

N A A T A P

Native American and Alaskan Technical Assistance Project

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# PROJECT GUIDE:

## Site Selection

*Part of A Series of Guides for Planning, Designing  
and Constructing Adult and Juvenile Correctional and  
Detention Facilities on Tribal Lands*

The Native American and Alaskan Technical Assistance Project (NAATAP) was created pursuant to an interagency agreement between the National Institute of Corrections and the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

National Institute of Corrections

Morris Thigpen, Director  
Larry Solomon, Deputy Director

520 First Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20534  
(800) 995-6423

Bureau of Justice Assistance

Domingo S. Herraiz, Director  
Mark Roscoe, Branch Chief

810 Seventh Street NW  
Fourth Floor  
Washington, DC 20531  
(202) 616-6500

Prepared under National Institute of Corrections Cooperative Agreement 04S07GIU2 with Justice Planners International LLC (JPI), 29 Donnybrook Drive, Demarest, NJ 07627 and 1179 Clifton Road, Atlanta, GA 30307. principals: Shelley Zavlek and Mark Goldman.

## Purpose

The purpose of each NAATAP Guide is to communicate substantive information concerning a range of subjects that are relevant to the development of adult and juvenile detention and correctional facilities in Indian Country. This series of guides grew out of a recognition that there were common concerns and questions being raised by Tribes and consultants developing new correctional facilities on Native lands throughout the country. The guides seek to provide research and information on issues of common concern to the Tribes. These guides also seek to document the knowledge and experience gained by Justice Planners International LLC (JPI) while providing technical assistance to tribes engaged in the facility development process.

## Acknowledgements

JPI acknowledges the assistance of the many consultants who contributed their expertise in the preparation of this series of guides. These materials were developed and reviewed by individuals with diverse backgrounds, expertise and experience in planning and design of juvenile and adult correctional and detention facilities, as well as analysis, design and operation of justice programs, facilities and systems on a local, state and national level.

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### **Author**

Paul DeFrancis and Justice Planners International LLC (JPI)

JPI Project Staff: Shelley Zavlek and Mark Goldman, Principals;  
Anthony H. Jones and Joshua LeFrancois, Associates

## Identifying Potential Sites

Selecting a suitable site for a new facility can be an extremely difficult process. Project team members may be presented with a site and told to “make it work,” or interested parties will put forward multiple potential sites and encourage your decision makers to accept them. Ideally, Tribal leaders will support an objective process that results in the selection of the best site possible to meet the Tribe’s needs and criteria.

Sometimes sites are identified before objective site selection criteria are developed. The danger with this is that knowledge about identified sites may influence the criteria. For example, perhaps analyses of objective criteria show that at least seven acres are needed to have adequate space for initial needs and future expansion. If Tribal leaders suggest a particular four-acre site, then the committee may attempt to make that site “work,” although it clearly has significant shortcomings.

Ideally, site selection criteria should be developed before sites are identified. With criteria in hand, the site selection committee can then identify sites that appear to best meet the established criteria.

## Selecting the Team to find the Site

To foster an objective process, it helps to have a site selection team in place with members that represent the various stakeholders in the new facility and that have various expertise to evaluate issues relevant to the site selection process (“Site Selection Committee). The Site Selection Committee should consist of all or most of the following people, depending upon availability of local and consultant resources:

- A public official/Tribal representative
- A community representative
- The Facility Director (jail administrator or juvenile correctional facilities administrator)
- The Tribe’s Project Manager
- A civil engineer – Tribal, if available
- The facility’s planner
- The architect, if selected; or another local architect
- A representative of another agency occupying the facility – if non-

correctional functions will be collocated in the new building or site

- A Public Works or maintenance administrator
- A Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) representative

## Developing Site Evaluation Criteria

The Site Selection Committee should be in place with adequate representation during the facility planning and programming phase of the project so that the Committee understands the building requirements that will influence the site selection. During planning and programming, discussions that will determine many of the site's requirements will be conducted, including the following:

