design**

Preparation of documentation for the manufacturing and installation of the sign and graphics program.

<p><b>Objective</b> <i>Determine what needs to be accomplished.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final documentation for purchasing implementation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Environmental Graphic Design Firm Tasks</b> <i>Verify what will be done by the Environmental Graphic Design firm.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare final sign location plans and message schedule.</li> <li>• Prepare final sign type drawings, text layout, construction details.</li> <li>• Prepare installation and mounting details.</li> <li>• Prepare specifications.</li> <li>• Develop pre-construction budget.</li> <li>• Provide list of pre-qualified GSA sign manufacturers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Documentation</b> <i>Establish what will be delivered.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drawings showing all sign types, details, mounting and layouts.</li> <li>• Final sign messages schedule and location plan.</li> <li>• Pre-construction budget.</li> <li>• Specifications.</li> </ul>
<p><b>VA Project Management Tasks</b> <i>Identify what will be done by the VA.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the final sign location plan, message schedule, sign type drawings and specifications.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Approvals</b> <i>Determine what approvals need to be achieved.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VA approval of Final Design documents.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Time</b> <i>Determine how much time will be required.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This phase will take 6 to 8 weeks.</li> </ul>

**Phase 6**

**Demolition**

Removal of existing sign program

<p><b>Objective</b> <i>Determine what is to be accomplished.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defining what work is to be accomplished regarding removal of existing signs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Environmental Graphic Design Firm Tasks</b> <i>Verify what will be done by the Environmental Graphic Design firm.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop documentation.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Documentation</b> <i>Establish what will be delivered.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Documentation describing the scope of demolition work. This can consist of photographs, description of work and plans of location of signs to be removed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>VA Project Management Tasks</b> <i>Identify what will be done by the VA.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide direction on the scope of demolition to be addressed.</li> <li>Review demolition documentation.</li> <li>Review sign removal schedule and plan providing comment and revisions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Approvals</b> <i>Determine what approvals need to be achieved.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>VA approval of demolition documents.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Time</b> <i>Determine how much time will be required.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2 to 4 weeks</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sign Company Responsibilities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Removal of demolition approved signs as well as any corresponding signage components.</li> </ul>

**Phase 7**

**Purchasing**

Bidding and entering into a contract for manufacturing and installation.

<p><b>Objective</b> <i>Determine what needs to be accomplished.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage a qualified manufacturer and installer.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Environmental Graphic Design Firm Tasks</b> <i>Verify what will be done by the Environmental Graphic Design firm.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist in the pricing process by answering questions and providing clarifications.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Documentation</b> <i>Established what will be delivered.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form 90-2237</li> <li>• Statement of Work</li> <li>• Estimate</li> </ul>
<p><b>VA Project Management Tasks</b> <i>Identify what will be done by the VA.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contracting Officer conducts the purchasing process.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Approvals</b> <i>Determine what approvals need to be achieved.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pricing Abstract</li> <li>• Technical Team</li> <li>• Contractor Qualifications</li> <li>• Grade Review</li> </ul>
<p><b>Time</b> <i>Determine how much time will be required.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This phase will take 4 to 10 weeks.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sign Company Responsibilities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Material samples and drawings for sign fabrication and installation.</li> <li>• Materials for samples and/or sign prototypes.</li> </ul>

**Phase 8**

**Implementation**

Manufacturing and installation

<p><b>Objective</b> <i>Determine what is to be accomplished.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Install and complete the project.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Environmental Graphic Design Firm Tasks</b> <i>Verify what will be done by the Environmental Graphic Design firm.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of shop drawings.</li> <li>• Review of materials, finishes, colors and samples.</li> <li>• Develop change orders.</li> <li>• Perform pre-installation walk through.</li> <li>• Perform punch list inspection.</li> <li>• Prepare punch list report.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Documentation</b> <i>Establish what will be delivered.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewed shop drawings.</li> <li>• Reviewed materials, finishes, colors and samples.</li> <li>• Punch list inspection report.</li> </ul>
<p><b>VA Project Management Tasks</b> <i>Identify what will be done by the VA.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review shop drawings.</li> <li>• Review materials, finishes, colors and samples.</li> <li>• Review punch list inspection report.</li> <li>• Provide access to the building and site.</li> <li>• Coordination with facility staff.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Approvals</b> <i>Determine what approvals need to be achieved.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acceptance of installed project.</li> <li>• Receiving Report.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Time</b> <i>Determine how much time will be required.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally projects take from 12 to 20 weeks, depending on their size and scope.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Sign Company Responsibilities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of shop drawings</li> <li>• Creation of material, finish and color samples.</li> <li>• Creation of requested sign prototypes.</li> <li>• Fabrication of signage structures.</li> <li>• Production of large format printed graphics.</li> <li>• Installation of signage structures.</li> </ul>



**Getting Help for a Small Project**

While this information will provide guidance for all projects, much of what has been discussed relates to large scale sign programs. The approach for small projects will be similar whether design/programming services are engaged or the work is done “in house”, with VA staff and resources.

