

**PUBLIC OWNER'S  
DESIGN SERVICES INFORMATION**

**QBS**  
**QUALIFICATIONS BASED SELECTION**

**A Step-by-Step Process for Selecting  
Design Professional Services**

*A Public Service of AIAMo, ACEC/MO and MSPE*

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## INTRODUCTION:

You, the public owner, have determined the need for public project or study and now face one of the most important decisions you will make – the selection of a design professional. Your choice will be critical to the success of your project. The design professional you select will influence every aspect of your project, from its construction, operating, and maintenance costs to its design, functional efficiency, and public acceptance.

**Qualification Based Selection, or QBS**, is a selection process that provides public owners with an objective and logical way to choose a design professional. QBS helps public owners hire a design professional based on the design professional's qualifications and competence as they relate to the specific project. QBS assures public owners of the best fit between their particular project and the design professional using an easy to follow step-by-step process.

The **American Council of Engineering Companies of Missouri (ACEC/MO)**, the **Missouri Society of Professional Engineers (MSPE)**, and the **American Institute of Architects of Missouri (AIAMo)** have long supported QBS as the most effective means of selecting design professionals for public projects. ACEC/MO, MSPE, and AIAMo offer this workbook and other guidance at NO CHARGE to public owners involved in selecting design professionals for their projects. All clients are, of course, free to select a design professional in any lawful way they choose. Our members and their client experiences have shown the selection on the basis of qualifications first, followed by reasonable fee negotiations, is most likely to achieve the best results.

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**WHAT IS QBS?**

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# QBS

## *Questions and Answers*

The following provides answers to the most frequently asked questions about QBS.

### **What is QBS?**

QBS, Qualification Based Selection, is an objective, step-by-step process that helps owners select design professional services based on qualifications for a particular project. QBS assumes that specific qualifications and previous experience, rather than price alone, are the best guarantee of a successful relationship between owner and design professional. Just as a “bargain” doctor or lawyer can result in greater expense in the long run, so too can the selection of design professional services based on price alone lead to increased costs by the end of a project. The QBS emphasis on qualifications assures a final product that truly is cost-efficient.

Since 1972 when the Brooks Act was passed, the federal government has required Qualification Based Selection for procurement of A/E services. In 1983, Missouri passed a mini-Brooks Law that says that all state agencies must use QBS. Local political subdivisions must use the QBS method if they do not have a formal procedure. QBS is recommended by the American Bar Association in their model procurement codes and is currently used by most states and numerous localities.

### **Why Use QBS?**

ACEC/MO, MSPE and AIAMo know that QBS benefits both owners and design professionals. In our work with public owners throughout Missouri, we have found that QBS saves the owner time and money by getting the design professional on board early enough to improve project planning, minimize total project costs, and prevent costly mistakes. Design professionals save time and money because they can better prepare and plan for interviews with QBS’s standardized criteria. Through the QBS process, both owner and the design professional are able to develop a productive team effort.

### **When Should I Contact for QBS Services?**

You should contact one of our participating organizations as early in the planning process as possible in order to take advantage of the resources we can send you. Early selection and involvement of the design professional can help you better define the project and reach the most cost-efficient solution.

## **What If the Owner Is Already Working with a Design Professional?**

The purpose of QBS is to assist owners in establishing a selection process only if they are not already working with a design professional that is qualified to do the work.

## **What Can I Expect of My Design Professional?**

You should expect your design professional to:

- Be fully informed about the project's scope and required services
- Have the experience and ability to analyze alternatives and design the most suitable improvement consistent with economic feasibility, environmental aspects, expected life of improvement, energy considerations, and the latest technical advances
- Provide necessary staff and facilities for all phases of planning, design, construction, and operation
- Retain and confer with specialists on unusual matters
- Provide qualified construction reviewers, who will keep the owner advised on construction matters and work toward plan and specification goals
- Perform all services in an ethical, professional, and timely manner

## **What Is the Owner's Responsibility?**

Every successful project is a team effort, involving the owner, design professional, and contractor. The design professional expects his client to assign a responsible management representative who will work with the design professional throughout the project and who will have the authority to make required decisions. The owner also needs to state his goals and objectives clearly, establish realistic criteria for future additions or expansion, and provide a workable budget.

For the address and telephone number for QBS Services, turn to the last page.