- Square footage of enclosed space
- Height: whether the facility will be one or two stories, or one story with a mezzanine
- Parking: number of parking spaces needed to accommodate staff (most detention facilities require parking spaces to accommodate all staff on the two most staff-intensive shifts, usually day-shift and evening shift), visitors, law enforcement, and, work releasees, if applicable. If the site will accommodate other functions, such as Tribal courts, a halfway house or a justice center, either initially or in the future, parking for these functions should be figured in site requirements.
- Outdoor recreation area(s)
- Security zoning, fencing and “no man’s land” (e.g. land separating the building and usable outdoor areas from neighboring properties)
- Inmate loading/unloading area (next to Intake)
- Law enforcement staging (may be part of inmate loading)
- Service loading/unloading area (next to the kitchen), large enough for trucks
- Other justice system functions that may be added later – such as courts, day reporting programs, attorneys offices, probation offices
- Expansion of capacity for adults and/or juveniles. Note that depending upon the magnitude of the increased capacity, this may require expansion of support and program areas as well as adding more housing units (although, ideally, support areas

should be sized for the projected expanded capacity). Thus expansion may need to occur in multiple directions (e.g. adjacent to the kitchen, next to juvenile classrooms, and next to the adult work release unit)

The team should create a list of objectives/needs/criteria to assist in the evaluation of each site. Many of these objectives/needs/criteria will come from planning and facility programming efforts and resulting studies and reports. If site selection precedes facility programming, then estimates of items, such as square footage, will be needed. The list of objectives/needs/criteria will enable the team to objectively rate each site.

The site evaluation criteria should include main objectives or headings, which may consist of Site Location, Distance from Services, Site Access, Site Availability, Site Acquisition and Costs, Utility Availability, and Community Support. Each main heading will have a number of sub-elements that should reflect your Tribe's needs and considerations.

See the “Sample Site Criteria and Evaluation Checklist” included at the end of this Guide.

## Developing the Site Checklist

The following site checklist contains many common criteria. Each Tribe should modify the checklist to incorporate local issues, such as a desire to gradually build a new government complex with the correctional facility being the first phase, or locating the facility adjacent to an existing treatment facility. Also, criteria related to geographical conditions particular to each Reservation (i.e. away from flood plains; quick access to tribal snow removal equipment) should be incorporated into the site checklist.

There should be two ratings for each objective. The first rating is on whether that objective is negotiable. For instance if the team determines that the site has to be in-town/downtown adjacent to the judicial complex, it would not make sense to evaluate sites far outside of town. If the team determines that the site has to be a minimum of eight acres, it would not make sense to evaluate a site of five acres in the hopes that the design will change to high-rise.

The second rating is on a scale of 1 - 5 measuring the importance your team places on each element (with 1 being least important and 5 being most important). It is suggested that the Site Selection Committee first discuss and reach consensus on each criteria, and then follow the same process to determine the relative importance of each item. If, for example, the Committee decides that “Near Tribal Offices” is of medium importance, it would be assigned a “3.” Then, each site that is near Tribal offices would get a 3; those that are not near Tribal offices would get a “0.”

The sample checklist below is derived from the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Planning of New Institutions P.O.N.I. Program.

## Sample Site Criteria and Evaluation Checklist

	Negotiable?		Importance 1 to 5	Ratings for Sites <sup>1</sup>		
	Yes	No		Site A	Site B	Site C
<b>Site Location</b>						
Central geographic location on the Reservation						
Centrally located with regard to population density						
Centrally located with regard to point of arrest frequency (closest to where most arrests are made)						
Use consistent with current zoning and/or tribal land use						
(Consider adding others here)						
<b>Distance from Services</b>						
No more than 5 minutes from fire responder.						
No more than 10 minutes from hospital, clinic or EMS.						
No more than 5 minutes from (or adjacent to) court						
No more than 5 minutes from (or adjacent to) Tribal Police Dept.						
Near (or adjacent to) Probation Dept.						
Near (or adjacent to) Attorneys' Offices						
Near (or adjacent to) service agencies. (Substance Abuse/Mental Health)						
Near Tribal Offices						
(Consider adding others here)						
<b>Site Access</b>						
On or near main road						
Has high snow removal priority (IF snow is an issue in your location)						
Regularly maintained road						

