



Qualification Based Selection saves money and time, reduces headaches and increases value

Iowa law recognizes that qualifications-based selection (QBS) is a competitive process that matches the right engineering and design professional to your project, based on experience, training, availability and previous experience. Iowa law restricts the selection of an architect, landscape architect, or engineer services based on price.

IOWA LAW (effective July 1, 2022)

26.4 Architectural and engineering services — exemptions — prohibitions.

1. Architectural, landscape architectural, or engineering design services procured for a public improvement are not subject to sections 26.3 and 26.14. (Competitive bidding statutes)
2. Fee-based selection of an architect, landscape architect, or engineer for a public improvement shall be prohibited

QBS

It's not just the law.

It's the selection process that delivers savings on your project.

Qualifications-based selection is a simple and competitive procurement method that drives savings, innovation and efficiency and is used by all federal agencies, 46 state governments and thousands of public agencies around the United States.

“American Public Works Association believes the public interest is best served when governmental agencies select architects, engineers, and related professional services and technical consultants for projects and studies through Qualification Based Selection procedures as opposed to price. Basing selection on qualifications and competence, rather than price fosters greater creativity and flexibility, and minimizes the potential for disputes and litigation” – APWA Guide on Selection of Architects and Engineers and Professional Consultants

Benefits of QBS

About Qualifications-Based Selection (QBS)

QBS is a simple and competitive procurement framework that selects architectural and engineering firms for projects based on expertise and experience rather than cost alone. QBS evaluates a firm’s experience, expertise, training, availability, and references.

QBS is used by all federal agencies, 48 state governments, and many localities around the United States.

QBS Saves Money

QBS outperforms the national average in keeping projects on budget.

QBS projects analyzed in a recent study showed an overall project cost growth of just 3%. This is half of the national average of 6%.

QBS Saves Time

QBS procurement results in fewer delays and improves the likelihood of owner satisfaction with the overall project. QBS also outperforms the national average in keeping projects on schedule.

About half (48%) of the QBS projects in a recent study met all construction milestones with no adjustment in schedule required. Only 32% of non-QBS projects had the same performance.

QBS Simplifies Complex Projects

Complex projects with community involvement, social components, and additional community features require design firms with broader knowledge and understanding. Less qualified and experienced firms typically have a harder time balancing these complicated social factors.

QBS Delivers Innovation

QBS procurement for design services produces innovative solutions. When firms have greater opportunity to explore innovations, they can produce better outcomes for clients. QBS enables innovation because price is not the only driving factor.

QBS Drives Procurement

QBS is the primary procurement tool – even for agencies that experience lean staffing and high turnover.

QBS PROJECTS

NON-QBS PROJECTS

48%	Met all construction milestones with no adjustment in schedule.	32%	Met all construction milestones with no adjustment in schedule.
7%	Schedule growth in a recent study.	10%	Schedule growth of all projects.
23%	Likelihood QBS projects would have <u>moderate to significant</u> innovations.	79%	Likelihood non-QBS projects would have <u>little or no</u> innovation included.
89%	Percentage receiving a “high” or “very high” satisfaction rating from project owners.	75%	Percentage receiving a “high” or “very high” satisfaction rating from project owners.
3%	Cost growth of QBS projects in a recent study.	6%	National average cost growth of all projects.





The Qualification-Based Selection Process is simple and straightforward

Bidding may get you a price quickly, but that price may not tell you what you bought for years to come. With QBS you'll know what you're getting before the contract is ever signed.

Step 1 - Selection Process

- A. The owner identifies the general scope of work for the project.
- B. The selection time frame for procuring professional design services is established.
- C. A request for statements of qualifications is published

Note: Iowa law allows an owner to begin directly communicating with an engineering firm they are familiar with or have previously utilized without requesting proposals or qualifications from other firms. If the owner chooses to solicit proposals from other firms there is a simple procedure they may choose to follow

- D. Statements of qualifications are received and evaluated.
- E. All firms are informed of their rating and ranking (this is optional).
- F. A short-list of firms to be interviewed (if interviews are necessary) may be determined.
- G. A tour of the site and/or facility may be arranged for the short-listed firms.
- H. Interviews are conducted and the firms ranked, based on their project approach, project team, timetable and overall understanding of the project.
- I. The firm most qualified for the specific project is selected.

