

Qualifications Based Selection

Owner's Manual

Process for the Selection of Consultant Services



Revised January 2026



QBS Saves Money

Design only accounts for 10% of the total cost of a project yet has the largest impact on the success and cost. QBS reduces construction change orders by an average of 7% over other procurement methods.



QBS Saves Time

Nearly half of QBS projects meet all construction milestones; 50% more than non-QBS.



QBS Simplifies Complex Projects

Teams created based on qualifications versus lowest cost are significantly more capable of handling complex projects. QBS procurement ensures that the most qualified team is selected for the project.



QBS Delivers/Encourages Innovation

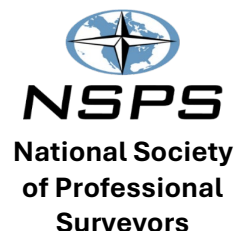
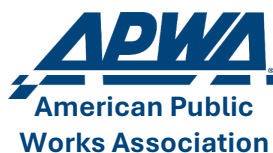
QBS promotes creativity and innovation. This results in better outcomes for clients. Cost based procurements inhibit and disincentivize creativity and innovation of engineers and architects.

QBS is required by law for federal and many state procurements.



QBS is required for vertical construction, MassDOT and MassPort procurements in Massachusetts and for most procurements when Federal money is used (even procurement of professional engineering and land surveying services when most federal grants are used). Using QBS ensures you are complying with state and federal procurement requirements and established best practices.

Numerous national and local professional organizations support the use of qualifications-based procedures for the selection of engineering and architectural firms, including:



The American Council of Engineering Companies of Massachusetts (ACEC/MA) would be pleased to provide more information about implementing Qualifications Based Selections (QBS) for consultants in your community. Please email acecma@engineers.org and provide your name, affiliation, and contact information.



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INTRODUCTION AND APPLICABLE LAW

QBS is a procurement process in which the owner of a project, whether a municipality, state agency, or special district, makes a competitive selection of architectural, engineering or land surveying services for studies, design and, and/or construction phase services, based on capability and experience rather than based on lowest bid to provide these services. Fair and reasonable fees are negotiated with the top-ranked firm for an agreed-upon scope of services.

Currently in the United States there are 47 states that by law require the procurement of professional design services through the process known as Qualifications Based Selection or QBS. In addition, the “Brooks Act” of 1972 (Public Law 92-582) requires all federally funded projects to use QBS for selection of Design Professionals. Massachusetts General Law Chapter 7C §§ 44-58 (Designer Selection Law) ensures that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts receives the highest quality design services for all its public building projects; provide for increased confidence in the procedures followed in the procurement of design and design related services; promote consistency in the methods of procurement of design and design related services for all public building projects in the Commonwealth. Communities, state agencies, and authorities must hire architects and building engineers professionals based on qualifications rather than lowest bid when the estimated design fee exceeds \$30,000 and an estimated construction cost exceeds \$300,000. ***Under the Designer Selection Law, price of services cannot be a consideration in the selection until the top ranked firm begins negotiations with the project owner.***

Under the Designer Selection Law, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) and the Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport) are also required to use qualifications-based selections for all professional services of an architectural, engineering or related nature (see Chapter 7C, § 58). At present, there is no law in Massachusetts governing the procurement of engineers for “horizontal” (e.g. roads, sewer, etc.) project study, design and, and construction phase services for other public agencies. However, procurement of these services are specifically exempted from the Uniform Procurement Act (Chapter 30B of the Massachusetts General Laws), therefore many communities have chosen the Qualifications Based Selection principles of the Designer Selection Law as a best practice for procurement of horizontal as well as vertical services. The attached document is being supplied to governmental organizations to provide clarification of Qualifications Based Selection as a method of procuring design or related consultant services.

In the document that follows, the American Council of Engineering Companies of Massachusetts (ACEC/MA) outlines a process which assists project owners in developing a selection process procedure. Under the QBS procedures, project advocates will be able to procure the best qualified individual, firm or team of firms/individuals for the project and have the confidence of knowing that the selected firm(s) is competent to perform the project work; comprehends the complexities of the project; understands the specific needs and issues confronting the owner; and will be the best choice to provide the most cost-effective long-term solution. In turn this reduces the likelihood of cost overruns, change orders and delays, and increases the likelihood of client satisfaction. For the purposes of clarity and inclusiveness this document will use the term “firm” when referring to individuals, firms, or teams of firms that would be considered the “designer” under the Designer Selection Law.

To implement the QBS process, the project owner follows six fundamental steps:

- 1) Establishing the selection criteria by which AEC firms are to be evaluated;
- 2) Soliciting architectural, engineering, and general contracting or construction management services via an advertisement for a Request for Qualifications (RFQ);
- 3) Rating the qualifications of the submitting entities and shortlisting the most qualified firms;
- 4) Interviewing and ranking the top service providers;
- 5) Negotiating with the top-ranked firm to establish price, project scope and other contractual terms;
- 6) Concluding a contract with the top-ranked firm if parties agree or with the second-ranked firm

and so on until an agreement is reached and a contract is concluded.

This process ensures that contracts are awarded to the most qualified provider based on experience and technical expertise. This guidance document is intended to assist public entities that have not adopted QBS in understanding and developing such a system as the preferred method of procurement.