<sup>1</sup> Note: may be as few as two, or more than three

**Continued**

	Negotiable?		Importance 1 to 5	Ratings for Sites <sup>1</sup>		
	Yes	No		Site A	Site B	Site C
Access roads adequate for increased traffic						
Access not blocked for more than 5 minutes due to traffic, trains, bridges or other reasons						
Access not blocked by natural factors such as floods						
Has more than one means of access.						
(Consider adding others here)						
<u>Site Characteristics and Size</u>						
Enough buildable area to meet space needs						
Allows for future expansion (Note: this is a BIA requirement)						
Adequate land for parking for staff and visitors – initially and once expanded- for correctional and other functions (if other functions may be added later)						
Space for law enforcement vehicles, emergency vehicles, service and delivery vehicles						
Adequate land for recreation areas						
Soil will support building of this size						
Slope/topography suitable for building, parking, recreation, etc.						
Good radio reception and transmission						
No environmental hazards or issues that are time-consuming or costly to remedy						
Good “fit “ with the neighborhood						
Not ecologically sensitive environment						

Continued

	Negotiable?		Importance 1 to 5	Ratings for Sites <sup>1</sup>		
	Yes	No		Site A	Site B	Site C
Not significant historically or archaeologically						
(Consider adding others here)						
<u>Site Acquisition and Costs</u>						
Currently available						
Owned by Tribe or low cost						
Ownership is uncontested						
No long hearing or negotiation process required						
Minimal development costs for demolition, grading, utilities, landscaping, etc.						
(Consider adding others here)						
<u>Support</u>						
Community supports the location of the site						
Tribal Council and (if exists) Business Committee supports this use of the site						
BIA supports this use of the site						
No significant public opposition to the site is likely						
(Consider adding others here)						
<u>Cultural and Traditional Values</u>						
Appropriate from cultural and historical perspectives						
(Consider adding others here)						
<u>Utilities</u>						
Telephone extends to the property line.						
Water main, large enough to handle the load, extends to the property line.						
Sewer line is adequate in size and extends to the property line						

Continued

	Negotiable?		Importance 1 to 5	Ratings for Sites <sup>1</sup>		
	Yes	No		Site A	Site B	Site C
Natural gas extends to the property line.						
Refuse service, if required, extends to the property line.						
(Consider adding others here)						
Other Issues Important to Your Tribe						
(fill in)						
(fill in)						
(fill in)						
Total						

## Evaluating Sites

To foster objective evaluations, all committee members should complete checklists separately. Differences in scores are to be expected and should be discussed and, if feasible, resolved. When consensus cannot be reached on scores, numbers should be averaged.

## Selecting the Site

Once the Committee agrees on the scores for each site – or averages the different scores – one site will emerge as the one that best meets the Tribe’s criteria. If the Tribe owns it, then the federally required environmental assessment should begin. If others own it, then negotiations should begin, but purchase should not take place unless/until it is found environmentally acceptable. If the site proves too expensive or does not pass environmental scrutiny, then the Committee should follow the same steps (environmental assessment, negotiation with owner if not tribal property) with the site that scored second best.





## ALSO AVAILABLE:

**Project Guide:** Adult Correctional Facility Design Resources

**Project Guide:** Alternatives to Incarceration of Offenders

**Project Guide:** Assessment of Project Status  
& Technical Assistance Needs

**Project Guide:** Best Practices - In-Custody Programs  
for Juveniles and Adults

**Project Guide:** Design Review

**Project Guide:** Existing Facility Evaluations

**Project Guide:** Juvenile Facility Design

**Project Guide:** Objective Classification Analysis

**Project Guide:** Population Profiles, Population Projections  
and Bed Needs Projections

**Project Guide:** Selecting an Architect-Developing  
RFQs and RFPs

**Project Guide:** Site Selection

**Project Guide:** The NEPA Land Use Process for Proposed  
Development of Correctional Facilities in Indian Country

**Project Guide:** Tribal Justice System Assessment