Step 2 - Jointly Develop Scope of Project

J. Negotiations are conducted relative to the project's scope, professional services required, and fee and payment schedules with the top-ranked firm. If an agreement cannot be reached with the top ranked firm, those negotiations are ended and negotiations begun with the second highest ranked firm (however, most negotiations between owners and the highest ranked firm are successful).

Step 3 - Contract Agreement

- K. An agreement covering the understandings reached during negotiations above is executed, and a notice to proceed is issued by the Owner to the successful engineer.
- L. All firms involved receive post-selection communications about the project award.

Qualification Based Selection of professional design services is not just required by law, QBS provides the public owner and the taxpayer with:

- A quality project
- Within an agreed scope of service
- A project designed to meet your needs now and in the future
- The knowledge and confidence your project is designed to meet the required service life
- And a project designed to provide the best life-time value

But don't take our word for it – Listen to what other public owners in Iowa have to say about qualification based selection

Testimonials on Why QBS Works

The City of Ft. Madison has selected engineering consultants based on qualifications for many years because we find that a qualified consultant can do a better job refining our scope of work and provide us with a more innovative solution than if we were just price shopping. Certainly, price is a consideration to us in every case, but we are looking for the most qualified engineer that we can work with so that we can then hammer out a good scope, man-hour estimate, and fee as the project progresses and the unknowns become clarified. The RFQ process is easy to use and results in the City of Ft. Madison being able to feel fully comfortable with the best qualified engineering consultant for the project.

Respectfully,

Mark Bousselot
Public Works Director
City of Fort Madison

“It is considered more desirable to make the qualification selection first and then to discuss the price because both parties need to review in detail what is involved in the work (for example, estimates of man-hours, personnel costs, and alternatives that the architect-engineer or land surveyor should consider in depth). once parameters have been fully discussed and understood and the architect-engineer or land surveyor proposes a fee for the work, the recommended procedure requires the Public Owner to make its own evaluation and judgment as to the reasonableness of the fee.”

American Bar Association Model Procurement Code 2000

The Crawford County Secondary Roads Department seeks to find the overall best value when hiring a consultant or making any purchase. When soliciting professional engineering services for planning and design, the scope of work is rarely defined specific enough for a consulting firm to assign an appropriate fee. Selecting a consulting firm based on competence for the work at hand and hiring people we trust to deliver the work has provided Crawford County with the best value for our expenditures.

Paul Assman, PE & LS
Crawford County Engineer

“Cedar Rapids has used qualification-based selection for engineers and architects for a number of years. We have found using QBS has resulted in more competitive construction bids. In addition to saving the city money, it allows us to work with our consultant to develop a project designed to meet our needs with an agreed upon design fee resulting in fewer changes during design and fewer change orders during construction.”

Bob Hammond
Cedar Rapids Public Works Director

“The City of West Des Moines has used the QBS selection for many years. It allows us flexibility to reach mutual understanding of our needs and abilities of our design professionals to provide the best possible value for our taxpayers. Often our consultants will propose unique design solutions that we haven’t considered that will save money during construction. The QBS process generates creativity which allows us to work with the consultant to prepare a suitable scope, establish an appropriate design fee, and streamline the overall project development cycle. With QBS, our contract documents quality increases which results in more competitive construction bids and saves our city money.”

Brian Hemesath, PE – City Engineer
West Des Moines, Iowa



With Qualification Based Selection (QBS), as a City we can work with appropriately qualified design professionals for the specific project to fully develop the scope before a Professional Services contract and price is executed. Developing the full scope of a project in advance of a contract allows the City to completely understand the design effort required, review the proposed fee, and estimated construction cost accordingly. This gives the City confidence a project is correctly scoped and will fit within a City's budget on the front end of a design project. This process additionally allows a design professional to identify unique solutions that will help keep a project within budget and save taxpayer money.

John E. Dostart, P.E.
City Engineer
City of Altoona, Iowa

For more information and FAQs on how you can easily use qualification-based-selection on your project go to www.cec-iowa.org/iowa-guide-to-qbs or scan QR code



Here you will find templates on how to

- **Announce your project and request scope of service**
- **Draft letter requesting a statement of qualifications**
- **Evaluation form you can use when reviewing statement of qualifications**
- **Evaluation forms to review references**
- **Draft letter to short-listed firms**
- **Memo to firms selected for interviews**
- **Evaluation form for short-listed firms**
- **Evaluation tally sheet**
- **Draft letter announcing final selection**