Specifying environmental graphic design and programming services as a part of a purchase order for a small sign project is an option that can be considered. However, be careful in retaining control and defining the qualification of the programmer/designer who will be doing the work.

There is an inherent conflict of interests with the programmer/designer working for the manufacturer and not the ultimate client, with a tendency to over specify the quantity of sign products needed or the types of signs being provided. Make sure the scope of work being provided by a manufacturer is also clearly spelled out, in detail, relating to the exact type of programming services that is going to be provided.

Be suspect if the manufacturer does not identify the true cost for designing and programming services and “buries” it in the product cost. Programming and design services are never free.

**Interior Sign Message Schedule**

The Sign Message Schedule is a spread sheet listing the variety of unique specifications for each sign in the project. The Message Schedule is first developed during the Programming phase of the sign process. Refined during Design development and finalized at the Final Design phase. The Message Schedule specifies sign location, specific sign text, and sign type. Additional information as to quantity, notes, layout symbols, revision dates and special conditions should be included.

- **Floor:** Interior sign schedules include a floor level number for each sign. Exterior message schedules do not include a floor level designation.
- **Location:** A number designating the location of a sign on a particular floor (location numbers should not be repeated on the same floor). There is typically a symbol indicating the orientation of a sign in plan view. A symbol parallel to a wall, designates the general location of a sign on a wall. Symbols for overhead signs are often located in the center of a hallway, or at a doorway opening. Symbols perpendicular to a wall indicate flag signs. To determine the specific horizontal placement of a sign, refer to the sign type drawing. To determine mounting height, refer to the installation details.
- **Sign Type:** A variety of sign types are typically used in a project. The size, design configuration and text layout vary amongst different sign types.
- **Sign Text:** The Message Schedule lists the text on each sign. Text required is specific to each location.
- **Sign Side:** Needs to be specified on all double sided signs. If one side is blank the words (blank) will appear in the message schedule.
- **Quantity:** In some situations more than one sign will be necessary at a particular location. Signs are often stacked horizontally on a wall to accommodate multiple signs sharing the same location.
- **Layout/Symbol:** Many signs use icons. For example, the accessible symbol, of a person in a wheelchair, is to indicate an accessible restroom.
- **Notes:** Critical information in any project can be listed in the notes. "Client to verify text" is often listed indicating that the copy is not final and need client approval prior to fabrication.
- **Glass Backers:** Signs installed on glass doors, windows and side lights, glass backers are installed to cover the back side of mounting tape.

