

## QBS PROCUREMENT OF PROFESSIONAL SERVICES SUMMARY FOR SMALL PROJECTS

### BACKGROUND

Qualifications Based Selection (QBS) is a negotiated procurement process for selection based on qualifications and competence in relation to the work to be performed.

The use of QBS is a requirement for Architectural and Engineering (A/E) services for federally-funded projects (Brooks Act of 1972) and for projects funded by the State of Colorado (mini-Brooks Bill CRS 24-30-1401 et. seq., 1988).

A typical QBS procurement involves:

- solicitation of qualifications (RFQ) from interested parties,
- creation of a short list,
- interviews of short-listed parties,
- ranking of each firm/team, and
- negotiation of a Scope of Work (SOW) and contract with the most qualified firm/team.

*Simply put, in the QBS process quality, innovation, efficiency, and timeliness are rewarded by fair fees and further opportunities. To the A/E, this results in profitability that pays for higher salaries of quality people who work efficiently. To the client, this results in VALUE by reducing the life cycle costs of the project, saving tax dollars. **It is a WIN – WIN system.***

In its most basic form, QBS just means the selecting the firm or team you think will provide your agency with the best value service based on their qualifications and experience. *This is most likely not the A/E consultant who will propose the lowest fee.*

### QBS FOR SMALL PROJECTS

Small projects, particularly in smaller communities, differ in many ways from larger projects in that the public's perception of the project – how it functions on its site, and as an integral part of the community, can be equally important or require even more technical proficiency than the function of the project. Very often, what is needed is a 'specialist' in the local community, as opposed to a specialist in particular the project type. For small engineering and architectural projects, local knowledge and history can be more important than a firm's equipment and resources. It is in this spirit that **QBS Colorado** offers the following guidance to simplify the process of hiring the right firm for your smaller project.

Frequently for small projects, many agencies are hesitant to use the QBS process because of the perceived effort required for the procurement process. Sometimes, even State procurement personnel may struggle with effective implementation of QBS for small contracts. For many, QBS is best used on an annual basis (or similar) to select pre-qualified firms for small projects.

The effort required for procurement shouldn't be out of line with the size of the contract being procured. The process does not have to be complicated, and in fact, some agencies have found that there is *less* effort required to develop a SOW because of the team approach and consultant cooperation promoted by QBS. The following suggestions are offered to help effectively use the process. The attached table lists examples of suggested criteria by which to judge submitting parties.

**SUGGESTIONS FOR EFFECTIVE USE OF QBS**

The QBS process can be used to promote community pride, capitalize on partnership among private companies and public agencies, and obtain the best, long-term value for the dollar. Engage the public in the discussion. These benefits can be realized on even the smallest projects

Here are some suggestions for getting the most out of the QBS process and using QBS for the small public works, public buildings, and other capital improvement projects.

- Regardless of the complexity of the procurement process used, engage involvement of both technical and non-technical or administrative staff in establishing evaluation criteria (see example evaluation criteria). Some criteria may be more technical in nature with others being driven more by aesthetics, schedule, or agency policy. For example, for a small town library, it may be more important for the town to have a local architect than one with extensive library experience.
- Put the onus on the proposers to demonstrate why they are best qualified. This can be done with a short, simple RFQ that provides general project criteria, evaluation criteria, and a request that proposers respond with their qualifications, experience, technical work approach, and description of how they will best add value to the project.
- Some agencies prequalify firms annually as suggested by the mini-Brooks Bill, but then perform price bids among the prequalified firms. This approach may breach the intent of QBS by motivating the proposers to provide only the minimum scope of work that will win the project for them. This method may not provide the scope of work that will result in the most effective, best-value project. A more effective approach to consider is to perform oral interviews of selected prequalified firms (which can even be done by telephone) as a means of selecting a consultant for a particular project.
- For larger projects, **QBS Colorado** offers several resources available, free of charge on our web site (at the bottom of the page). Several evaluation tools are presented there for “typical” QBS projects.
- For smaller projects, we believe the procurement process should be similar in scope to the project size. We recommend that the agency/owner develop “Small Projects” QBS evaluation criteria similar to the attached table. The evaluation criteria should be reviewed for each specific project, but a majority of the items will remain the same from project to project.

