

Manitoba Association of Architects

HOW TO FIND, SELECT & ENGAGE AN ARCHITECT USING QUALITY BASED SELECTION (QBS)

INTRODUCTION TO QUALITY BASED SELECTION

The Manitoba Association of Architects (MAA) is a self-governing professional association, mandated by the Province of Manitoba under The Architects Act to regulate the practice of architecture in Manitoba.

The MAA encourages the use of Quality Based Selection (QBS) to assist organizations, institutions and businesses in identifying and documenting their need for architectural services; and to systematically choose the most appropriate firm.

This document is a step-by-step guide to Quality Based Selection.

QUALITY BASED SELECTION IN CONTEXT

There are three methods of selecting an architect.

- i) **Direct Selection**, when the client selects one architect on the basis of reputation, recommendation, knowledge of the architect's work, etc.
- ii) **Design Competition**, when an open architectural competition is held and a jury selects the winner who then receives the commission or when a limited competition is held, in accordance with MAA rules, to determine the project architect.
- iii) **Quality Based Selection** - a structured process for 'competitive' selection between two or more architects, using qualifications-based criteria. The process focuses on matching client expectations with the expertise, experience, available resources and innovation of an architectural firm.

THE STEP BY STEP QBS PROCESS

The guide to QBS has been prepared by the Manitoba Association of Architects (MAA) to assist potential clients in the process of selecting and engaging an architect when a competitive selection process is to be employed.

This guide has been designed to provide a step-by-step process and includes examples of letters and forms which can be modified to meet specific project needs. The selection process is divided into two stages: an initial Request for a Statement of Interest followed by either an interview or a Request for Technical Proposal.

The following steps are involved in QBS:

1. Describing the Scope of Work
2. Establishing a Selection Time Frame for QBS
3. Compiling a List of Architects

4. Requesting Statements of Interest
5. Establishing a Short-list
6. Informing the Short-listed Architects
7. The Detailed Written Proposal
8. Interviewing Short-listed Architects
9. Ranking the Short-listed Architects
10. Negotiating an Agreement with the Highest Ranked Architect.
11. Notifying Unsuccessful Architects of the Results

1. Describing the Scope of Work

To begin the selection process, briefly outline the general scope of the project. Properly described and communicated this will save time, money and effort for both you and the firms. The following are the basic elements that should be included:

1.1 *Your name, address, complete contact information* – Identification of who the architectural firm will report to and where questions should be directed.

1.2 *Project Description* – Describe in detail the vision, need and expectation of the project. This information will guide the architectural firm in addressing the exact design intent of the project and determining the appropriate scope of service that is required.

1.3 *Program Requirements* - Include (to the extent known) the intended size, function, and occupancy, as well as other anticipated requirements, e.g. renovations, demolition, additions, new construction; and energy, land use, and site selection considerations. Also, the anticipated funding strategy, budgeting, and approvals required.

1.4 *Proposed Schedule and Timelines* - Including completion of design work, beginning of construction, and planned occupancy date. Any other project milestones and significant dates should be included.

1.5 *Background Information* – This information is supplementary to the *Project Description* and *Program Requirements*. It may include the involvement of a selection panel or client groups, e.g. boards, foundations, committees or citizen groups; descriptions of completed studies, surveys, and/or preliminary feasibility work that is relevant to the project; requirements for further feasibility studies and planning prior to design and construction.

1.6 *Submission Guidelines* – Guidelines will vary per project but may include:

- Page limit – 5 to 10 pages.
- Time limit for related projects, for example, past 5 years
- Format requirements of submission
- When the Statement of Interest is due
- How many copies of the submission are required.

2. Establishing a Time Frame for QBS - The following is a suggested format to determine the time frame for the steps of the QBS process.