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QUALIFICATIONS-BASED SELECTION (QBS) PROCESS

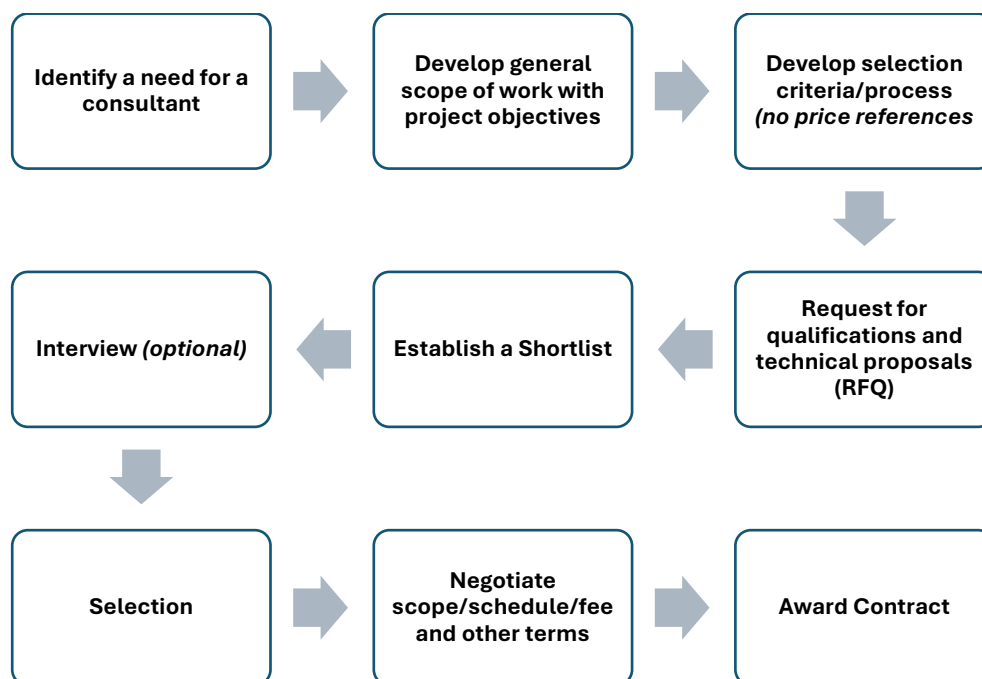
QBS is a fair and rational procedure which facilitates the selection of firms that represent a broad range of professional services such as engineering, architecture, land development, surveying, geotechnical, and other related specialties. For the purposes of clarity and inclusiveness this document will use the term “firm” when referring to individuals, firms, or teams of firms that would be considered the “designer” under the aforementioned Designer Selection Law.

The selection is based on qualifications and competence in relation to the scope and needs of the particular project. QBS is no “magical” process. Instead, QBS enhances communications between the owner and the firms under consideration, and results in the selection of a firm that is not only qualified but compatible as well.

The owner should involve the services of the consultant as early as possible in the planning of the project. The consultant can take the owner’s available information and ideas to create workable plans with options, which then allows the owner to make sound decisions on what should be implemented.

The sooner the consultant is selected, the sooner the consultant will become a vital member of the project team. With adequate and proper planning early in the project, expensive mistakes and duplication of efforts can be reduced. ***One of the most beneficial aspects of QBS is the joint development of the Scope of Services during the negotiation process.*** Owners should consider the QBS process as an educational experience; they can learn from the firms submitting information and especially from those being interviewed. Even after selection, the owner will continue to collaborate with the consultant to refine scope and fees during the negotiation process, prior to a contractual commitment being made. There is no commitment to proceed with the most qualified firm if the owner is unable to negotiate a fee with them. In this case, which is rare, the owner proceeds to negotiate a fee with the next highest ranked qualified firm.

In most instances, the QBS process will include all or part of the following steps, and variations of this process are detailed in the following sections:



Identify a Need for a Consultant

In the Qualifications-Based Selection (QBS) process, identifying the need for a design consultant begins with the owner recognizing a project or problem that requires professional services. It is important at this stage to include key stakeholders input to clearly identify the need and key goals for the project.

Develop General Scope of Work with Project Objectives

To begin the selection process, the public owner must briefly identify the general scope and the particular needs of the project. Just as the owner needs information about the qualifications and competence of the consultant, the firms need to know the broad project requirements. A properly defined and communicated scope of work saves time, money, and effort for both the owner and consultants. The firm has information upon which to base a decision to pursue the project and is able to tailor teaming partners and its statements of qualifications directly to the project requirements, providing the owner with a more uniform basis for evaluating the responses.

Items normally included in a preliminary statement of the scope of work for a public project are:

- A. Owner's name
- B. Project name or identification
- C. Project location
- D. A single contact person (clearly identified as the only person to contact for information on the project), mailing address, telephone and, and email address, as appropriate.
- E. Description of any other projects in process or planned for the same site or time frame, which may affect the scope of work.
- F. Description of completed studies, survey, and/or preliminary feasibility work relevant to the project and available to the firms which will be responding. Ideally, these would be provided electronically with the RFQ or by request.
- G. Requirements for further feasibility studies or program planning prior to design and construction, if appropriate
- H. Project outline, including what issue you are trying to resolve or goal you want to achieve, intended size, function, capacity, and other general anticipated requirements (e.g., renovation, modernization, demolition, additions, new construction, energy, land use, and site selection considerations).
- I. Anticipated time frame, including completion of design work, the beginning of construction, and planned project completion date.
- J. Description of consultant selection process and clear breakdown of scoring criteria
- K. Additional or unique requirements/considerations
- L. Anticipated budget and potential funding sources.