**ADVOCATES OF QBS**

American Bar Association (ABA)  
American Consulting Engineers Council (ACEC)  
American Institute of Architects (AIA)  
American Public Works Association (APWA)  
Association of General Contractors of Colorado (AGC)  
Colorado Association of Geotechnical Engineers (CAGE)  
National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE)

This information is provided by **QBS Colorado** to help increase effectiveness of small project procurements, and to provide ideas for alternative streamlined processes that satisfy the basic intent of QBS. The very nature of QBS is somewhat subjective. It is expected that additional or alternative criteria will be (should be) developed based on each situation. We welcome any questions or comments about ways to improve this “Small Projects” process.

## SUGGESTED EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION OF DESIGN PROFESSIONALS

Typical evaluation criteria in Federal solicitations include:

- Specialized experience and technical competence in the type or work required,
- Professional qualifications necessary for satisfactory performance of required services,
- Capacity to accomplish the work in the required time,
- Approach to quality management and quality assurance/quality control,
- Past performance on contracts with similar requirements,
- Approach to cost control and budget management,
- Proximity of the firm's facilities to the project site, and
- Proximity of the firm's facilities to the Agency's offices.

Evaluation criteria included in the mini-Brooks Bill include:

- Qualifications,
- Approaches to the project,
- Abilities to furnish the required professional services,
- Anticipated design concepts, and
- Use of alternative methods of approach,
- Ability of professional personnel,
- Past performance,
- Willingness to meet time and budget requirements,
- Location,
- Current and projected work load,
- Volume of work previously awarded to the person by the agency, and
- Minority subconsultant involvement

## QBS EVALUATION AND RATING FORM

The example evaluation form provided here divides a few of the above criteria into four main categories. However, as discussed, the process is subjective. The example form is meant to be modified based on those criteria that would be most appropriate for the agency, community, and/or project.

The example form contains four columns for judging each firm in each main category. For example under the "**Specific professional experience**" one may wish to evaluate or score the firms for

1. Knowledge of local geology,
2. Public Involvement,
3. Safety, and
4. Knowledge of local environmental issues.

The scores for each item are then added (and multiplied by a weighting factor if desired) to arrive at a total score for that main category. The scores for the firms are then compared to determine the most qualified firm or firms.

As discussed, this process is best used when the evaluation criteria are customized to the project and specific criteria important to the agency and community. As such, some main evaluation categories may only need to be scored for 1 or 2 items and weighting may not be necessary. The intent is for this document and the example form to help in developing methods that are best for your project, your agency, and your community.

# QBS SMALL PROJECTS RATING FORM

Project Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Firm Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Contact Email and Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_  
 Business Location \_\_\_\_\_  
 Project Manager \_\_\_\_\_ Years at this Location \_\_\_\_\_  
 Intended sub consultants \_\_\_\_\_ Years of Experience \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Previous work for this Agency \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Previous work in this Community \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria	1	2	3	4	Weight	Score
<b>1. General professional experience</b> Years of experience, Licensure, Years in community, Knowledge of project area, Senior staff involvement, Training, Project Manager, Proximity/Availability to project locale and site meetings  <p style="text-align: right;"><b>OVERALL RATING</b></p>						
<b>2. Specific professional experience</b> Environmental, Technical, Operational, Safety, Maintenance, Public and Community, Schedule, Cost Control, Specialties, Similar Scope/Size, Local Building Codes, Local Climate and Geology, ADA issues  <p style="text-align: right;"><b>OVERALL RATING</b></p>						
<b>3. Proposed use of sub consultants</b> Qualifications, Experience with design team, Appropriate for project, Extent of participation, Schedule and Cost Control, Timely Delivery, Good Teamwork, Reduce redundancy  <p style="text-align: right;"><b>OVERALL RATING</b></p>						
<b>4. Project Approach</b> Logical, Organized, Innovative, Understanding of concepts and aesthetics proposed, Experience with similar methods/projects, Building materials, Value-Oriented, Sustainable  <p style="text-align: right;"><b>OVERALL RATING</b></p>						
<b>5. Other: graphic examples, references, professional organization involvement, etc.</b>          <p style="text-align: right;"><b>OVERALL RATING</b></p>						
<b>Total</b>					100	