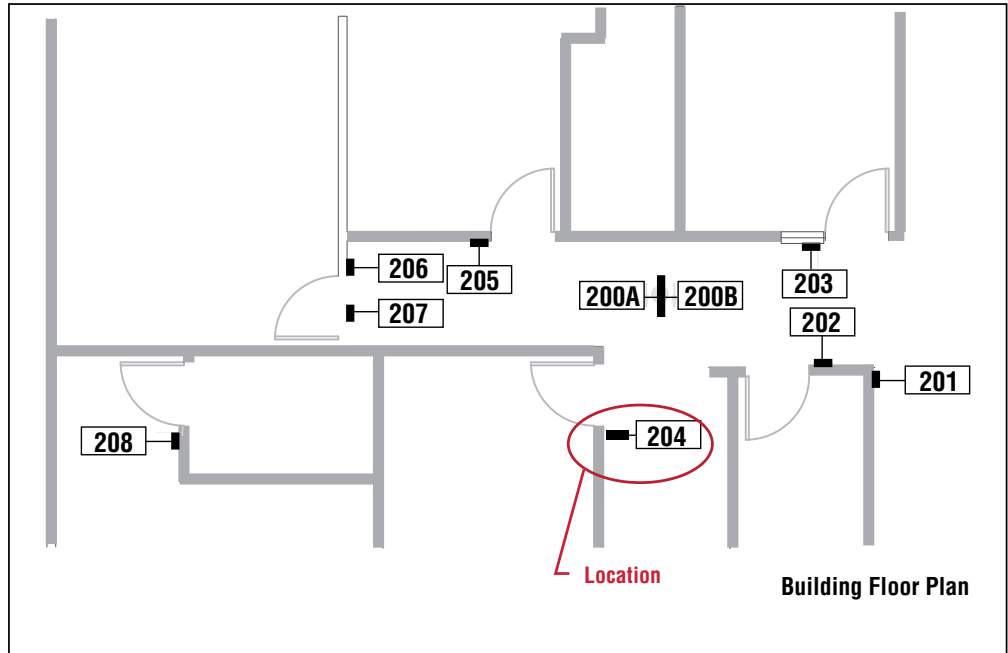
Figure 3  
Interior Message Schedule

Interior Message Schedule										
Building Name										
Floor	Location	Sign Type	Sign Text	Side	Quantity	Layout/Symbol	Notes	Glass Backer	Revised Date	Installation
2	201	IN14.01	← Clinic E Main Lobby ----- → Therapy Services Radiation Therapy		1					
2	203	IN19.01	Pharmacy		1		Mount to sidelight	yes		
2	207	IN01.22	CAUTION BIOHAZARD (symbol)		1	Biohaz. symbol	Mount to door			
2	206	IN03.01 IN04.02	1359 Soiled Utility		1					

**Interior Sign  
Location Plan**

**Interior Locations Plans** show sign locations relative to doors, walls, hallways, lobbies. The signs are placed to identify rooms, as well as areas, and provide a wayfinding system to help patients and visitors locate rooms and services. Sign Location Plans are architectural floor plan drawings showing sign locations, which are cross referenced to the corresponding message schedule. These drawings can be part of the architectural drawing set or a separate document. The drawings need to be drawn to scale and exterior plans need north orientation. Location plans can be a variety of sized documents such as Architectural A to E size or 11"x 17" layouts. The drawings must be printed so that location call outs are legible.

Figure 4  
Interior Location Plan



**Exterior Sign Message Schedule**

The Exterior Sign Message Schedule is a spread sheet listing the variety of unique specifications for each sign in the project. The Message Schedule is first developed during the Programming phase of the sign process. Refined during Design Developments and finalized at the Final Design phase. The Message Schedule specifies sign location, the specific sign text and sign type. Additional information as to quantity, notes, layout symbols, revision dates and special conditions should be included.

- **Location:** A unique number representing each sign location. The symbol indicates the orientation of the sign on the site.
- **Sign Type:** A variety of sign types are used in a project. The size, design configuration and text layout vary from different sign types.
- **Sign Text:** The Message Schedule lists the text on each sign. Text required is specific to each location.
- **Sign Side:** Needs to be specified on all double sided signs. If one side is blank the words (blank) will appear in the message schedule.
- **Quantity:** In some situations more than one sign will be necessary at a particular location.
- **Notes:** Critical information in any project can be listed in the notes. "Client to verify text" if often listed indicating that the copy is not final and need client approval prior to fabrication.