# THE QBS STEPS

ACEC/MO, MSPE and AIAMo recommend the following QBS steps to assure the best fit between you and your design professional:

## **I. Project Definition**

- 1) Identify the Preliminary Scope of Work (Project Description)
- 2) Request Statements of Qualifications
- 3) Establish a Schedule of Activities

## **II. Review**

- 4) Evaluate Statements of Qualifications
- 5) Establish a Short-List of Design Professionals You Will Interview

## **III. Selection**

- 6) Arrange a Tour of Facility/Site
- 7) Conduct Interviews with Short-Listed Design Professionals
- 8) Rank Interviewed Design Professionals and Select Most Qualified Design Professional
- 9) Develop Scope of Services, Compensation, and Agreement

# I. DEFINITION

## I. PROJECT DEFINITION

<b>1.</b>	Defining the Preliminary Scope of Work	p.	4
<b>2.</b>	Requesting Statements of Qualifications	p.	5
<b>3.</b>	Establishing a Schedule of Activities	p.	6

# 1. DEFINING THE PRELIMINARY SCOPE OF WORK

**The Preliminary Scope of Work is the owner’s description of the project’s needs. A properly defined and clearly communicated Scope of Work saves time, money, and effort for both you and the design professionals. Given the appropriate information, design professionals can tailor their Statements of Qualifications directly to your project’s requirements, providing you with a more uniform basis for your evaluation. Limit Scope of Work to one page.**

**Sample Preliminary Scope of Work:**

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_  
*Owner* \_\_\_\_\_ *Project*
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_  
*Location*
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_  
*Contact person*

(Limit Contact to one and include mailing address and telephone and fax numbers as appropriate)

- 4) Other involved groups (e.g., boards, committee's or citizens' groups)
- 5) Description of available and relevant studies, surveys, and preliminary feasibility work
- 6) Requirements for further feasibility planning before plan or design work development
- 7) Project outline: intended size, function, capacity, and general requirements (e.g., demolition, renovation, new construction, waste management, energy, land use, and site selection considerations)
- 8) Time frame:  
Award of design services contract: \_\_\_\_\_  
Completion of design work: \_\_\_\_\_  
Beginning of construction: \_\_\_\_\_  
Planned project completion date: \_\_\_\_\_
- 9) Description of design professional selection process
- 10) Other requirements (e.g., referendums, public hearings)



### 3. ESTABLISHING A SCHEDULE OF ACTIVITIES

To keep your selection process running smoothly, you should set a schedule. An established time frame prevents misunderstandings and last-minute surprises that might delay the selection process.

**Sample Schedule of Activities:**

The following schedule has been established by:

\_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_  
*Owner Project*

<u>Date</u>	<u>Description</u>
_____	Develop a Preliminary Scope of Work.
_____	Identify interested and potential design professionals.
_____	Mail requests for Statements of Qualifications.
_____	Statements of Qualifications are due. (Allow a minimum of 14 days for design professionals to submit their material.) REVIEW REFERENCES.
_____	Develop a Short-List of 3-5 design professionals to interview.
_____	Notify short-listed design professionals of the interview date, the pre-interview tour date, and the interview criteria.
_____	Notify all other design professionals informing them of the short-listed design professionals and expressing appreciation for their time and interest.
_____	Tour facilities/site at _____ at _____. <div style="text-align: center;"><i>Time Location</i></div> (Schedule tours at least 10 days before the interview date to allow for preparation.)
_____	Interview short-listed design professionals.
_____	Negotiate and execute a contract with the selected design professional.
_____	Notify all design professionals interviewed of the results and express appreciation for their involvement.
_____	Arrange for any post-selection requirements, such as public hearings.

## II. REVIEW

## II. REVIEW

**4.** Evaluating the Statements Of  
Qualifications

pp. 7-9

**5.** Finalizing a Short-List

pp. 10-12

## 4. EVALUATING THE STATEMENTS OF QUALIFICATIONS

- General Suggestions:**
- Document all selection proceedings in the event questions arise.
  - Establish a policy that you will not consider Statements of Qualifications after the deadline.
  - Make sure your selection committee is staffed with individuals committed to qualification based evaluation.
  - Check references before you meet to determine your Short-List. You should check references other than those suggested by the design professional. We have included a sample reference check form.
  - Your goal should be to short-list 3-5 design professionals. Three is usually sufficient for a smaller project.

