The Lab Assessment: A First Step Towards A Better Lab/R&D Space

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Lab spaces can often have a shorter effective life cycle than many other built environments. The technology and science may evolve beyond the original intent of the lab, complex mechanical systems may no longer operate effectively, or lab chemicals may have taken their toll on finishes. Think about your own lab: Are there spaces that you would not show to visitors or potential clients?

When considering an upgrade to a laboratory facility, whether it is a master plan for the future, a facility renovation or even an equipment upgrade, it is helpful to fully understand the current conditions in order to plan for the future. To help gain support for making capital improvements, Hixson recommends conducting a Lab Assessment. Some of the questions we examine with our clients during Lab Assessments include the following:

- How well is utility infrastructure functioning now, and how much life does it have left?
- What is the existing utility capacity and redundancy capabilities, and are these able to scale up over time?
- Do lab odors migrate throughout the facility?
- Does the lab meet temperature requirements or is it too hot/too cold?
- What is the current state of the infrastructure, including general building condition and building envelope?
- Are lab benches/casework stained, scratched, or rusted?
- Are there inefficiencies in the current process flow?
- Is the lab meeting current performance goals?

Armed with information listed above (and in *Experience in Brief*, at right), the next step in the assessment process is to review existing conditions. Areas of opportunity will then be identified, from which broad recommendations – including order-of-magnitude costs for facility improvements and utility system upgrades – can be provided. This information can provide R&D and laboratory facilities with a baseline reference from which strategic, smart decisions can be made regarding the facility and future operations.

experience in brief

The future state of the lab is another area that should be addressed during a Lab Assessment. Therefore, the following questions should also be reviewed:

- Are there potential trouble spots that can impact future operations or projects?
- Can the lab meet future performance goals?
- What new ideas and operational strategies could benefit the facility and its operations?

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