

QBS Wisconsin



QBS Manual

**Qualifications-Based Selection:
When Quality & Value Matter**

For Architectural & Engineering Services



qbswi.org

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Introduction

When an owner of a facility undertakes a project requiring architectural or engineering (A/E) services, the owner faces one of the most important decisions for the success of the project—the selection of a professional A/E firm. This decision influences the success of every project element; from site selection, cost estimating, aesthetics, plans and specifications, construction observation to efficient operation and maintenance.

The Qualifications-Based Selection (QBS) process provides an objective and commonsense approach to selecting the highest qualified professional A/E firm for your project.

Federal agencies, most states and many local units of government select professional A/E firms using a QBS process. This is because QBS has proved to be the most effective means of getting expected results.

The American Council of Engineering Companies of Wisconsin (ACEC WI) and American Institute of Architects (AIA) Wisconsin provide this QBS Manual and additional FREE assistance to owners as a public service.

The Wisconsin QBS Manual is provided as a public service by:



American Council of Engineering Companies of Wisconsin
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Visit www.qbswi.org for additional information and resources.

The QBS Process

1

Planning

- Describe your project needs and goals
- Identify your selection committee
- Establish a schedule for selection
- Establish selection criteria
- Compile a list of Architecture/Engineering (A/E) firms
- Prepare a request for Statements of Qualifications (SOQ)
- Distribute the SOQ requests

2

Selection

- Evaluate SOQs
- If you are able to make a decision based on SOQ, you may proceed to step 3, negotiation
- Establish a short list of A/E firms
- Inform all A/E firms of selection results
- Arrange a site tour
- Utilize Interview Evaluation Form
- Conduct interviews and rank firms
- Inform short-listed A/E firms of selection results

3

Negotiation

- Discuss approach, schedule and resources with highest ranked firm
- Negotiate services, terms and fees

Frequently Asked Questions

What is QBS?

QBS stands for “qualifications-based selection.” It is a process that helps you select the highest qualified A/E firm. The process focuses on A/E firms’ qualifications and competence in relation to the scope and particular needs of your project. The QBS process is:

- Straightforward,
- Easy to implement,
- Objective and fair, and
- A well-documented and defensible process.

Why use QBS?

- QBS provides an objective, step-by-step process that allows you to select the highest qualified A/E firm based on qualifications specific to the needs of your project.
- QBS develops a successful and cooperative relationship between you and the A/E firm.
- QBS benefits both you and the A/E firm by saving time and money.
- QBS gets the A/E firm onboard early enough to improve project planning, minimize total project costs and enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

Who uses QBS?

Since 1972, with passage of the Brooks Act, the federal government requires QBS for its A/E services procurement.

State of Wisconsin agencies require the use of the QBS process to select A/E firms.

QBS is endorsed and promoted by the American Public Works Association.

QBS is recommended by the American Bar Association in their model procurement codes and is currently used by most states, numerous localities and private owners.

The following organizations support and promote the QBS process:

- American Bar Association
- American Council of Engineering Companies
- American Council of Engineering Companies of Wisconsin
- American Institute of Architects
- American Institute of Architects Wisconsin
- American Public Works Association
- Federal Highway Administration
- League of Wisconsin Municipalities
- National Society of Professional Engineers
- United States Army Corps of Engineers
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
- Wisconsin Department of Transportation
- Wisconsin Division of Facilities Development
- Wisconsin Rural Water Association
- Wisconsin Towns Association

Can public agencies use QBS?

Yes. In fact, if federal funds are involved in your project, a QBS process is required for selecting your A/E firm.

Frequently Asked Questions

How much time will QBS take?

Depending on the project and the number of decision-makers, it can take from one week to five months. Two to three months is common.

Is there help to implement the QBS process?

Yes. There are QBS documents available from the ACEC WI and AIA Wisconsin offices and websites. As a public service, a free QBS facilitator will be provided for one-on-one assistance.

Resources available:

- www.qbswi.org
- www.acecwi.org
- www.aiaw.org

What is a QBS facilitator?

A QBS facilitator is a person who works with you to develop an appropriate selection process tailored for your specific project.

What does a QBS facilitator cost?

QBS facilitation is FREE.

Contact ACEC WI or AIA Wisconsin as early in the planning process/protocol as possible for information and assistance.