**Sample Qualifications Evaluation Form:**

1) \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_  
*Project* *Design professional*

2) \_\_\_\_\_  
*Address*

3) \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_  
*Phone* *Contact*

Rate each design professional in the eight categories listed below. To arrive at the Total, multiply Rating (highest = 5, lowest = 1) by Weight (highest = 10, lowest = 1). Assign weight to categories according to their importance to the project. Based on this model, 400 points is the maximum total, assuming all categories were weighted at "10" and the design professional received a "5" rating in each category.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Rating</u>	X	<u>Weight</u>	=	<u>Total</u>
1) Design professional's history and resources	_____	X	_____	=	_____
2) Evaluation of assigned personnel	_____	X	_____	=	_____
3) Related experience (e.g., design services, construction coordination, demolition, studies, other)	_____	X	_____	=	_____
4) Budget and cost control experience	_____	X	_____	=	_____
5) Familiarity with local geography and facilities	_____	X	_____	=	_____
6) Ability to relate to project needs	_____	X	_____	=	_____
7) Analysis of subjective statements (one page)	_____	X	_____	=	_____
8) Reference Check (transfer evaluation from Reference Check form)	_____	X	_____	=	_____
<b><u>Grand Total</u></b>					_____

## 4. EVALUATING SOQs CONTINUED

### Sample Qualifications Evaluation Summary:

Use this form to compile the evaluation results of all Statements of Qualifications. Enter the previous Grand Total for each design professional as recorded by individual reviewers. Then divide each design professional's Grand Total by the total number of reviewers to arrive at the design professionals' Average Scores.

Reviewers	<u>Combined Grand Totals</u>									
	Design Professionals									
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
2	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
3	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
4	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
5	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
6	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
7	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
8	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
<b><u>Combined Grand Total</u></b>	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Divided by # of interviewers = <b><u>Average Score</u></b>	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---



## 5. FINALIZING A SHORT-LIST

**After you rank the design professionals' Statements of Qualifications, select the top 3-5 design professionals for your Short-List. Notify all design professionals of your decision.**

### To finalize your Short-List, you should:

- 1) Notify the design professionals you did not select for further consideration. All design professionals devote considerable time and expense in preparing their Statements of Qualifications and deserve recognition for their efforts. Personal letters will help to preserve good relations with the design professionals you have not selected. We have included a sample memo, which you can write as a letter, thanking participating design professionals for their interest.
- 2) Notify the design professionals that you have selected for your Short-List. Your project's size and complexity will determine whether you will conduct subsequent interviews in person or by telephone. If you decide to interview in person, the short-listed design professionals will need the following information:
  - The date, place, and time of the interviews.
  - The date of the tour(s), when appropriate, of the facility/site.
  - A list of project issues, the interview criteria, and an explanation of the scoring and selection process.
  - Any feasibility studies, project program, or other background information. Send this information to ALL design professionals being considered, either with the letter to the short-listed design professionals or distributed to each design professional during the tour.

We have included samples of the memo and scoring sheets that you should send to short-listed design professionals. You can tailor these samples to fit your criteria and your project's specific requirements.

## 5. FINALIZING A SHORT-LIST CONTINUED

### Sample Memo to Short-Listed Design Professionals:

TO: \_\_\_\_\_  
*List in alphabetical order all design professionals you wish to interview*

FROM: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Owner* \_\_\_\_\_ *Project*

RE: Interview Schedule and Requirements

We will be interviewing the design professionals listed above for their \_\_\_\_\_  
services. *Study, design, other*

#### Attached are the following:

- 1) An Interview Score Sheet, which the \_\_\_\_\_ will use during the  
interview *Interviewers*
- 2) The evaluation form used to compile the evaluation score
- 3) Copies of \_\_\_\_\_ compiled by \_\_\_\_\_  
*Name of studies or reports* *Name of group*

Each design professional will have 45 minutes to present their qualifications and to answer questions. The interviewers will schedule 15 minutes between interviews for informal discussion of information presented during the preceding interview. After the interviews, the interviewers will rank the design professionals according to their competence and compatibility for the project. The design professional deemed most qualified will then enter into negotiations for a contract to provide the necessary design services. If contract terms cannot be reached, the design professional ranked second will be invited in for contract negotiations.

Interviews will be held on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.  
*Date* *Address*

The order and time of interviews are:

_____	_____
<i>Design professional A</i>	<i>Time</i>
_____	_____
<i>Design professional B</i>	<i>Time</i>
_____	_____
<i>Design professional C</i>	<i>Time</i>

We have arranged a tour of the site and/or facility for \_\_\_\_\_.  
*Date*

Please have your design professional's representative make arrangements with  
\_\_\_\_\_ for a time on this date.