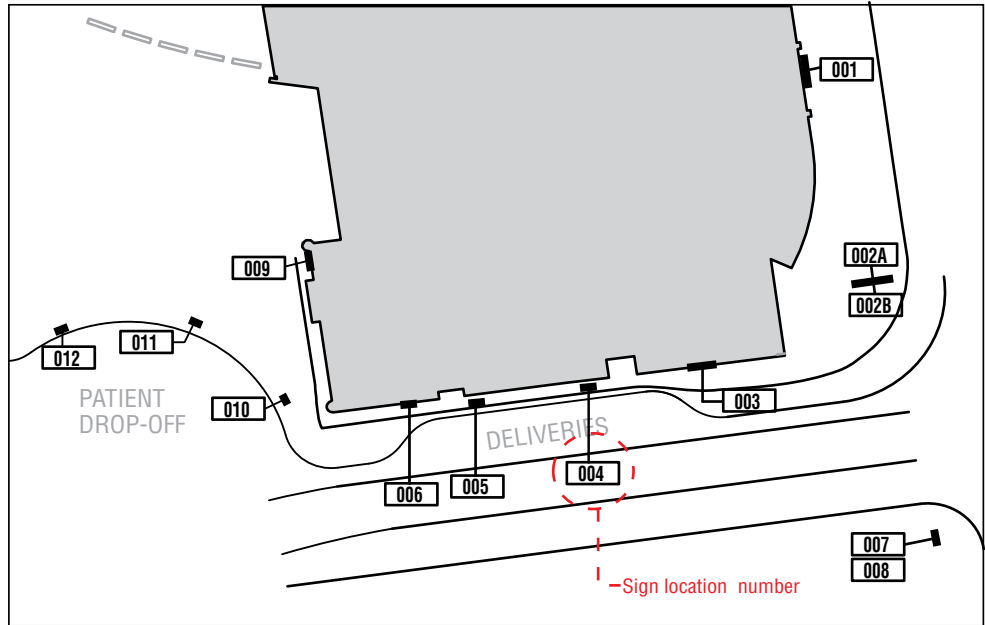
Figure 5  
Exterior Message Schedule

Exterior Message Schedule								Installation
Building Name								
Location	Sign Type	Sign Text	Side	Quantity	Notes	Revised Date		
002	EN03.02	← Exit  ----- → Visitor Parking Patient Drop Off	A  B	1				
001	EN09.07	Medical Center (logo) (underscore)		1				
003	EN09.03	2151 N. Harbor Blvd.		1				
004	EN05.03	Service Vehicles Only		1				
007	EN10.03	YIELD		1				

**Exterior Sign Location Plan**

**Exterior Locations Plans** show building location within a site and vehicular, as well as pedestrian, paths of travel. Roads, buildings, landscape layouts, building entries. Sign Location Plans are Architectural or Civil plan drawings showing sign locations. These drawings can be part of the architectural drawing set or a separate document. Drawings need to be drawn to scale and exterior plans need north orientation. Location plans can be a variety of sized documents such as Architectural A to E size or 11"x 17" layouts. The drawings must be printed so that location call outs are legible.

Figure 6  
Exterior Location Plan



### Picking a Sign Company

Not all sign companies are the same and they don't all have the same capabilities. Typically sign companies specialize in one of two types of signs groups. These groups are generally the ones that fit the company's manufacturing capabilities. There are certain sign products that almost all sign companies buy from select vendors because of the specialized processes required to produce the product (i.e. cast metal plaques cast metal letters).

It is important to work only with a sign company that has a current state contractors license. Most states require a license for site sign construction, installation and electrical work. The sign company (contractor) must pay a fee and pass a lengthy test, which determines their ability to perform the work correctly. The fee they pay is insurance in the form of a Surety Bond with the state construction contractors board. This provides a limited amount of financial security in the event the contractor is ordered to pay damages due to failure to uphold a contract. Having a license also is a way to be sure the company is not an operation "working out of the back of a truck".

### Types of Sign Companies

The sign industry is generally divided into four main categories – Electrical, Commercial, Architectural, and Service. Within these categories there are companies that range in size from small to large and provide products and services locally, regionally and nationally.

The key to a successful sign project is to select the correct type of sign company to build and install the type of signs needed. An analogy would be, that if you broke your ankle, what kind of doctor would you go to: a cardiologist, a gynecologist or an orthopedic doctor. They are all doctors, however, they do not all practice the same specialties.

**Electrical Sign Company:** The electrical sign company typically has a large manufacturing facility and are capable of fabricating large electrical signs including large pylon signs, skyline building signs, illuminated letters, neon signs, electronic dynamic displays and many more types of custom lighted signs. They will also have computerized equipment for cutting of custom letters and sign elements. They will have boom trucks or crane trucks for high-rise and large sign installation along with a variety of service vehicles. They will have installation staff and vehicles, permit services, drafting departments and maintenance services.

**Architectural Sign Company:** An architectural sign company typically manufactures sign products found in "institutional" or public facilities, such as hospitals, civic buildings, airports, corporate buildings, and schools. These companies manufacture and install both interior and exterior signs and their products tend to be more integrated into the architecture and environment as opposed to presenting a commercial appearance. They will have installation staff and vehicles, permit services, design and drafting departments and maintenance services.

This type of sign company is best suited for providing signage to a VA facility.

**Commercial Sign Company:** This group is generally comprised of Retail Sign Companies, Franchise Sign Companies and Small Neighborhood Sign Companies. Many times these types of sign companies are found in strip malls, retail outlets and small industrial buildings. They usually don't have large or complex equipment and tend to specialize in less technical manufacturing techniques. They offer fairly quick turnaround times and offer such signage as vinyl lettering for windows, vehicle graphics or vehicle wraps, decal and banners. They may also manufacturer sandblasted wooden signs, do screen printing or hand lettering. Usually these

**Types of Sign Companies**

*(continued)*

companies are small, with just a few employees, and are often family owned and operated and specialize in only certain types of signs. These companies can often be found in the phone book. They will most often list their specialty in their ad. These types of sign companies can be a resource for temporary signs, banners, informational signs, event signs, etc. They are not equipped to manufacture and install large-scale institutional sign projects for a VA facility.