What can a QBS facilitator do?

- Meet with your board, committees, staff and other groups to provide QBS selection information.
- Help customize QBS materials to meet your project's special needs.
- Provide guidance and answer questions throughout the selection process.
- Provide resources, such as directories of architecture and consulting engineer firms.

What won't a QBS facilitator do?

- Recommend any individual firm.
- Evaluate or critique any individual firm.
- Participate in the interview process or contract negotiations between you and the selected firm.
- Provide estimates for A/E services or construction costs.

Testimonials

“ The Qualifications Based Selection (QBS) process, in my opinion, offers a much better opportunity to screen consultants for projects that demand ‘out-of-the-box’ thinking. Those projects best suited for QBS usually require a thorough understanding of the community’s special needs or desires, and a unique approach to accomplishing those goals. The approach must be one that can demonstrate an award winning design, yet be cost effective and sustainable. QBS process allows consultants to showcase past successes on similar type projects, while also providing the client a vision of how their project can be the next one that raises the bar for all consultants to reach when submitting proposals. At the end of day, nearly all consultants can provide design plans for the project, but few can turn a design into an award-winning project. Most of these improvements are a once in a generation opportunity, and **QBS gives the client the opportunity to make a once in generation improvement.**”

John C. Rooney, PE
City Engineer and Asst. Commissioner of Public Works
City of Racine

“ QBS is a proven procurement method that emphasizes quality throughout the evaluation and product selection process. **Communities that utilize QBS report their long-term costs are lower** because of this emphasis.”

Jerry Deschane
Executive Director
League of Wisconsin Municipalities

QBS Process Documents

1

Planning

Describe your project	Preliminary Scope of Services	9
Establish a schedule	Schedule of Activities	11
Establish selection criteria and compile a list of A/E firms	Qualifications Evaluation Criteria	12
Prepare a request of Statements of Qualifications (SOQs) and distribute SOQ requests	Request for SOQs	13

2

Selection

Evaluate SOQs	Reference Check Form	15
	Qualifications Evaluation Summary	17
Establish a short list	Short List Highest Qualified A/E Firms.....	18
Inform all A/E firms	Memo to Short-Listed Firms	19
	Memo to Firms Not Selected for Interview	20
Arrange a site tour	Providing a Tour of Facility/Site	21
Conduct interviews and rank	Interviews	22
	Interview Evaluation Form	23
	Selection Committee Score Sheet.....	24
Inform short-listed A/E firms	Memo to Interviewed Firms	25

3

Negotiation

Discuss scope of services with the highest ranked firm and negotiate agreement	Negotiate Scope of Services, Compensation and Agreement	26
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Preliminary Scope of Services

6. Project description: intended size, function, capacity and general requirements (e.g., preliminary design/studies demolition, renovation, new construction, sustainability, waste management, energy, land use and site selection considerations).

7. Timeline:

Award of A/E contract	_____
Commencement of design work	_____
Beginning of construction	_____
Planned project completion	_____

8. Description of A/E selection process.

Schedule of Activities

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

The following schedule has been established by:

_____ owner/client

for _____ project

Date	Description
_____	Identify a selection committee. <div style="border: 1px solid #00728f; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> TIP: A good selection committee mix includes individuals who are decision makers, have technical experience and at least one board/council member. Provide all selection committee members with a copy of the QBS Manual. </div>
_____	Develop a preliminary scope of services and project description.
_____	Identify interested and potential firms.
_____	Mail requests for Statement of Qualifications (SOQs).
_____	SOQ due date. <div style="border: 1px solid #00728f; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> TIP: Allow a minimum of two weeks for firms to submit their material. </div>
_____	Review references and develop a short-list of firms to interview.
_____	Notify short-listed firms of the pre-interview tour date, the interview date and the interview criteria.
_____	Notify all other firms of short-listed firms and express appreciation for their time and interest.
_____	Tour facility/site at _____ at _____. <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: -10px;"> time location </div>
_____	<div style="border: 1px solid #00728f; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> TIP: Schedule tours at least 10 days before the interview date for preparation. </div>
_____	Interview short-listed firms.
_____	Review SOQs and interview notes. Rank firms.
_____	Notify all firms interviewed of the results and express appreciation for their involvement.
_____	Negotiate and execute a contract with the selected firm.
_____	Arrange for any post-selection requirements, such as public hearings.