As appropriate, other items may be added to provide general guidance to the interested firms and meet the owner's needs. All services the owner wishes the consultant to provide, including feasibility studies, program development, design, construction coordination, and budget development, must be specifically identified. Identify what Federal, state, or local laws, regulations, and standards will govern the procurement. **Remember, you will only get what you ask for.** Proper planning will ensure you receive responses that allow you to make the best decisions.

Develop Selection Criteria/Process

The criteria upon which prospective consultants will be selected should be carefully considered based on the specific needs of the project. The criteria should be comprehensive and reflect the complexity of the project and the project owner's ability to understand and fairly assess the criteria.

Typical criteria for both evaluating and ranking firms may include the following:

- The education, experience and expertise of the firm's principals and employees who will be assigned key project responsibilities, with particular attention to their qualifications, competence and past performance.
- The firm's general experience and history of performance on projects similar to the one under consideration with references. Recommendations and opinions of each firm's previous clients as to the ability to meet deadlines and remain within project budget. Prior clients may also be able to advise as to each firm's sense of responsibility, attitudes of key personnel, concern for economy, efficiency, and environment, and quality of service.
- Availability of equipment and facilities to do the needed work expeditiously. If necessary, perform an on-site examination to observe each firm's facilities and the sites of current and/or completed projects, including computer capability, reproduction and communication equipment, laboratory and testing equipment, or other specialized equipment applicable to the project under consideration.
- The firm's approach to plan development, organization and management of a project, including communication procedures, approach to problem solving, data gathering methods, evaluation techniques, quality assurance/quality control, and similar factors.
- Present workload with attention to current and future commitments of available personnel, particularly those key persons expected to be assigned to the project.
- Financial stability, with particular attention to avoiding a situation in which the firm is solely dependent upon income from the project at hand for its existence.
- Proximity of the design consultant firm to the proposed project site.
- Awards received by the firm and technical papers authored by employees.
- Special considerations for some projects might include staff conversant in foreign languages and qualified minority representation.
- Interviews and public presentations may be required and should be conducted for large and/or complicated projects.

The selection committee should arrive at a consensus of which criteria should be evaluated and a per criteria weighting value. The weight given each evaluation criterion in the ranking process may vary from project to project. For example, criterion "X" may be more heavily weighted than criterion "Y" if the bulk of the project tasks involve computer analysis and design. However, the reverse may be true for a project with an extensive construction oversight provision. In all projects, pursuant to Qualifications Based Selection, ***cost information shall not be used as selection criteria, nor shall it have weight for ranking purposes.***

To keep the process of selecting a consultant advancing smoothly, owners should establish a time frame for completion of the selection process. Establishing the time frame communicates requirements with the firms and prevents misunderstandings and last minute "surprises" which might delay the process.

The time frame for each public project will differ, depending upon the nature of the project, the concerns of the owner and other factors. Since selecting the right firm is key to the success of the project, sufficient time should be allowed for the proper planning and administration at each step of the selection process. **Depending upon the status of the owner's project, adjustments can be made to accommodate the owner's needs.**

A sample "Schedule of Activities" is provided on the following pages.

SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

The following schedule is typical of the QBS process:

Owner	Project
_____	Identification of needs is finalized by the owner. A scope of work in general terms is developed.
Date	
_____	Request for statements of qualification is published.
Date	
_____	Statement of qualification due. (Allowing for sufficient time, commensurate with the complexity and scale of the project, for the firms to submit their materials) NOTE: Before the next action date, references should be reviewed.
Date	
_____	Pre-proposal tour or tours of facilities at (time and (location). OPTIONAL: As needed and commensurate with the scope and complexity of the project.
Date	
_____	Development of a short list of firms (3-5) selected for subsequent interviews, if appropriate. Selection should be based on qualifications, references and, and compatibility with the owner's project.
Date	
_____	Mail or email sent to short-listed firms advising them of the date for interviews and pre-interview tour or tours of site and/or facilities, along with criteria to be reviewed during the interview, when appropriate.
Date	
_____	Mail or email notification sent to unsuccessful firms informing them of firms to be interviewed and expressing appreciation for their interest.
Date	
_____	Tour or tours of facilities at (time) and (location)
Date	
_____	Interviews scheduled for short-listed firms to be held at the time and location as previously communicated. The best firm for the project is to be selected based on qualifications.
Date	
_____	Contract including fee with selected firm is then negotiated and implemented.
Date	
_____	Mail sent to all firms interviewed informing them of the results of the interviews and expressing appreciation for their involvement.
Date	
_____	Post-selection requirements. Public hearings, etc.
Date	

Request For Statement of Qualifications and Technical Proposals (optional)

The ***Request for Statement of Qualifications (RFQ)*** should be published in the Central Register, in COMMBUYS, and at least once in a newspaper of general circulation in the area from which the notice emanates. (Local laws or regulations may control the publication requirements and should be reviewed and adhered to.) In addition, the ***RFQ*** is normally sent to those firms that have signified, in writing, an interest in submitting qualifications for a particular category of professional services.