**Service and Lighting Company:** These companies repair existing signs. They can be called to repair a sign that is no longer illuminating or functioning properly. They have service trucks and a staff familiar with sign construction and installation. They can also repair parking lot and street lighting. Also some of these companies provide services to maintain facilities light fixtures, both inside and outside of buildings, as well as parking lots and structures.

**Submittal and Shop Drawing Check List**

In the course of implementing a sign program, the first milestone is reviewing the sign company's submittal of samples and shop drawings.

The following outline provides an overview of items to look for and check during the submittal and shop drawing review. It should be noted that each project is different so this guide cannot be all inclusive of every possible item to check.

It is recommended that the submittal and shop drawings review process be conducted with a complete submittal, meaning, all samples and all drawings are submitted at one time. Partial submittals can result in items being missed or misunderstood.

If, in the review process, one has a question, needs more information, or wants a clarification, the sooner in the submittal review process it's raised the easier it is to address. Once the submittal and shop drawings are approved, the sign company takes that as authorization to proceed into manufacturing and any changes after this point will usually result in a change order and additional cost.

**Samples**

The quantity of samples submitted can vary for different projects, but a quantity of 3 of each is recommended, as a minimum. This allow one set to be returned to the manufacturer, when approved, one set to remain in the project master file, and one set to be used by the designer, during the course of the project, for reference purposes, meetings, field comparisons, etc. If the sign program is part of a renovation project, additional copies are required. When reviewing the shop drawings, the following considerations must be addressed before the shop drawings can be considered complete:

1. Have all materials, colors and finishes been provided?
2. Are all colors and finishes labeled with their reference/color code and manufacturer name?
3. Are color submittals, samples and material finishes at least 6" x 6". If there is a grain, finish, pattern, or texture, is the direction indicated?
4. Have all the correct sign type samples been submitted?
5. On letters with a satin grain finish, is the direction of the grain on the letter face indicated?
6. Verify the original material specifications have been met and not altered or substituted with an inferior product.

**Shop Drawings****General – Both Exterior and Interior**

The following items are applicable to the review of any sign program submittal, interior or exterior.

1. Do the drawings make sense? Are they logical, consistent and complete?
2. Are all sign types required for the job included and indicated in the drawings?
3. Are paint colors specified by color number, name and paint manufacturer? If a custom color is mixed, is the added information of the formula included?
4. All the graphic symbols and type fonts should be noted.
5. All drawings need to be drawn in scale and the scale noted.



**Shop Drawings**

*(continued)*

6. All sign face layouts need to be fully dimensioned with capital letter size, interline spacing and margins. All Braille symbols need to be properly defined.
7. Are all code required and VA mandatory signs included?
8. On double sided signs, is the layout for each side shown and dimensioned?
9. Are the job colors, materials and finishes noted and correct for each sign?
10. Are the dimensions shown for each sign type and its components detailing length, height and thickness?
11. Are the dimensions shown for the placement of all graphics on the sign?
12. Do the dimensions for the intended size and the placement of the graphics add up?
13. Do the drawings clearly show how is the sign is assembled?
14. Do exterior signs that utilize adhesive in the assembly process identify the type of adhesive (glue or tape) and the method of surface preparation?
15. Is the sign type installation specifically shown and detailed? Will it adequately secure the sign to its intended location?
16. Are instructions provided for the correct cleaning methods of the signs?
17. Are instructions provided on maintenance of the signs (i.e., how to access lamping for service, how to change directory strips, etc.)?

It is important to remember that shop drawings will become the file document that will be used for future reference when servicing, repairing, updating or ordering new signs. These drawings also become an important reference for future vendors who may be trying to match new signs to existing signs.

**Exterior**

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**General – Illuminated and Non-illuminated**

The following items are applicable to the review of any exterior sign program submittal:

1. All signs over 8 feet require a structurally engineered footing (foundation). Do the footing drawings have the structural engineers name and license/stamp visible on the drawing? Are calculations provided to substantiate the foundation design?
2. How is the sign connected to its footing?
3. Exterior signs with a visible concrete base must have the finish of the exposed concrete identified.
4. Are all sign cabinets, structural posts, etc. fully dimensioned?
5. All signs over 8 feet require a structural engineering detail the internal support structure. The drawings must have the structural engineers name and license/stamp visible on the drawing.
6. Exterior signs on private property (leased facilities) require building/sign permits from the local city or county. The signs also require final inspections by city or county inspectors and must be scheduled and performed the day of the installation.
7. The shop drawings should clearly show where the signs are to be installed with any field conditions noted that have a bearing on the sign location

**Exterior***(continued)*

(curbs, walks, electrical service point, underground utilities, etc.). These drawings should be drawn in “plan-view” clearly noting street names, distance from sidewalks, streets, buildings and easements.