- _____ 1) Identification of needs finalized by the client and Scope of Work developed.
(Date)
- _____ 2) Issuance of memo or placement of advertisement or notice inviting "Statements of Interest" (optional)
- _____ 3) Deadline for receipt of "Statement of Interest" (Allow a minimum of 10 days for architects to submit materials). Note: Before the next action date, references should be checked.
- _____ 4) Short list of 3-5 architects to be interviewed and/or to be requested to submit Detailed Written Proposal is developed by the client. Selection is based on qualifications-based criteria, references and compatibility with owners' project.
- _____ 5) Memo directed to short-listed firms advising date for interviews and pre-interview tour or tours of site and/or facilities, along with criteria to be reviewed during the interview. (May also include request for Technical Proposals).
- _____ 6) Memo directed to all architects who submitted "Statements of Interest" (excluding short-listed firms), informing them of firms to be interviewed and expressing appreciation for their interest.
- _____ 7) Tour or tours of facilities at [time] and [location]. (Optional).
[Should be scheduled at least 10 days before interviews, to allow for preparation].
- _____ 8) Scheduled interviews for short-listed firms, at times and locations previously communicated. Architects to be ranked for the project based on qualifications-based criteria. (May be preceded by submission of Detailed Written Proposals).
- _____ 9) Contract with highest-ranked architect negotiated and executed.
- _____ 10) Memo mailed to all architects interviewed indicating results of interviews and expressing appreciation for their effort and involvement.
- _____ 11) Project proceeds.

3. Compiling a List of Architects

Any of the following three avenues are appropriate for compiling a list of architects:

- A directory from the Manitoba Association of Architects;
- Placing a notice in a local newspaper or one of broader circulation, a professional journal or publications distributed by the MAA;
- A short list of preferred architectural firms.

4. Requesting Statements of Interest

Once the list of architects has been compiled, a memo is sent to selected firms with an invitation to submit Statements of Interest. The memo should list all firms in alphabetical order. The following is a suggested memo format:

TO: [List all architects in alphabetical order]

FROM: [Client, Individual, Title]

RE: Request for Statements of Interest

You are invited to submit your Statement of Interest to provide architectural services related to design and construction requirements for the [name of project].

Attached to this memo are:

1. A general definition of the preliminary scope of the work (see item 1).
2. A schedule of dates and requirements for the selection process (see item 2).

Please limit your Statements of Interest to a maximum of 10 pages and include at least the following information:

Name, address, and brief history of your firm.

A brief description of the proposed project team including disciplines, roles, responsibilities, qualifications and reporting relationships.

Related projects over the last 5 years with accompanying description and budget.

References.

It is our intention to select 3 to 5 architectural firms based on review of the Statements of Interest. The selected firms will be invited to submit written technical proposals and/or attend an interview.

We will select the project architect using the Quality Based Selection Process (QBS) as recommended by the Manitoba Association of Architects.

Please submit Statements of Interest to the following address no later than 3:00 p.m. local time on [Date]

Submit To:

[Name] [Title] [Address]

For additional information, contact: _____

5. Establishing a Short list

A Selection Committee assigned to develop a short-list of architects should evaluate the Statements of Interest. (An architect to aid in the selection process can sometimes be helpful.)

Based upon an evaluation of the Statements of Interest and reference checks, you may proceed to develop a short-list of three to five firms who will be invited to attend an interview and/or submit a Detailed Written Proposal. Architectural firms who were not short-listed should be contacted to express appreciation for their efforts and to identify the short-list.

The next decision is whether to proceed directly to an interview of the short-listed architects (*see section 8*) or to first request a Detailed Written Proposal (*see section 7*).

A request for a Detailed Written Proposal is only appropriate when the project is well defined and the significance of the project justifies the expense and time of the short-listed architects in preparing the Detailed Written Proposal and your time and resources in evaluating them. The Detailed Written Proposal process will add several weeks and commensurate costs to the selection time frame.

6. Informing the Short-listed Architects

The short-listed architects should immediately receive Interview or Detailed Written Proposal preparation requirements including:

1. If you consider that a tour of the site or facility is appropriate a date should be established. The tour provides the architects with an important first-hand look at existing conditions and the concerns that gave rise to the project. The tour also provides a further opportunity for exchange of information about the project. If the project site is vacant, you may simply provide site surveys and directions to the site, to allow the architects to visit the site independently.