At a minimum, the ***RFQ*** should indicate the following:

- * Scope of work that provides sufficient project information to establish project requirements
- * Deadlines for pre-bid conference/tour, questions, responses to questions, and submission of the firm's ***Statement of Qualifications***
- * Minimum firm requirements (e.g., years of experience, number of projects, D/M/WBE requirements)
- * Owner's contact name and telephone number
- * Selection Process
- * Required format of submittal such as materials (e.g. paper, bindings), margins, fonts, maximum number of pages, total number of copies required and the format (electronic and/or hard copy)
- * Evaluation matrix with scoring criteria clearly defined

More complex and generally larger projects may require additional data, which should be included in the ***RFQ*** or made available upon request for firms responding to the ***RFQ***:

- * A more detailed scope of work
- * Possible technical approach
- * Regulations concerning minority programs (for example Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) requirements)
- * Definitions of interpretation of documents and publication of addendum
- * Important project milestone dates
- * Funding availability
- * Selection process and weighted categories of interest
- * Contract requirements including liability/indemnity agreement

A sample of a typical ***RFQ*** is included.

REQUEST FOR STATEMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS (sample)

The _____, MA, invites *Statement of Qualifications* for engineering services from qualified firms for the survey, design and, and construction assistance for the following project:

(DESCRIBE SCOPE OF SERVICES REQUIRED) (For example: length, any structures, location, budget, schedule, and any special requirements)

Statements of qualifications received after the time deadline for submission will not be considered.

Professional liability insurance in the amount of \$ _____ will be required.

The selection of an Engineer will be made no later than (date) _____.
Project will be ready for bidding within (#) _____ days of that date.

Evaluation of responding firms will be based on the following criteria:

1. Professional background and caliber of previous experience of key persons within your firm and of each of your consultants to be assigned to this project. Please identify their precise role in accomplishing the work.
2. Do you propose to use the services of specialty consultant(s)? If so, please indicate name, address and, and previous affiliations.
3. Recent experience on similar projects. Please detail type of project; your time schedule for accomplishing the respective phases of basic services; construction change order number, value and, and reason; your construction cost estimate vs. bid; and names and telephone numbers of persons representing the owner and general contractor for each of five similar projects your firm has accomplished in the past five years. Indicate the individuals on your staff who had responsibility for each project and whether these people are still with your firm.
4. Capacity and capability of the firm to perform the work on schedule.
5. Firm's familiarity with the area of the project.
6. Location where work on this project is to be accomplished.

Please furnish (#) _____ copies of your submittal to _____ by _____ o'clock (date) _____. A maximum of three (3) firms will be selected for personal interview. You will be notified by (date) _____ of the result of the initial screening process. If you are selected for interview, you will be expected to present your approach to the project at that interview.

You may direct any questions or schedule visits to the project site (name) _____
(telephone number) _____.

Receipt And Evaluation of Statements of Qualifications

IMPORTANT: The selection committee should document its proceedings and decisions in the event questions arise about any decisions made.

The owner should formally establish a policy that *Statements of Qualification* received after the deadline will not be considered.

It is up to the owner to ensure that the selection committee is composed of competent individuals who are neutral and are able to make an intelligent selection decision based on factual information and that the members of the selection committee evaluate each proposal. Members should keep notes of their review process, evaluations, and scoring.

The number of firms to be included on the short list (and possibly subsequently interviewed, if necessary) may vary depending on the size and scope of the project. Three-to-five firms are generally sufficient. For the smaller project, three firms should be short listed, with interviews if appropriate.

A generic “*Statement of Qualifications Evaluation*” form and summary follow.

Reference should be checked during the interim between the time the statements of qualification are received and the selection committee meets to develop a short list.

A suggested form for “The Reference Check” is included.

STATEMENTS OF QUALIFICATIONS EVALUATIONS

Questions may be added or deleted as appropriate for your situation. SUGGESTION: Possible points should be highest for those items of the most importance to the owner.

Owner _____

Contact Person _____

Project Description _____

Firm _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

Web Site _____ E-mail _____

1. Professional background and caliber of previous experience of each person of the firm and of each of the consultants to be assigned to this project.
2. Capacity and capability of the firm to perform the work, including any specialized services, within the time schedule.
3. Past record of performance on contracts with government agencies or private industry with respect to such factors as control of costs, quality of work and, and ability to meet schedules.
4. Proximity to or familiarity with the area in which the project is located.
5. The amount of design work that will be produced by a Massachusetts business within this state.
6. Reputation for personal and professional integrity and competence.
7. Other criteria, excluding cost, desire by the owner.

GRAND TOTAL

Name of Reviewer _____

Possible Points	Awarded Points	Comments

STATEMENTS OF QUALIFICATIONS EVALUATION SUMMARY

To be used by the review group person in charge to compile the evaluation results of all statements of qualification submitted to narrow the number of firms down to the number desired for a short list. NOTE: enter the grand total for each firm's qualifications from their respective evaluation sheet for comparative purpose in selecting the three, four, or five most qualified firms to be interviewed.

Firms	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Reviewer 1										
Reviewer 2										
Reviewer 3										
Reviewer _										
Reviewer _										
GRAND TOTAL										

THE REFERENCE CHECK

Owner_____ Project Description_____

Firm_____ on which the reference check is being conducted.