*Owner's representative*

## 5. FINALIZING A SHORT-LIST CONTINUED

### Sample Memo to Design Professionals Not Selected for Interview:

TO: \_\_\_\_\_  
*List in alphabetical order all design professionals not asked to interview or tour the facility/site.*

FROM: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Owner*

RE: Status of Selection Process for \_\_\_\_\_  
*Project*

The \_\_\_\_\_ appreciates your interest in our project.  
*Committee or group*

After careful consideration by the \_\_\_\_\_, we have decided  
*Committee, board, or staff unit*  
to interview the following design professionals:

*(List design professionals in alphabetical order)*

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) \_\_\_\_\_

Although we did not select your design professional for an interview, we appreciate your interest in our project and the resources spent preparing your Statement of Qualifications.

# III. SELECTION

## III. SELECTION

- |   |     |       |
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| <b>8.</b> Ranking Interviewed Design Professionals  | pp. | 15-18 |
| <b>9.</b> Developing the Scope of Services, Compensation, and Agreement Instead of the Contract | p.  | 19    |

## 6. PROVIDING A TOUR OF THE FACILITY SITE

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

Schedule tours at least 10 days before the interview date to allow design professionals enough time to incorporate any new information into their plans.

In most cases, you should provide tours for short-listed design professionals only. Whether to offer tours to all interested design professionals or only to short-listed design professionals depends on the project requirements.

Tours work best when handled one-on-one, with your representative meeting with the representative of one design professional. A group tour that includes all interested design professionals can also be effective, but discussion under these conditions may be somewhat limited.

## 7. INTERVIEWING THE SHORT-LISTED DESIGN PROFESSIONALS

**Interviewing the short-listed design professionals gives you the opportunity to compare design professionals' creative approaches to the project as well as their interpretation and understanding of the project requirements.**

### Interview Environment

The room for the interview should be comfortable, have good acoustics, and be large enough to accommodate the expected number of people. You should provide a separate area for design professionals waiting to be interviewed.

If available, equipment such as blackboards, flip charts, and audio-visual screens is useful. Most design professionals, however, will bring any equipment they need for their presentation. Because equipment set-up time may cause delays in the interviewing process, use two rooms if possible. While you interview one design professional in the first room, another design professional can set up its presentation in the second room.

### Interview Guidelines

- 1) Interview only those design professionals short-listed. All interviewed design professionals should have an equal opportunity to prepare their presentation and equal access to all pertinent information. Send all design professionals the criteria for the interview scoring system.
- 2) Schedule all interviews on the same day, so the committee can compare all design professionals while the information is still fresh in their minds. This will aid consistent interview scoring.

## 7. INTERVIEWING CONTINUED

### Interview Guidelines Continued:

- 3) Schedule 45 minutes for each presentation and 15 minutes between interviews. This will allow ample time for the presentation, the question and answer period, and discussion of the presentation among the selection committee members.
- 4) Make sure the design professional's management representative and key personnel attend the interview. The interview will allow you to evaluate their personal styles. Also include project users in the interview.
- 5) Although it is appropriate to question design professionals about how they would approach the project, do not expect project details at this time. The requirements for each project, simple or complex, can be quite involved. The design professional will not be sufficiently aware of your needs and requirements to be able to produce a meaningful design solution. Detailed design discussions now can waste valuable time and hamper creativity and flexibility later.
- 6) You should ask how the design professional plans to determine its compensation. However, you should discuss specific compensation only after you select a design professional and you both have a clear understanding of the Scope of Services. This ensures that the design professional has included in its Scope of Services your expectations for the project as well as all detailed requirements. Good, open communications now will avoid serious misunderstandings later.
- 7) Let all design professionals know when the selection decision will be made and when they will hear from you. If possible, the committee should make its decision the same day it conducts the interviews. We have included a sample notification memo.

## 8. RANKING THE INTERVIEWED DESIGN PROFESSIONALS AND SELECTING THE MOST QUALIFIED DESIGN PROFESSIONAL

The interview evaluation form is an effective tool for rating, ranking, and ultimately selecting a qualified and compatible design professional. This system also provides a well-documented record of your selection process.

### General Suggestions:

- 1) Each interviewer should evaluate each design professional and record his score on separate forms. The Chair of the committee will then compile the individual score sheets.
- 2) We have included a sample evaluation form that includes a weight and a score for each criterion or interview question. You may develop other versions of this system depending on your project's complexity.
- 3) After completing interviews and rankings, it is customary for owners to notify design professionals of the final selection decision. We have included a sample post-interview memo.

## 8. RANKING DESIGN PROFESSIONALS CONTINUED

### Sample Individual Design Professional Score Sheet:

<i>Design Professional</i>	<i>Project</i>
----------------------------	----------------

Rate each design professional in the ten categories listed below. To arrive at the Total, multiply Rating (highest = 5, lowest = 1) by Weight (highest = 10, lowest = 1). Add all totals to determine the Grand Total. Based on this model, 500 points is the maximum possible total, assuming all categories were weighted at "10" and the design professional received a "5" rating in each category.