8. All hardware should be noted as being corrosion resistant.
9. Exterior signs that have dissimilar metals in contact with one another must have isolating material between them.
10. Is the sign construction and installation method appropriate for the materials used? (e.g., acrylic cannot be welded to steel.)
11. All exterior signs and letters that are attached to a building must show and identify how the building penetrations are going to be sealed to prevent water intrusion.
12. All exterior signs and letters must have a small spacer to slightly space the sign off the wall to allow for water run-off and prevent streaking on the building surface.

**Illuminated Exterior Signs**

The following items are specifically applicable to the review of an illuminated exterior sign program submittal:

1. On each electrical sign the service voltage required and circuit load should be noted.
2. Sign footings for all electrical signs should show footing dimensions and details regarding reinforcing steel and concrete. Does the footing design require a structural engineer?
3. Exterior illuminated sign cabinets must show details on how the cabinet opens for access to servicing internal lamping and components.
4. Internally illuminated signs illuminated with florescent lamping must identify the size and type of lamp and ballast.
5. Internally illuminated signs illuminated with LED's must identify the LED manufacturer and the LED part number.
6. Internally illuminated signs illuminated with LED's must show the placement and position of the LED's and the quantity being installed and note the light color.
7. Internally illuminated signs illuminated with florescent lamping must show the lamps position in the cabinet, the distance from the sign face and the number of lamps installed as well as the lamp light color.
8. Where does electrical wiring needed to power the sign enter into the sign?
9. Large exterior illuminated sign cabinets sign faces should be hinged.
10. Where is the “UL sticker” located on the sign?
11. Where is the placement of the shut off switch and how does one access it?
12. The interior of an illuminated sign cabinet must be noted as being painted with a reflective white finish.
13. Exterior illuminated signs with aluminum sign faces and routed-out text must show the mechanical attachment of letter voids to the diffuser. Adhesive attachment of the letter void is NOT an alternate construction method because it will fail.

**Exterior**

*(continued)*

14. Exterior illuminated signs with aluminum sign faces with routed-out text must show how the mechanical attachment of the plastic diffuser is made to the aluminum sign face. Adhesive attachment of the letter void is NOT an alternate construction method because it will fail.
15. Illuminated letters must show the attachment points of the letters and to the building surface and identify the type of hardware.
16. Is the depth and construction of the footing shown and detailed and appropriate for the soil conditions where the sign is going to be installed?

**Non-illuminated Exterior Signs**

The following items are specifically applicable to a non-illuminated exterior sign program submittal:

1. Sign footings for all signs should show footing dimensions and details regarding concrete.
2. Is the depth and construction of the footing shown and detailed and appropriate for the soil conditions where the sign is going to be installed?
3. The finish on the edges of letters needs to be noted.

**Parking Lot Signs**

Refer to the general and exterior sign list.

**Parking Structure Signs**

Refer to the general and exterior sign list.

1. Determine if the type of mounting hardware is suitable for the type of construction used for the parking structure.
2. Any mechanical fasteners used in a post-tension construction structure need to be coordinated with the structure's construction drawings to ensure method of attachment does not contact or effect the tension system.

**Interior**

The following items are specifically applicable to the review of an interior sign program submittal.

1. Interior sign method of mounting to wall surface should be noted and specified. Is the method appropriate for the wall surface?
2. Detail drawings for the directory strips needs to note material, size, margins and layout for all directories.
3. What is the assembly method shown for interior signs that have component parts?
4. Interior sign drawings must show the mounting placement on the wall, with dimensions, for each type of sign.
5. The finish on the edges of letters must be noted.
6. Flag type signs should detail the method of mechanical attachment of the sign to the wall.
7. For hanging and overhead signs, details must be provided showing the mounting method and clearance height to the bottom of the sign for each type of ceiling condition. Is the method of attachment appropriate?
8. Directory drawings must indicate how the inserts or strips are removed and updated. Does the door swing open, lift off, slide off, etc.?