

Benefits of QBS

How does Qualifications-Based Selection work?

The contracting agency or company invites interested architectural or engineering firms to submit information about their experience and qualifications to provide services for a particular project. The submissions are evaluated and reduced to a “short list” of the three to five most qualified firms. Personal interviews usually are conducted with these firms to discuss each firm’s qualifications, philosophies, and overall approach to the project. Once these interviews are completed, the agency or company ranks the firms. The top-ranked firm is invited to negotiate a formal agreement, which includes a discussion of project concepts and goals, the alternatives that might be considered, a specific scope of work, the general approach of the firm to the scope of work, and the firm’s compensation for the project.

What does QBS evaluate?

The QBS process evaluates a firm’s experience, expertise, training, availability, and references. This simple and competitive process matches the right firm for the project based on qualitative factors over cost alone.

Why is QBS preferred over other methods of selection, particularly for public projects?

At the beginning of a project, the scope of work for architectural and engineering services is often unclear. As a result, competing firms are unable to provide definitive pricing. Project owners and agencies must evaluate qualifications, competence, availability, and other factors to determine the best candidate for the job. For public projects, this is especially important for balancing complicated social factors and providing quality service and value to taxpayers. In a review of 76 design-build projects in the United States, QBS was found to have the lowest cost growth and the fastest construction speed when compared to sole source, best value, and low bid procurement methods.

Why should price not be the primary factor in selection?

Project owners focused on qualifications over price ensure that the architectural and engineering partners selected for the work will have the technical ability and professional judgment to turn a vision into an efficient, effective, and economical reality.

QBS sounds like it takes much longer than soliciting bids. What if I am on a tight timeframe?

QBS actually saves time. QBS procurements result in fewer project delays and improve the likelihood of owner satisfaction with the overall project. It is worthwhile to spend time at the beginning of the process to find the right partner in order to save time during the overall project. Research shows QBS outperforms the national average by keeping projects on schedule.

How does QBS benefit the client or the public?

QBS promotes collaboration and innovation, often lowering overall costs and reducing construction change orders. Recent research shows that overall growth of QBS projects is 3% compared to the national average of 6%. Similarly, 48% of QBS projects met all construction milestones compared to 32% of non-QBS projects. Research also shows there is a strong association between the use of QBS and the quality of construction documents developed by the design team, the final cost, and schedule performance.

Does QBS help or inhibit competition?

Because QBS focuses on the most meaningful factors, including qualifications, competence, previous performance, and availability, the process aids the competitive process so that it is not based primarily on a single factor, such as price. This is especially important for complex projects that can require community involvement, political sensitivities, and other social factors that call for experienced teams with broad knowledge and understanding.

Does QBS increase project cost?

No. QBS outperforms the national average by keeping projects on budget. Investing more design effort has been shown to reduce a project’s final cost from early estimates by solving construction problems during the design phase when the costs are lower instead of after construction has commenced. A 2022 study found that QBS performed better in terms of cost when compared to best value procurement in 160 design/build projects between 2008-2019.