

ACEC POLICY STATEMENT

SELECTION OF DESIGN PROFESSIONALS ON THE BASIS OF QUALIFICATIONS

The cornerstone of ACEC policy on the procurement of services from design professionals is selection on the basis of qualifications. Design services involve the exercise of professional judgment and creativity that are vital to a project's success. Providers of such services must not be treated as commodities to be selected on the basis of lowest price. Qualifications-based selection of design professional services allows public and private owners to achieve successful projects, reduces project life cycle costs, and protects public health and safety.

In the design-bid-build delivery system, the qualifications-based selection process (QBS) for recruiting design professionals follows a well-established sequence. The owner issues a request for qualifications (RFQ); professional entities or individuals respond to the RFQ; the owner reviews the qualifications based upon past performance, technical competence, capacity to accomplish the work and related factors; the owner ranks the firms, with the best-qualified firm ranked first, the second most qualified second, and so on; the owner commences negotiations with the top-ranked firm to reach a mutual understanding of scope; and the parties negotiate a fair and reasonable price for the services required. If the owner and top-ranked firm cannot reach an agreement on scope, contract terms or price, the owner would then negotiate with the second-ranked firm, and so on. Caps on allowable costs and non-statutory based limitations on compensation are violations of the intent of the QBS process.

ACEC recognizes that owners frequently employ alternative project delivery methods. To help ensure that such projects receive the benefit of high-quality professional design services, ACEC recommends the following:

- The Owner should retain, or have on staff, a design professional selected on the basis of qualifications and not associated with the alternative delivery system prime contractor. This design professional should assist the owner in developing initial project scope, selecting the most appropriate project delivery system and assisting the owner throughout the project delivery process.
- Regardless of delivery method selected, the competence, experience, independent judgment and creativity of the design professional are major factors in a project's success. Thus, the qualifications and role of the project's design professional (A/E of Record) should be major selection criteria for awarding the overall alternative delivery contract.
- When alternative project delivery methods are employed, ACEC supports the use of procurement methodologies for the prime contractor (who may be an A/E, contractor,

developer or joint venture) that emphasize qualifications. These purchasing mechanisms include QBS (qualifications only) or best value source selection (the latter includes qualifications plus technical response and costs). Specifically, ACEC firmly supports the use of qualifications-based selection for all design professional services (e.g., for a design services subcontract) procured under an alternative delivery prime contract.

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