Tours can be handled either by meeting individually with the short-listed architects, or in a group meeting at a specified time and place for a group review of the site and/or facility.

Remember that all of the short-listed architects must be given the same information. For example, questions and answers should be shared with all of the short-listed architects.

2. A list of interview criteria and questions, and an explanation of the scoring and selection process should be sent to the architects on the short-list. (*see form A-1 sample score sheet*)

Predetermining selection scoring criteria and your specific areas of concern, and providing that information to the short-listed architects will provide you or the interviewing committee with the best possible basis for making an "apples to apples" comparison.

3. Similarly, if you are requesting a Detailed Written Proposal, inform the short-listed architects of the specific requirements for those submissions, and of the criteria and weighting which will be used in evaluation and scoring. Consider establishing appropriate limits to the length of the submission to reasonably minimize the time spent by the architects developing the resume, and by you in evaluating the Detailed Written Proposals. Again, it is in your best

interest to establish a 'level playing field' for the selection process.

4. If you have feasibility studies, a project program, or other background information on the project, these materials should be submitted to the architects or made available to them for purposes of review.
5. Other specifics about the interviews themselves, including the date, place, time and the names and titles of the members of the group that will be conducting the interviews, should also be included.

7. The Detailed Written Proposal

The Request for Detailed Written Proposals will be sent to the short list of qualified firms. The Request will ask the firms to identify the following:

Their Understanding of the Project – How the firm understands what is required for the project.

The Proposed Methodology – How the firm will approach the design and construction of the project.

Proposed Project Management – Explain your firm's management procedures for client meetings, schedule, cost and quality control.

Related Experience – Any supplementary projects or related experience that the firm feels further qualifies the submission.

It is recommended to give firms four weeks to respond to the Request for Proposals. During this period, they may submit inquiries to the Project Contact and visit the site if required.

Notes:

Regarding Fees: The MAA endorses the Quality Based Selection Process in lieu of a fee based selection process. The RAIC publishes "A Guide to Determining Appropriate Fees for the Services of an Architect" and it is available in electronic format at no charge. Should your committee require a fee submission, it is recommended that the Client meet with the highest ranked Architect to confirm scope of services and negotiate a fee agreement (see item 10):
Regarding Project Schedule: A project schedule should not be requested until a detailed scope of work has been defined and agreed upon including the length of time required for client approvals.

8. Interviewing Short-listed Architects

Interviews with the short-listed architects gives you the opportunity to compare the architects' different approaches to the design process, as well as their interpretations and understanding of the specific project requirements. You should not expect sketches or other design work for the project in the Technical Proposal to be presented during the interview. The design requirements for even simple projects can be quite complex. At this stage, the architects will not be sufficiently informed as to your needs and requirements to be able to develop a meaningful design solution.

In addition to providing an opportunity to review the architects' experience and expertise, the interviews allow you to evaluate the personal styles of each architect's management and key personnel, and their compatibility with the pre-identified criteria for the project. It is imperative that design personnel assigned to the project from the architect's office be present at the interview. It is essential that the project's intended users be involved in the interviews. Direct interaction between the client/user and the architect is essential for the development of a design that truly meets the owner's needs.

Set-Up

The physical set-up for the interview should be comfortable, with good acoustics and ample room. A separate waiting area should be provided for others scheduled to be interviewed. Equipment such as blackboards, flip charts, and audio-visual screens may be useful if available, although many architects will bring the equipment they need. Advise the short-listed architects if you intend to have any equipment available, or of any restrictions (such as the room cannot be 'blacked out' for slide presentation). Since equipment set-up time may cause some delays, it is ideal if two similar rooms can be used. While one group is being interviewed in the first room, another can set up in the second room. This ensures that important interview time is not spent checking equipment and setting up.