Qualifications Evaluation Criteria

General suggestions:

- Document all selection proceedings in the event questions arise.
- Establish a policy that you will not consider SOQs submitted after the deadline.
- Check references before you meet to determine your short list. You should check references other than those suggested by the firm. (Reference Check Form pg 15-16)
- A short list is usually sufficient.

project

A/E Firm

The criteria below represent general criteria for rating firms. Add to this list, depending on project needs (e.g. environmental experience if the project has extraordinary environmental concerns). Weight each category if certain categories are more important to the project than others by adjusting the Best Possible Rating for each criteria.

Qualifications Evaluation Form		
Criteria	Best Possible Rating	Rating
1. Project interest and understanding		
2. Firm's history		
3. Firm's ability and expertise		
4. Assigned personnel		
5. Related project experience		
6. Reference check		
Total		

Request for Statements of Qualifications

Once you have formulated your project's scope, invite potential firms to submit their Statements of Qualifications (SOQs). When requesting SOQs, remember that firms' responses can be lengthy and will require careful review. Keep this in mind when deciding how many firms you will contact. You can find potential firms by contacting facility owners who have completed projects similar to yours. ACEC WI and AIA Wisconsin also provide member directories. Allow at least 14 days for firms to submit their SOQ.

TO: _____
list all firms in alphabetical order

FROM: _____
owner/client representative

owner/client representative

RE: Request for Statement of Qualifications (SOQ)

Your firm is invited to submit a Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) to become eligible for an interview for A/E services for:

_____ project

Attached to this memo are the following:

1. A list of information and materials that you should include with your Statement of Qualifications.
See QBS Manual page 14
2. A Preliminary Scope of Services.
See QBS Manual Forms page 9-10
3. A Schedule of Activities for the selection process.
See QBS Manual Forms page 11

We will arrange a tour of the facility/site, if appropriate, for firms selected for an interview. Forward your Statement of Qualifications to the following address, to be received no later than _____ on _____.
time date

TO: _____
name

address

Request for Statements of Qualifications

Statement of Qualifications Information and Materials

1. Firm name, contact person, address, email and telephone number.
2. A **one-page statement** of interest and qualifications for this project.
3. A **brief** (maximum two-page) project understanding description. Include any concerns regarding permits, schedule, site, etc.
4. Discussion of firm's specific abilities and expertise to provide the required professional services and qualifications related to project requirements, including project management skills and methodology to monitor project budgets.
5. Key personnel proposed as project team members, including resumes. Clearly identify subconsultants, if proposed, with similar information.
6. Descriptions of recent and related projects completed by the firm.
7. References of other owners for which the firm has provided similar professional services. Reference information **must** include:
 - a. Name of owner
 - b. Project name
 - c. Brief description of firm's involvement
 - d. Contact person
 - e. Email
 - f. Address
 - g. Telephone number
 - h. Firm's key personnel assigned to referenced project
 - i. Project completion date

Reference Check Form

References checked for:

A/E firm

owner

address

project referenced

phone

person contacted

What was your project? _____

When was it completed? _____

What did the firm do for you (e.g., design work, construction phase services, project budget, studies, other?)

Who was the staff person assigned to the project? _____

Reference Check Form

Rate the Following	Rating 1-5 (5 = highest)	Comments
Quality of key personnel		
Timeliness		
Budget control		
Communication		
Creativity		
Total		

TIP: Other categories can be added by the selection committee.

Qualifications Evaluation

Use this form to compile the evaluation results of all SOQs. Enter the grand total for each firm as recorded by individual reviewers.

Evaluation Summary Table							
		Firms					
		A	B	C	D	E	F
Reviewers	1						
	2						
	3						
	4						
	5						
	6						
	7						
	8						
Total							

Short List Highest Qualified A/E Firms

To finalize your short list, rank the firms' SOQs and select the top firms for your short list. A short list of three firms is usually sufficient. Notify all firms of your decision.

1. Notify the firms 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 firms 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 the project issues, the interview criteria and an explanation of the scoring and selection process.
 - List any feasibility studies, project program or other background information that will be made available to all short-listed firms.
 - A sample memo you may send to short-listed firms is on page 19.
2. **Notify the firms you did not select for further consideration.** The A/E firms devote considerable time and expense in preparing their SOQs and deserve recognition for their efforts. Personal contacts will help to preserve good relations with the firms you have not selected. A sample memo thanking participating firms for their interest is on page 20.