Reference Information

Owner_____ Project Reference_____

Address_____ Person Contacted_____

Phone_____

Based on references provided in firm's proposal or through networking with other owners who have worked with the firm.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED:

1. What was your project?
2. When was it complete?
3. Did the firm above do the work?
4. What did they do for you? Design work, construction phase services, studies, other (specify)
5. Who was the staff person assigned to work with you on this project? Were you satisfied with his/her work?
6. Was the project started on schedule?
7. Was the project completed as planned?
8. Were the budget, cost control and, and financial administration within the planned controls and limitations?
9. Did the firm and (you) the owner work well as a team on the project?
10. Did the firm's personnel work well with the committee/board's staff and on all of the project's specific requirements?
11. What is your overall evaluation of the firm based on your experience?
12. Other question(s)

TOTALS

Question	5 Excellent	4 Good	3 Average	2 Fair	1 Poor
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
6					
7					
8					
9					
10					
11					
12					
Total					
Grand Total					

Based upon the evaluation and ranking of the ***Statement of Qualifications*** and subsequent reference check, the owner should establish a short list of three to five firms to be interviewed for the specific project, if interviews are determined to be necessary for the project. Since all the firms submitting ***Statement of Qualifications*** have made a commitment of the time and expense in pursuing the project, the owner should contact ALL the firms, not just those selected for the short list. A personal letter to each proposer is more professional and will tend to preserve relations better with unsuccessful proposers. The letter (or memo) sent to those firms who did not make the short list should express appreciation and identify the firms being invited for further consideration.

If interviews are scheduled, the firms selected for interviews will need information on the following:

1. The date, place, and time for the interviews.
2. The date for a tour or tours, when appropriate, of the site/facilities. The tour provides the firms with an important firsthand look at the owner's needs and allows for a further exchange of information about the project. Tours are recommended for all but the simplest and most straightforward projects.
3. A list of project issues, the project criteria, and an explanation of the scoring and selection process. By providing the selection scoring criteria and specific areas of owner concern, the interviewing committee will achieve the best possible system for making a fair selection.
4. Any feasibility studies, project program, or other background information. This information should be submitted or available to ALL firms being considered, either with the letter to the short-listed firms or distributed to each firm during the prearranged tour.

The memo and scoring and ranking sheets should be tailored to meet the owner's criteria and specific project requirements.

TO: (LIST ALPHABETICAL ORDER ALL FIRMS YOU WISH TO INTERVIEW)

RE: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE AND REQUIREMENTS

The firms listed above have been short-listed and will be interviewed for the (engineering/architectural/etc.) services relative to work necessary to implement this (specify project study/design/etc.)

Attached to this memo are the following:

- 1) An interview Score Sheet that will be used by the (interviewing group or individual) during the interview session.
- 2) Evaluation form for use by the person in charge to compile the evaluation scores.
- 3) Copies of (name of studies or reports) compiled by (name of group) for your information and review.

Each firm will be allowed (45) minutes to present their ***Statement of Qualifications*** and to answer questions. The interviewers will schedule (15) minutes between interviews for informal discussion of information presented during the preceding interview. At the completion of the interviews, the interviewers will rank the firms interviewed in accordance with their determination of which firm is most competent and compatible to do the work. The first-ranked firm will then enter into negotiations for a contract to provide the necessary design services. If contract terms cannot be reached, the firm ranked second will be invited in for contract negotiations.

Interviews will be held on _____ (date) _____.

The location is _____ (name of building) _____ at _____ (address) _____.

The order and time of interviews are:

Firm A _____ (time) _____.

Firm B _____ (time) _____.

Firm C _____ (time) _____.

Firm D _____ (time) _____.

Firm E _____ (time) _____.

A tour of the site and/or facility will be arranged for _____ (date) _____. Please have your firm's representative make arrangements with the owner's representative for a time on this date.

Tour Of the Site/Facility

In most major or complex projects, a tour of a project site or facility will be one of the most important parts of the selection process. These tours provide interested consultant design firms with the opportunity to obtain first-hand information on the proposed project and have their questions answered.

Tours work best when handled one-on-one, with the owner's representative meeting with the representative of one firm. A group tour with all interested firms meeting for review of the site and/or facility can also be effective, but discussion under these conditions may be somewhat limited.

Interviewing the Short-Listed Firms

The interviews of the short-listed firms give the owner the opportunity to compare the firms' creative approaches to the process, as well as their interpretations and understanding of the project requirements. Depending on the project, the owner may not expect project details at this time. The requirements for each project, simple or complex, can be quite involved and may not be necessary to successfully perform a qualifications-based selection; however, if deemed necessary, such requirements should be identified by the project owner in the interview request. The consultant will not be sufficiently aware of the owner's needs and requirements to be able to produce a meaningful design solution or financial information.

All interviews should be designed to allow for the evaluation of the personal styles of each firm's management and key personnel assigned to the project. The selection committee should evaluate how well they match up with the pre-identified criteria.

Present at the interview should be the key representative from the firm's management team plus key personnel who would be assigned to the project.

Direct interaction between the owner/user and the consultant is important for the development of a project that truly meets the owner's and user's needs.

Interviewing Setup

The room for the interview should be comfortable, have good acoustics, and be large enough to accommodate the number of people expected.

A separate area should be provided for firms waiting to be interviewed.