You may tailor categories as appropriate to your project.

<u>Category</u>	<u>Rating</u>	X	<u>Weight</u>	=	<u>Total</u>
1) <b>Project Requirements:</b> (Design professional's analysis, preparation and interest level)	_____	X	_____	=	_____
2) <b>Design Approach/Methodology:</b> (Design professional's or key personnel's creativity and problem-solving abilities)	_____	X	_____	=	_____
3) <b>Key Personnel and Roles:</b> (Qualifications and professional skills of key personnel)	_____	X	_____	=	_____
4) <b>Previous Experience, Firm:</b> (Related projects)	_____	X	_____	=	_____
5) <b>Previous Experience, Key Personnel:</b> (Related projects of key personnel)	_____	X	_____	=	_____
6) <b>Resources and Ability:</b> (Quality and importance of consultant or in-house support services)	_____	X	_____	=	_____
7) <b>Technical Project Management:</b> (Abilities in technical functions, such as project cost controls, construction observation, and time scheduling)	_____	X	_____	=	_____
8) <b>Responsiveness To Owners' Concerns:</b> (Design professional's ability to communicate and form successful working relationships)	_____	X	_____	=	_____
9) <b>Method Of Compensation:</b> (Design professional's method of determining compensation. Compensation proposals are NOT required.)	_____	X	_____	=	_____
10) <b>Other Relevant Issues:</b>	_____	X	_____	=	_____
 <b><u>Grand Total</u></b>					_____

## 8. RANKING DESIGN PROFESSIONALS CONTINUED

### Sample Group Totals Score Sheet:

The Chairperson should use this form to compile the design professionals' total scores. Enter the previous Grand Total for each design professional as recorded by individual interviewers. Then divide each design professional's Grand Total by the total number of interviewers to arrive at the design professionals' Average Scores.

Interviewer	<u>Combined Grand Totals</u>				
	Design Professionals				
	A	B	C	D	E
1	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
<b><u>Combined Grand Total</u></b>	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Divided by # of interviewers = <b><u>Average Score</u></b>	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____



## 9. DEVELOPING THE SCOPE OF SERVICES, COMPENSATION, AND AGREEMENT

**As soon as possible, you and the selected design professional should begin detailed discussions on the scope of services and the associated fees. This is the most important step of the QBS process, for it gives you the opportunity to clarify your goals and the project requirements and to make clear your expectations of the selected design professional.**

From this point on, you and the selected design professional will work as a team. You should discuss the project in detail with your design professional so that you both have a good understanding of what the project entails and what services the design professional is to provide. For a major project, these discussions might require several meetings. The result of your discussions – the detailed Scope of Services – is the foundation of your agreement with your design professional.

When you have agreed on the Scope of Services, the design professional will develop a detailed fee proposal, which will serve as the basis for your fee negotiations. If the proposed fee exceeds your budget, the design professional can suggest modifications to the Scope of Services. At this time, the design professional will also explain the possible ramifications of any changes to the original Scope of Services.

In the unlikely event that you and the selected design professional are unable to reach an agreement on the Scope of Services and/or compensation, you should terminate discussions and begin negotiations with the second-ranked design professional.

The final agreement on the Scope of Services and compensation must be in writing. Your design professional may use standard forms of agreement, which allow for a detailed Scope of Services, compensation for both basic and special services, and schedules for payments, performance, and required meetings.

Your final agreement ensures that both you and your design professional have the same expectations and understanding of the project requirements. Legal counsel may be needed in the final formulation of the agreement.

Remember, the QBS approach is designed to give both parties peace of mind. After the selection process, you can be assured that you will be working with the design professional that has the qualifications best suited to your project. After discussions of the required Scope of Services and associated fees, your design professional will clearly understand your project and your expectations.

**ACEC/MO, MSPE or AIAMo** would be happy to advise you with any step of the QBS process. Please feel free to tailor the workbook forms and guidelines to your specific project needs.

For more information, call or write to:

**American Council of Engineering Companies of Missouri**  
200 E. McCarty Street, Suite 201  
Jefferson City, MO 65101  
(573) 634-4080  
FAX: (573) 634-8929  
Website: [www.acecmo.org](http://www.acecmo.org) and click on QBS tab.

**American Institute of Architects of Missouri**  
204 East High Street  
Jefferson City, MO 65101  
(573) 635-8555  
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**Missouri Society of Professional Engineers**  
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