Memo to Short-Listed Firms

TO: _____
list, in alphabetical order, all firms you plan to interview

FROM: _____
owner/client representative

RE: Interview Schedule and Requirements

Congratulations. Your firm has been short-listed for consideration to provide professional services for _____
project

Each firm will have 45 minutes to present its 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 firms according to their competence and compatibility for the project. The firm deemed highest qualified will then enter into negotiations for a contract to provide the necessary services. If contract terms cannot be reached, the firm ranked second will be invited in for contract negotiations.

Interviews will be held on _____ at _____.
date location

The order and times of the interviews are:

_____ time
firm A

_____ time
firm B

_____ time
firm C

We have arranged a tour of the facility/site for _____.
date and time

Please have your firm's representative contact _____,
owner/client representative

committing to attendance for the tour and interview.

The committee anticipates making a decision and notifying short-listed firms of final rankings by _____.
date

Memo to Firms Not Selected for Interview

TO: _____
list, in alphabetical order, all firms you have not selected for an interview

FROM: _____
owner/client representative

RE: Status of Selection Process for _____
project

The _____ appreciates your interest in our project.
committee/group

After careful consideration, we have decided to interview the following firms:

List short-listed firms in alphabetical order

Although your firm was not short-listed, we appreciate your interest in our project and the resources spent preparing your Statement of Qualifications.

Providing a Tour of the Site/Facility

TIP: On major or complex projects, a tour of the project facility or site can be an important part of the selection process. Tours provide interested firms with the opportunity to obtain firsthand information on the proposed project and to have their questions answered.

Schedule tours at least ten days before the interview date to allow firms enough time to incorporate any new information into their presentations.

You should provide a group tour for short-listed firms only. However, whether to offer tours to all interested firms or only to short-listed firms depends on the project requirements. A group tour that includes all interested firms can save time and avoid bias but discussion under these conditions may be somewhat limited.

If a group tour is not feasible then one-on-one tours may be appropriate, with your representative meeting with firm representatives one firm at a time.

For one-on-one tours, the following is suggested:

- Schedule all tours for one date.
- Limit times for each tour to be consistent for each firm (e.g., one hour for each short-listed firm).
- Ensure that the owner's representative is the only "owner's voice" on the tour to prevent possible conflicting information. Also, the owner's representative should strive to answer similar questions from each of the firms with the same information.
- Consider published FAQ document to be available after the tour.

Interviews

Interviewing the short-listed firms gives you the opportunity to compare each firm's creative approach to the project as well as its interpretation and understanding of the project requirements.

The Interview Environment

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

Interview Guidelines

1. All interviewed firms should have an equal opportunity to prepare their presentation and equal access to all pertinent information. Send all firms the criteria/questions to be used for the interview scoring.
2. Schedule all interviews on the same day. This saves time and enables the committee to compare all firms while the information is fresh in their minds. The same interviewers should be present at all of the interviews. This will also result in consistent interview scoring.
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. Request that the firm's project manager and key personnel (no more than 5) attend the interview.
5. Let all firms know when the selection decision will be made and when they will hear from you.
6. A sample Interview Evaluation Form is provided on page 23. You may develop other versions of this form, depending on your project's complexity.
7. Each interviewer should evaluate each firm and record his/her score on separate forms. The chair of the committee will then compile the individual score sheets. See sample Selection Committee Score Sheet on page 24.

Interview Evaluation Form

The individual Interview Evaluation Form is an effective tool for rating, ranking and ultimately selecting a qualified and compatible firm. This tool also provides a well-documented record of your selection process.

Project: _____

Firm: _____

Rate each firm using the categories listed below. Depending on your needs, you may wish to weight the categories by determining different Best Possible Ratings for each one. Develop a rating system in advance that your group is comfortable with. You may tailor categories as appropriate to your project.

