

Improving the Measurement of Plan Review Availability and Timeliness

Recommendations to the WI DSPS from the Alliance for Regulatory Coordination

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Currently, the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services tracks, and posts on the agency website, the date of the next available appointment for commercial building plan review services. Although this information is somewhat helpful for plan review customers, the ARC recommends the following changes in how the agency measures both plan review availability and plan review timeliness.

Third Next Available Appointment

The ARC recommends that instead of tracking the date of the “next available” appointment, the DSPS should track the date of the “third next available” appointment. The “third next available” appointment is used rather than the “next available” appointment since it is more reflective of true appointment availability. For example, an appointment may be open because of a cancellation or other unexpected event. Using the “third next available” appointment eliminates these chance occurrences from the measure of availability. The [Institute of Healthcare Improvement recommends this measure](#) be used in the healthcare industry; and the ARC believes it would be helpful relative to DSPS plan review services.

The measurement should be the length of time, in calendar days, between the date of taking the measurement and the date of the third available appointment for a plan review.

There is less variability when using the third next available appointment as compared to using the next available appointment.

The Gap Between Requested Plan Review Date and Available Plan Review Date

The ARC recommends the DSPS begin tracking the gap in time between each customer’s desired plan review date and the actual date that plan review begins. Data about this gap, including the smallest, largest and average gap during a given period; week, month, quarter, and year, would provide useful information for DSPS managers, customers and legislators.

The plan review by appointment process was originally set up as a way to better integrate the plan review step into the overall project timeline for building design, approval and construction. The process was intended to allow both parties, the plan submitter and the Department, to make arrangements for “meeting” on a future specific date, upon which DSPS review of plans would commence.

Some building design timelines cover weeks or months. In such cases, submitters may desire a plan review appointment date that is weeks or months in the future. When the only measure of plan review timeliness involves measuring the time to the next (or third next) available appointment, the actual satisfaction levels of many customers are ignored, and DSPS services may appear less timely than they actually are.

Illustrated another way. When you want a dinner reservation in four weeks you are most satisfied when the restaurant says it can fit you in on the date you want – not the week before or the week after.

The Alliance for Regulatory Coordination is a consortium of 21 organizations involved in building design, construction and regulatory services. Alliance membership consists of business, labor, advocacy, professional and governmental groups; numbering thousands of members, all committed to promoting more coordinated and efficient regulatory services for citizens and businesses of Wisconsin. Learn more about the Alliance at www.4ARC.org.