

Qualifications Based Selection (QBS)

Support Technical Corrections for QBS Bill for Transportation Agencies

When procuring design services, government agencies should award contracts based on the **qualifications of the firms**. This is known as Qualifications Based Selection. Selection of design professionals using qualifications accomplishes the goals of delivering quality projects at competitive costs while safeguarding the public. The language in Sections 40-45 of Chapter 25 of the Acts of 2009 makes this the law in Massachusetts for horizontal public works projects. It is already the law for vertical public building projects in Massachusetts.

KEY POINTS

Public agencies that use QBS to procure engineering services can better control construction costs and achieve a consistently high degree of project satisfaction than those using other procurement methods, according to a new two-year study led by Paul S. Chinowsky, PhD, University of Colorado, and Gordon A. Kingsley, PhD, Georgia Tech. QBS should continue to be the procurement method of choice for public contracting officers seeking to acquire A/E services to meet increasingly challenging infrastructure needs.

QBS is used by federal agencies, 44 states, and many localities throughout the country. QBS works because:

- **QBS protects the taxpayer.** Most individuals would not select medical or legal services based solely on cost – these highly skilled services are too important to leave to the lowest bid. Likewise, engineering is a highly skilled service that should not be selected on the lowest bid. The skill level of the engineer directly affects the health, safety and welfare of the public.
- **QBS also protects the taxpayer's pocketbook.** Over the life of a project, engineering services account for less than one-half of 1 percent of total project costs. Yet these services play a huge role in determining the overall project costs, as well as the quality of the completed project. QBS lowers the overall cost of projects through designs that reduce change orders during construction and minimize long-term maintenance and repair costs.
- **QBS benefits small firms.** QBS helps small firms compete by providing 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.
- **QBS promotes technical innovation.** Using QBS, owners have the opportunity to fully define the Project scope during the selection process. This process fosters innovative, cost-saving and timesaving approaches to problems, the final project to meet or exceed the owner's goals.

ACTION REQUESTED

Short Term: Clarify use of QBS process for those state agencies currently defined in the bill (MassDOT, Massport and MBTA).

Long Term: Continue to encourage all state and municipal agencies to use QBS selection of Architectural and Engineering Services.