

# Why use Qualifications-Based Selection to Procure A/E Services:

- **Engineering Services are Unique**

When an engineer enters a project, the scope of the work has not been entirely defined; therefore, there are no specific parameters on which to base a price estimate.

A critical element in the design process is the creation of a collaborative spirit between professional and client. Fully defining the project scope with the most qualified offeror, prior to contract award, fosters exploring alternative innovative solutions and cost-saving and timesaving approaches to problems, ensuring that the final project meets or exceeds the functional and performance goals set by the owner.

If price is an initial consideration, design professionals' proposals will attempt to assume the client's needs.

Minimal standards will most likely be used because a firm cannot judge exactly what the client wants; innovative approaches, advanced technologies, or new features which could improve completed project performance or save a great deal over the life of the project, may not be added because another firm, not including those features, may offer a lower price.

- **No Two Design Solutions Are the Same**

People often believe that design professionals practice an exact science, learning formulas and applying them similarly. Nothing could be further from the truth. Design is based on the application of education, experience, opinion, and judgment. Not all design professionals have the same level of experience in every specialty or project type, and not all can bring that experience to bear on a project in a timely manner. Not all design professionals apply the same degree of creativity and ingenuity and not all have the same level of communication skills.

- **Long-Term Savings**

Over the life of a project, engineering services account for less than one-half of one percent of total ownership costs. A high-quality engineer's design can have a dramatic savings effect on construction and maintenance and operations costs over the lifespan (ownership) of a project, as well as keeping the project on time and on budget.

Studies on project costs comparing low-bid and qualifications-based procurement procedures demonstrate conclusively that the low-bid process can ultimately be more time consuming and cost more than qualifications-based procurement (i.e., when considering the final cost, with changes vs. the negotiated price which has a well-defined scope of work).

Low bids, based on fixed scopes for an incompletely defined final project, give rise to needed changes as progress is made. The needed changes are negotiated with what is then a sole-source contractor.

Negotiating a scope of work with the most qualified offeror enhances communications and better defines the final project and changes needed prior to cost finalization and contract signing.

When engineers compete for projects by the qualifications-based method, fair and reasonable price is considered during scope and price negotiations, after the most qualified firm is selected.

- **Safeguarding Public Interest**

Public health/welfare and safety considerations, property protection, and environmental and economic risks are at stake with physical infrastructure projects.

In recent times many other considerations are being added to design considerations. These include resilience, sustainability, reduced power and water use, and other “social” factors.

All evaluations for selection are systematic and consistent. This creates an accountable record of the public owner’s selection of the design professional.

- **Encourage Competition**

The process is based on an offerors (team) ability to perform a job, not merely on the lowest price offered. Well qualified large firms avoid situations where cost determines selection, probability of winning outweighs costs of competing, and project risk may impact their reputations. Small firms can compete where QBS provides a forum to demonstrate their unique capabilities that often include a greater degree of niche market expertise, knowledge of local regulations and business practices, and greater involvement of senior level management in the execution of a project

The skills, experiences and specialization of firms and specific design team members (that will actually work on a project) are considered (including local knowledge), not merely a firm’s number of employees or national reputation.

Small and minority firms are at a disadvantage under the price bidding method; to win they must have a lower bid than a larger firm, which is able to spread its cost among a greater number of projects or under-bid with the hope of securing the market and making-up for the lost profits on other projects or in changes.

- **Summary**

The main advantage of the qualifications-based system is that the design professional and the client work in a collaborative spirit to maximize the quality, value, cost effectiveness and usefulness of the final product, starting prior to contract award.



THE BEGINNING OF THE  
CONSTRUCTION NIGHTMARE

WILEY  
8-1-11

WILEY  
WILEY

WILEY@WILEY-SECURITY.COM PART BY UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE WILEY