Equipment such as blackboards, flip charts, and audio-visual screens will be useful in most situations, if available. Most firms will bring any equipment they need for their presentation.

****Interviews should be held in closed session****

Guidelines For Interviews

1. Interview only those firms short-listed. All interviewed firms should have an equal opportunity to prepare their presentation based on the same information.

2. Schedule (45) minutes for each presentation and (15) minutes between interviews. This will allow ample time for the presentation and question and answer period, and for the selection committee members to discuss the presentation among themselves before beginning the next interview.
3. Schedule all the interviews on the same day so the committee can compare all the firms while the information is still fresh in their minds. This will ensure consistent interview scoring.
4. The evaluation criteria for the interview scoring system should be sent to all firms in advance as an attachment to the memo, giving interview and tour information.
5. While it is appropriate to question firms about how they would approach the project, owners should not ask for an actual solution during the interview. Appropriate and responsive designs require considerably more interaction between the owner and consultant than is possible during the selection phase. If either the owner or the consultant brings a preconceived design solution to the interview, considerable time and energy will have to be spent to get beyond this point, or the existence of it may stop further creativity and prevent other, perhaps better solutions from being explored.

Let all firms know when the selection decision will be made and when they will receive communication regarding their status.

Ranking Of Interviewed Firms

The evaluation form, which includes a weight and a score for each criteria/question, is a useful instrument for evaluating, ranking and, and ultimately selecting a compatible and qualified firm. Each interviewer should evaluate all firms separately during the firm's presentation.

The chair of the selection committee will compile the individual score sheets when all the interviews have been concluded. This system provides a documented record of the selection process as support for the committee's actions, which is important.

The selection committee should take time to achieve the ranking and selection by consensus rather than just by majority vote.

A sample evaluation/ranking system is included. Other versions may be developed, based on the complexity of the project and the sophistication of the owner.

After the interviews and ranking are completed, a memo should be prepared and sent to all firms who participated in the interview process. The memo should list all interviewed firms and the order in which the committee ranked them. It is customary for owners to provide this information as a courtesy to the firms.

THE INTERVIEW: ISSUES AND SCORE SHEETS

Owner	Project	
(Firms invited to interview for the captioned project should be prepared to speak to the following issues during the course of the interview. Questions can be expanded as appropriate.)		
CATEGORIES	POSSIBLE POINTS	POINTS
1) Grasp of Project Requirements (Owner may evaluate firm's analysis, preparation and, and level of interest.)	_____	_____
2) Design Approach/Methodology (Owner may evaluate firm or individual's creativity and problem-solving ability.)	_____	_____
3) Key Personnel and Roles (Owner may evaluate personal qualifications and professional skills of key individuals.)	_____	_____
4) Pertinent Experience, Firm (Owner may evaluate related projects presented as previous work of the firm.)	_____	_____
5) Pertinent Experience, Individual (Owner may evaluate related projects presented as previous work by the key personnel.)	_____	_____
6) Consultant/In-House Resources (Owner may evaluate firm's abilities and importance of consultant or in-house support services.)	_____	_____
7) Technical Project Management (Owner may evaluate firm's abilities related to technical functions such as project cost controls, construction observation, time scheduled, etc.)	_____	_____
8) Responsiveness to Owner's Concerns (Owner may evaluate firm's ability to form successful working relationships and communications with the owner.)	_____	_____
9) Other Relevant Issues (Owner may evaluate importance of other relevant issues presented by the firm.)	_____	_____
10) Reference Check	_____	_____
INTERVIEWER _____	GRAND TOTAL	_____

GROUP INTERVIEW EVALUATION FORM

(For use by the person in charge of the interviews to compile all scores of engineering firms participating in the interview process.)

NOTE: Enter the grand total for each firm as recorded by each interview on the interview score sheet. After all entries are made and totaled, divide the combined group total for each firm by the maximum possible score.

Combined Group Totals

	Firm A	Firm B	Firm C	Firm D	Firm E
Interview 1.....	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Interview 2.....	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Interview 3.....	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Interview 4.....	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Interview 5.....	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____.....	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____.....	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
GRAND TOTALS	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Divided by number of interviewers.

Average Score

Selection and Negotiation of Scope and Compensation

As soon as possible after selecting a preferred firm, the owner should begin detailed negotiations with the selected firm. Should agreement on the scope of services and compensation not be reached, negotiations with the first ranked firm must be terminated and the owner should initiate negotiations with the second-ranked firm.

It is not overly difficult to reach agreement on compensation, if there have been detailed discussions of the scope of services. Those services for which the effect is readily estimated may be included under the basic fee. Services of a more indeterminate nature--such as surveys, soil borings and, and investigations, regulatory agency permits, construction observation, materials testing, and special administrative procedures--should be included under special services with caps, of a reasonable amount, on these efforts.

The selected firm should be requested to prepare a detailed fee estimate predicated on the agreed upon, detailed scope of services as the basis of compensation negotiations.

As an integral part of the scope discussions, the requirements, and format of the proposed written contract must be discussed. The owner and consultant may wish to use the standard forms of agreement used by professional societies.

Contract Execution

The agreement resulting from the negotiation must be reduced to written form, including detailed scope of work, compensation for both basic services and any special services, schedules of payment as well as schedule of performance and required public meetings.

The agreement between the owner and consultant must ensure that both parties have the same expectations and understanding of the project requirements. Legal counsel may be needed in final formulation of the agreement and its subsequent approval by the governing body.

