



## Center for Innovative School Facilities of Oregon

A Project of Innovation Partnership

# Site Panel FAQs

### **What is a Site Panel?**

A team of volunteer specialists handpicked to address the issues selected by the District. They are professionally briefed and managed, to provide the district with neutral, third-party recommendations.

### **Why would we need a Site Panel? How is it different from the other services we use?**

The Center and its services, including the Site Panels, are offered as “coaching” for districts. Managing a facility and property portfolio requires a diverse set of skills, therefore, there are many specialists that come into the equation. Oftentimes, when it comes to a major bond with construction and rehabilitation of existing schools, the district has not done this level of work for a number of years. Bottom line, the Center and its Site Panels are *Here to Help You Spend Your Capital Improvement Bond Dollars Wisely*.

### **When should we have a Site Panel?**

Generally, the sooner the better; two years prior to a bond campaign is a particularly good time as the traditional Site Panel is designed to help the District “frame up” its facility needs and opportunities, as well as indicate the areas that need in-depth specialist research or advice.

However, Site Panels can also be designed to assist Districts work their way through a specific conundrum. Therefore, Site Panels are to be used anytime a district needs neutral, third-party advice or comment on an issue with which they are having problems.

### **Do we get to pick our Panelists?**

Over 100 specialists from around the state (in areas including architecture, construction, cost estimating, development, engineering, finance, legal and sustainability) are willing to donate their time to the Center for a Site Panel. It is our experience that if a particular person or specialist is desired, they make every effort to make it work. We will, of course, provide a suggested Panel based on our understanding of the District’s issues. The final decision is yours.

### **How long does a Panel usually take from the time we agree on the Panel until the final report?**

We can research, assemble, brief, deliver a Site Panel and complete the report in as little as three weeks if all the necessary players’ schedules can accommodate the timeline.

### **Can we control or reduce the cost of a Site Panel?**

Yes, the level of research for the Briefing Book that you provide the Center directly impacts the amount of prep time required. Also, if analysis of the issue at hand has been addressed to some extent, this will be taken into consideration. Also, some communities have been able to get on-site expenses (food and lodging) donated locally. If the cost is prohibitive, the Center can assist the District in raising the funds for the Panel. Costs range from \$5,000 to \$25,000 depending on complexity and the amount of available completed analysis and can be determined on a weighted Average Daily Membership (ADM) if preferred.

### **Are there superintendents and board members from prior Site Panels that will talk with us about their experience?**

Yes, a quick call or email to the Center requesting contact information will be promptly filled.

### **What is the typical Site Panel visit?**

The Site Panel team will arrive in the district already prepped via a prior briefing and having received a notebook of research on your district and site(s). The Panel often starts their visit with a “meet and greet” with school and community leaders invited by the district. This helps generate interest and gives the Panel an opportunity to hear diverse viewpoints. The next order of business is touring all of the target facilities and properties usually with the facilities/business staff and often the superintendent. This tour usually takes a half day, includes considerable discussion among the district leadership and the team and begins shaping the recommendations. Another half day is spent interviewing community and school leaders. These are people who are influential leaders and whose opinions are often not available without an interview. Finally, the Panel spends a minimum of a half-day discussing, analyzing and preparing their recommendations. The visit concludes with a public presentation (unless private is requested) of the recommendations, the power point of which is immediately available. Also, during the visit or at the conclusion the Panel is available to the media as directed by the district.

### **Can we consider a Site Panel without making a commitment?**

Sure, a call to the Center staff is a good way to start the review of options. They can help define the immediate versus longer term need and prepare some options for your consideration. Or, if the current issue is simply answered, the district will be matched up with a volunteer specialists ready to assist with that single question or “one-off,” or connected to a readily available resource. Also, a volunteer and staff team are always available to make a visit to your district, take an initial look at the specific sites and review the options with you.

For more information contact Ruth Scott ([ruth@innovationpartnership.org](mailto:ruth@innovationpartnership.org)) or Jeff Renfro ([jeff@innovationpartnership.org](mailto:jeff@innovationpartnership.org))