Often clients elect to interview the short-listed firms in the architects' offices. This can give you additional insight about the work setting as well as methods, equipment and information resources, and key team members proposed for the project.

Interviews are held in closed sessions unless applicable statutes or regulations require an open public meeting. In that latter case, the architects should be notified of this in advance.

Some Interviewing Guidelines

If you have requested Technical Proposals, carefully review and 'score' them before the interview. While it is not usually an effective technique or efficient use of time to review the Technical Proposals in detail during the interview, the interview presents an opportunity to clarify or expand upon elements of the Technical Proposal.

Interview only those architects who have been short-listed through QBS to ensure that all architects have had equal opportunity to prepare presentations.

As a guideline, schedule approximately 45 minutes for each presentation, and 15 minutes between interviews. It is important to allow ample time for both the presentation and question-and-answer period, and also for the committee to discuss the presentation privately before beginning the next interview.

Schedule all interviews on the same day or on consecutive days. This permits the committee to compare all of the interviewed architects while information is freshly in mind, and ensures consistent interview scoring.

The evaluation and weighting criteria for the interview scoring system should be communicated to all architects in advance.

While it is appropriate to question architects about their approach to the design of a project, do not ask for or expect specific advice on an actual design solution during the interview. Appropriate and responsive designs require a great deal of interaction between owner and architect, considerably more than is possible during the selection phase. Preconceived design

solutions brought to the table by either the architect or owner rarely address the true needs of the owner's program. Considerable time and effort may be subsequently expended trying to salvage those preconceived ideas and make them fit the program. This actually impedes progress and prevents the exploration of more responsive solutions to identified design issues.

The interview provides an opportunity to explore issues such as design innovation and cost control and how these can be applied to your project.

Some clients may wish to explore how the architects plan to develop an appropriate level of compensation for their professional services. However, compensation amounts should be left to be resolved through detailed negotiations with the architect who is finally selected, and then only after there is a comprehensive and mutual understanding of the actual scope of services.

Let all architects know when the selection decision will be made. It is ideal if the decision can be made and announced on the same date as the interviews, after the committee has had ample time to evaluate all short-listed architects. You are anxious to get underway, and the architects may be involved in a selection process for other projects to which they may be asked to commit.

9. Ranking the Short-listed Architects

A score sheet that includes a weight and a score for each criteria and/or question can be used for evaluating Technical Proposals and interviews, ranking and finally, determining the most appropriate architect for your project. *(See form A-1 sample score sheet)*

10. Negotiating an Agreement with the Highest Ranked Architect

A detailed and comprehensive description of the scope-of-services should be developed jointly by you and the highest-ranked architect. This is often accomplished through one or more meetings with the architect, after which the architect submits a detailed project and work plan. The work plan should list consultants and the roles and responsibilities of all members of the design team, as well as your responsibilities.

Once there is an agreement on the scope of services and the work plan, the architect will submit a proposal for compensation to initiate fee negotiations. The Canadian Standard Form of Contract for Architectural Services Document Six, current edition, is helpful in developing the scope of services, and arriving appropriate compensation for the architect. Compensation is usually established:

- as a percentage of construction cost,
- as a fixed fee,
- based on hourly rates, or
- as a combination of the above

Reimbursable expenses such as long distance communication, shipping, travel expenses, and reproduction of documents are additional.

You are urged to confirm all of the negotiated details in a written contract. The standard form of contract between a client and architect (Canadian Standard Form of Contract for Architectural Services Document Six, current edition) is available from the MAA. This contract is widely-used

nationally and is designed to protect the interests of both you and architect. To preserve the integrity of the QBS process and to assure that the selection process remains properly focused on the quality of service; you only negotiate Scope of Services and Compensation with one architect at a time. If negotiations cannot be successfully completed with the first-ranked architect, those negotiations are permanently abandoned, and negotiations undertaken with the second-ranked architect.

11. Notifying Unsuccessful Architects of the Results

You complete the QBS process by notifying all of the short-listed architects in writing of the outcome of the selection process and advising them of the name of the first ranked architect.

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