Interview Evaluation Form			
Category		Best Possible Rating	Firm Rating
1.	Project requirements Firm's analysis, preparation and interest level		
2.	Design approach/methodology Firm's or individual's creativity		
3.	Key personnel and roles Qualifications and professional skills of key individuals		
4.	Previous experience of firm Related projects		
5.	Resources and abilities Quality and importance of support services		
6.	Project management Project cost controls, construction observation, conflict resolution and schedule control		
7.	Responsiveness to owners' concerns Firm's ability to communicate and form successful working relationships		
8.			
9.			
10.			
Total			

TIP: Other categories/criteria can be added by the selection committee.

Selection Committee Score Sheet

The chairperson should use this form to compile all of the individual evaluation scores. Enter the total for each firm as recorded by the individual reviewers.

Selection Committee Score Sheet		Firm		
		A	B	C
Interviewers	1			
	2			
	3			
	4			
	5			
	6			
	7			
	8			
Combined Total				

Memo to Interviewed Firms

TO: _____
list, in alphabetical order, all interviewed

FROM: _____
owner/client representative

RE: Status of Selection Process for _____
project

The _____
owner/client representative has completed the selection process for
professional services for _____
project.

Our objective was to select the highest qualified firm to perform this service.

We have entered into contract negotiations with _____
firm.

On behalf of _____
owner/client representative's selection committee, I would like to

express our appreciation for your time, effort and interest spent on our behalf.

Sincerely,

Selection Committee Chair Signature

Negotiate Scope of Services, Terms and Compensation

As soon as possible, after an A/E firm is selected, begin detailed discussions on the A/E agreement for professional services. This gives you the opportunity to refine your goals, project requirements (scope of services), fees and expectations of the selected firm.

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

When you have agreed on the scope of services, the A/E firm will develop a detailed fee proposal, which will serve as the basis for your fee negotiations. Common fee proposals include:

- lump sum
- percent of construction costs
- hourly rate basis
- cost plus fixed fee
- combination of above

If the proposed fee exceeds your budget, the firm can suggest modifications to the scope of services. At this time, the firm's project manager will also explain the possible ramifications of any changes to the original scope of services.

In the unlikely event that you and the selected firm 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 firm.

A written agreement between you and the A/E firm is important to ensure that both parties have the same expectations and understanding of the project requirements, responsibilities, scope of services and compensation. The firm may recommend using a standard form of agreement developed by either The American Institute of Architects (AIA) or the Engineers Joint Contract Document Committee (EJCDC). These standard contract documents are widely used and accepted because they are time-tested and reflect the consensus of opinion among organizations representing facility owners, attorneys, insurance industry and contractors, as well as engineers and architects. These AIA and EJCDC standard agreements are part of a coordinated family of contract documents, which is important and beneficial to the owner. For example, if you use AIA contract documents, you will know that the provisions contained in the agreement with your A/E firm will be consistent and coordinated with the provisions contained in the contract with a contractor for the construction of your project.

It is advisable to involve legal counsel when finalizing the agreement and its subsequent

Debriefing

After receiving the “Memo to Interviewed Firms” the unsuccessful firms will likely attempt to contact the Selection Committee to obtain more information regarding why their firm was not selected for the project. The following is a list of typical questions that you should be prepared to answer. This feedback can be valuable to the firms as they pursue future projects and acknowledges the time and effort they expended in pursuing your project.

1. Do you have suggestions that might lead to a more favorable ranking the next time?
2. What elements of our proposal/presentation were not as strong as the other proposals/presentations?
3. How did you feel about the related experience of our team members?
4. Did we communicate the services we intended to provide?
5. How did our response to your questions compare with the other firms?
6. What was our score and what was the top firm’s score? Would you be able to provide a summary score sheet to demonstrate the evaluation differences?
7. What were the major criteria used in the selection?
8. Did you contact references?
9. Were there any other reasons why we weren’t selected?

Organizations Supporting QBS

Qualifications-Based Selection (QBS) is supported and endorsed by the following state and national organizations:

- American Bar Association (ABA)
- American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC)
- American Council of Engineering Companies of Wisconsin (ACEC WI)
- American Institute of Architects (AIA)
- American Institute of Architects Wisconsin (AIAW)
- American Public Works Association (APWA)
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- League of Wisconsin Municipalities
- National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE)
- United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE)
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WisDNR)
- Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT)
- Wisconsin Division of Facilities Development (DFD/WisDOA)
- Wisconsin Rural Water Association (WRWA)
- Wisconsin Towns Association

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Visit www.qbswi.org for additional information and resources.