



DEJONG

CASE STUDY

State Of Arkansas:

Task Force to Joint Committee on Educational Facilities

November 17, 2004

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“By providing us with an inventory of facilities, the assessment report gives us an unprecedented opportunity to invest in the future of our state. Knowing what we know now positions us to meet the educational requirements of the 21st century and allows us to move beyond the antiquated procedures that have now run their course. Let’s all work together to foster school systems that our state can be proud of and give our children the education they deserve.”

- Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee

The Objective

Aging school facilities have become a growing issue throughout the United States. Arkansas is the first state to take a comprehensive look at the problem statewide, a response stemming from a lawsuit aimed at upgrading and equalizing the quality of the state’s public school facilities.

The first step was to thoroughly review the educational facilities and infrastructure and then develop a plan to correct the situation. The Task Force to Joint Committee on Educational Facilities was established in June 2003 to carry out this responsibility. In February 2004, the Task Force hired DeJONG as the program manager to oversee assessment of more than 5,800 facilities and 84.6 million square feet of educational facility space.

The assessment provided a baseline cost for upgrading facilities to comply with educational facilities standards, current building codes, and current technology support system requirements. The project was to be completed before the 85th Arkansas General Assembly convened in January 2005.

The Strategy

The Task Force to Joint Committee on Educational Facilities was comprised of 80 volunteers, including government officials and private citizens representing the legislature, independent school districts, code enforcement agencies, state government agencies, private industry and the engineering/design community.

Its mission was to ensure the physical assessment was standardized, uniformly applied, objectively evaluated and reported. State law also required that the assessment be conducted by registered professional architects and/or engineers who have demonstrated capabilities in educational facilities. The task force asked DeJONG to manage the assessment process, create design guidelines for future facilities and provide enrollment projections to effectively determine Arkansas’ future educational facility needs.

Immediately after it was hired, DeJONG began to establish an Adequacy Assessment Headquarters and assemble the team of project coordinators to manage the process. During this time, the DeJONG team, in conjunction with the task force and Arkansas Department of Education, developed the assessment criteria that would be used to evaluate each facility. The next phase entailed fully defining the evaluation forms and conducting a pre-assessment of each facility. DeJONG project coordinators reviewed each facility to ensure the accuracy of the baseline data – school name, location, contacts, floor plans, etc. – so the engineers and

CASE STUDY

architects conducting the final assessments could be as efficient as possible. After the pre-assessments were complete, DeJONG and the task force evaluated and selected the firms to complete the field assessments and conducted a pilot study. The pilot study entailed a review of by the DeJONG team. Based on the study, the assessment criteria were revised and the final assessment guideline manuals were developed.

The statewide assessment began in June and ended on September 20, 2004. A team of more than 300 engineers, architects and consultants participated in the assessment process. Many consultants and project coordinators were local Arkansas residents, including six architectural and engineering students from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville and four native Arkansans.

Each team was responsible for completing a thorough evaluation of the engineering, architectural and educational suitability criteria recording deficiencies for each educational facility. The assessment included factors such as classroom size, technology availability, HVAC and all other major building systems. Each assessment was completed on site and then delivered to DeJONG for input into the APPLE software and master database. The data was then thoroughly analyzed to provide accurate information for tracking facility data and estimating costs for repair. This information will provide the foundation for future funding requests and capital renewal programs related to the renovation and new construction of educational facilities.

DeJONG also led an initiative to provide 10-year enrollment projections that will be instrumental in helping the State of Arkansas effectively plan for the academic needs of its school-age children. To create the projections, the team collected substantial demographic information, including number of residents, growth patterns, age of residents, number of students, and live birth rates. Based on this information, DeJONG generated student enrollment projections from birth to kindergarten and from grade to grade to project future student population growth or decline by individual district as well as statewide.

Another key component of the project was to create standards for the development of future educational facilities. DeJONG, in conjunction with the Educational Facilities Standards Committee, prepared detailed recommendations relating to the goals and objectives, space requirements, spatial relationships of the program area, equipment needs, technology needs and other special considerations for future facilities. The 500-page document will serve as the roadmap for facility designers and ensure that each new facility meets the needs of the communities served.

Upon completion of the data assessment and analysis, DeJONG and the team submitted its final report to the task force in early November. The final report included the following information:

- Recommendations regarding accountability and monitoring procedures for achieving and maintaining facilities adequately
- Interactive Web site that enables stakeholders to view assessment data
- Assessment report summaries by District
- Assessment report summary by System
- Facility Condition Index [FCI] Report

Upon review and revision by the task force, the final report and deliverables were made available to the public in December 2004.

CASE STUDY

The Results

Arkansas is now better positioned to effectively make decisions about the future of its schools and extensive inventory of assets. By supplying the information regarding the current condition of school facilities as well as the 10-year enrollment projections, and design standards, this process provided Arkansas the necessary information to most effectively allocate its resources "to ensure that adequate facilities and substantially equal facilities are, and will continue to be provided for Arkansas' school age children," as required.

At the completion of the project, the team had evaluated more than 5,800 school facilities and 82.868 million square feet of buildings. The project was completed on time and under the original \$10 million budget.

The next step is for the Arkansas legislature to review the findings and determine the best way to fund the program.

For more information on the Task Force to Joint Committee on Educational Facilities plans, please visit www.arkansasfacilities.com.

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