The Role of The Community Outreach Representative

Through its Community Outreach Services, **ACEC/MA offers at no cost to the community**, independent advice on matters related to the procurement of engineering services and the negotiation of contracts with engineering firms.

Your ACEC/MA Community Outreach Representative will be an experienced volunteer from the professional staff of an ACEC/MA member firm, which will not be associated with your project. For more information on the Community Outreach Representative, call ACEC/MA at The Engineering Center at 617-227-5551.

The QBS public owner assistance program is available:

1. Out of concern for the misunderstanding that owners often have about how to select consultants.
2. To help the owner select the consultant firm that is the best qualified to perform the owner's project.
3. To help the owner become a more informed consumer.
4. To help the owner develop and use an objective selection method.

5. To help the owner's selection of a consultant progress in a timely and equitable manner.
6. To help the owner develop the right tools for selecting a qualified firm for the project.
7. To help the owner obtain the most cost-effective and appropriate project.

The Community Outreach Service is provided by referral through ACEC/MA. Through the referral process, a volunteer ACEC/MA Community Outreach Representative will be assigned to meet with you and work with you on matters associated with selecting a consulting engineer.

The Community Outreach Representative will not make recommendations regarding the selection of a particular firm, participate in any negotiations or, or review or make comment on the work of another engineer or consultant.

Methods Of Compensation

Your selected consultant is both a professional and a businessperson providing design services. A consultant not only provides highly technical services and acts as his client's agent, but must also record all costs and earn a fair profit to remain in business. The purpose of this section is to explain how your consultant charges, so you will be fully informed when you enter into negotiations to establish a fair and reasonable price for professional services.

OVERHEAD

The most obvious costs are direct labor and expenses incurred in development of designs and plans or in the observation of construction. A secondary, but very real cost, is overhead. This cost is usually expressed as a percentage of direct labor. Overhead items may include the following:

Direct Salary Overhead

Federal FICA
Employment taxes
Holidays
Vacations
Sick leave
Retirement or incentives
Group insurance
Unemployment benefits

General Overhead

Administrative salaries
Stenography and bookkeeping
Continuing education
Business development
Office supplies
Legal and accounting
Interest expense
Rent and utilities
Business Taxes
General and Liability Insurance
Telephone and Communications
Dues and Subscriptions
Depreciation

COST PLUS

In addition to direct and overhead cost, your consultant must charge a fee to cover return of capital investment, risk management, and other non-reimbursed costs. The requested net fee may vary depending upon the difficulty of the project.

LUMP SUM

Lump sum arrangements are usually best when the scope of the services is well defined. A schedule of payments for various phases of the project's development should be a part of the lump sum agreement.

TIME AND MATERIALS

Cost-based arrangements are more desirable when the scope of particular services is less well defined. These may take the form of direct and overhead costs plus a fixed fee, salaries times a multiplier plus expenses, or standard billing rates plus expenses. Cost-based arrangements should have a maximum agreed-upon limit, which may contain a contingency for unexpected costs.

OTHER METHODS

Percentage of construction cost, retainers, per diem or, or other systems of reimbursement may also be used.

After the most qualified firm has been selected and a detailed scope of services has been agreed upon, a detailed labor and fee estimate should be prepared for price negotiations.

QBS - PUTTING QUALITY FIRST

SAMPLE REQUEST FOR STATEMENT OF QUALIFICATIONS

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND SCOPE OF WORK

The (Name of Agency) is soliciting proposals from qualified (Insert Type of Professional – DESCRIPTION AND Architects, Engineers, Landscape Architects, Land Surveyors and Construction Management) to SCOPE OF WORK provide (general statement of services and deliverables being requested) for the (project name or study).

Insert a short project description including project type, estimated size and location (if known) and desired completion date, as well as the local government's general goals for the facility or infrastructure's performance. Provide enough information that consultant understands the scope and complexity of the project. The amount of information will vary depending on the size, type and complexity of the project and services being requested.

A fee will be negotiated after the selection process. Please do not include a fee with the RFQ response.

Types of professional services required are likely to include (Insert description of applicable services – for example, feasibility analysis, grant preparation, participation in public meetings, surveying, programming, schematic design, cost estimation, construction drawings, project oversight).

Optional: Funding sources for this project may include (Insert funding sources). The successful Firm will be required to comply with (Insert requirements such as environmental regulations, Firm's public participation responsibilities, local government's affirmative action policies, etc.). (If the agency knows they will only have a finite amount of money for these services or for construction, it can help to share that).

RELEVANT PAST STUDIES (OPTIONAL)

The (Name of Agency) has coordinated a number of studies that provide background information and recommended programmatic planning:

- (List the Studies, if any)

Identify where to obtain the relevant information. Visit the (Name of Agency's) website for copies of relevant studies.

PROPOSAL CONTENT

The proposal must be organized in sections containing the following information:

- **Description of Firm.** Describe your Firm's legal structure, areas of expertise, length of time in business, number of employees, and other information that would help to characterize the Firm. Provide the address of the main office (for legal purposes) and the address of the office that will manage the project, as well as the name and contact information of the Project Manager.
- **Experience.** Briefly describe other projects executed by your Firm that demonstrate relevant experience. However, extensive descriptions of vaguely related projects are discouraged. For each project mentioned, include the name, address and phone number of a person who can be contacted regarding your performance on the project. When submitting projects for which your Firm worked in an auxiliary capacity or in a joint

venture or partnership, include the name of the lead Firm.

- **Personnel.** Provide a professional resume and contact information for the key people proposed to be assigned to the project (including any important subconsultants) and describe relevant related experience. Describe key personnel's proposed roles and responsibilities on this project. Submittals must identify a proposed project manager who would be responsible for the day-to-day management of project tasks and would be the primary point of contact with your Firm. An organization chart of the project team may be appropriate.
- **Project Approach.** Describe the approach, management, and tasks that will be accomplished to complete the project. Provide a narrative description of how the Firm proposes to execute the tasks (you may request a detailed scope of services that will be used to negotiate a contract, or a general description of the workflow and key deliverables. A detailed scope is more appropriate for a technical assignment, and a general description is more appropriate for a large project or study). If applicable, discuss any unique aspects of the project, alternative approaches the (Name of Agency) might wish to consider or special considerations related to programmatic/funding requirements. Your Firm should rely on its expertise and experience with similar projects to demonstrate how it will effectively complete the project.
- **Project Schedule.** Provide a schedule of general project activities indicating the duration of each activity and of the total project. The schedule should reflect realistic activity durations. (Optional: The agency may want to lay out a schedule of key milestones the selected Firm would need to meet, such as notice to proceed, design deliverables, construction documents, and completion and delivery of constructed project or study).
- **Optional:** Brochures, project writeups, experience tables or other material that may be helpful in evaluating your Firm may be included in an appendix of the proposal.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Questions regarding the project may be directed to (Name of Agency's director or another designated manager familiar with the project) at (Provide address, e-mail address and phone number). Questions must be submitted no later than (Time Due) on (Date).

INSTRUCTIONS TO FIRMS

Firms are requested to submit written qualifications consisting of documents, information, and other materials supporting (Name of Agency's) project outlined in this RFQ. (Reference the need to attach such statements as Non-Collusion Certificate, Certificate of Tax Compliance and other forms that must be submitted along with the Qualifications).

(Number) copies of the proposal must be received no later than (Time Due) (PST) on (Date) at (Specification location – street, building, room number etc.). If preferred, proposals may be delivered electronically, specifically referencing the project name in the Subject line.

Proposals received after the deadline will not be considered. (Page limit may be requested. It should be reasonable for size of project. Clearly state what is included in page count: cover letter, contents page, resumes, dividers, etc. State if minimum font size and line spacing is required, i.e. use minimum 11-point font with 1.15 line spacing in text).

The submission must be responsive to this RFQ in all material respects. The submission must be sufficiently detailed and complete to enable the (Name of Agency) to evaluate in in relation to other submittals.

The (Name of Agency) reserves the right to amend this RFQ at any time. Any amendments to the RFQ will be described in written addenda. The (Name of Agency) will provide copies of each addend to all Firms who, according to the (Name of Agency's) records, received the RFQ. All addenda will become part of the RFQ. The Firm must acknowledge receipt of each addendum in its submission.

SELECTION PROCESS

Proposals will be ranked on qualifications and the (Name of Agency) may choose to interview (number) of the top ranked firms. (Typically, no more than three. It is costly for Firms to prepare and respond to an RFP/RFQ. The agency should show them the professional courtesy of only short listing those Firms that have made a quality submittal and are most likely to be selected for the project).

However, at its discretion, the (Name of Agency) may dispense with interviews and select a Firm to perform the work from the information submitted. Firms will be evaluated on the basis of the following factors (include the % weight for each item) (These should be considered for each project. Will they be equal, is the Project Manager or experience particularly important? You may add or take from the list based on the project and what is important to your agency):

- Firm History and Capability to Perform Project (xx%)
- Relevant Project Experience (xx%)
- Qualifications of Project Manager and Key Project Team members (xx%)
- Familiarity with Area and Project (xx%)
- Project Approach and Schedule (xx%)
- Client references (xx%)
- Other (xx%)

Selected references will be contacted.

A selection committee with at least 3 members (use an odd number to avoid ties) appointed by the (Name of Agency) will assist with Firm evaluations and rank the Firms in order of most qualified based on the evaluation factors and weighting listed above. The combined score for each Firm will then be made, and the Firms listed in order of the most qualified will begin the final selection process.

The highest ranked Firm will be selected for negotiations and the three highest ranked Firms will be notified of the selection and ranking. The (Name of Agency) will then request that the highest ranked Firm submit a scope of services and fee to the (Name of Agency) within 2 weeks after receiving notice of the selection. The (Name of Agency) will seek to negotiate a professional services agreement, a detailed scope of services, fee, schedule, etc. with the selected Firm that is fair and reasonable. If unable to reach an agreement, the (Name of Agency) will terminate negotiations and resume the negotiations process with the second-ranked Firm (and if applicable, open the second-ranked Firm's envelope at this time), and so forth.

The (Name of Agency) expects to evaluate proposals and provide written notification of the short-listed Firms within 30 days of receipt of proposals. If interviews are held, they will be scheduled within (Insert Number) weeks of short-list notification. The time for award may be extended by mutual agreement between the (Name of Agency) and the responsible Firm that offers the most advantageous submittal as determined by (the Chief Procurement Officer in the Agency).