

The Consultant Selection Process

I. Overview

Five Ways to Find a Consultant

- A. Sole-source procurement
- B. Selecting from a list of pre-qualified candidates
- C. Selection based on a response to a Request for Qualification (RFQ)
- D. Selection based on a proposal submitted in response to a Request for Proposal (RFP)
- E. Selection based on a two-step process that includes an RFQ followed by an RFP

Critical Issues to Consultants in the Selections Process

- A. Clarity and completeness in published request and information given to prospective consultants
- B. A fair and consistent process that treats all firms equally
- C. A process that matches the size and scope of the project
- D. To be selected because they are the right fit
- E. To work in an environment of trust and respect where there is a "good chemistry"
- F. Other issues
 - 1. Teaming - If you ask for Team submittals - try to avoid breaking up teams during selection process.
 - 2. Timing - Be sure you are ready to proceed with the project when commencing a selection process.
 - 3. Preferred Consultant - If you have a preferred Consultant for a project, consider hiring out right.
 - 4. Number to Short List - Try to keep it to 3 or 4 maximum.
 - 5. Price Proposal - Provide everyone with budget information.
 - 6. Timing the Interviews - They should all be on the same day. Allow adequate notice for preparation with a minimum of one week.
- G. Questions consultants typically ask in deciding whether or not to spend the time and money on preparing a proposal

Consultant Selection Process Worksheet

1. How will you find/select a Consultant?	Method Selected	Comments
• Sole source		
• Select from pre-qualified candidates		
• Request for Qualifications (RFQ)		
• Request for Proposals (RFP)		
• RFQ/RFP		

2. How much time will the selection process take?	Minimum time for this setup	Note: Issues to consider in determining the amount of time needed
• Response time allowed		
• Time to review submittals and select firms for interview		
• Time to prepare for interviews once short list is identified		
• Interview evaluation and notification of selected firm		
• Negotiation and contract execution		

3. What information will be provided in the RFQ/RFP packet?	YES, and why	No, and why not
• Amount budgeted for the project		
• Project purpose		
• Project scope		
• Project timeline		
• Description of desired experience/qualifications		
• Are there WMBE requirements?		
• List of expected deliverables		
• Will you specify required submittal information and if so what? (e.g., maximum length of submittal, specific information to be provided, forms to be included, budget and scope, references, etc.)		
• Evaluation criteria		
• Description of the selection process		

4. How much additional information will be provided and who will answer the questions?	What information falls within this category and who can answer these questions?	What method(s) (if any) will be utilized to provide information and responses to questions? (e.g., written responses, pre-proposal conference...)
• Administrative Questions		
• Substantive Questions		

5. Conducting interviews	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will interviews be conducted? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many firms will be interviewed? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much time for each interview? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What tools (rating forms, pre-determined questions) will be used to evaluate the firms? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will all interviews be conducted on the same day? What if some firm(s) are not available on the preferred day? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there supplemental information you would like submitted by the firms prior to the interview and if so, what? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who will participate in the interview panel? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What process will you use to select the preferred firm after interviews are complete? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will you check references? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you break a tie? 	

II. Contracting 101

Scope of Work: What are You Trying to Accomplish

- A. Planners are process oriented, but how concerned should you be about how the outcome is achieved vs. the outcome?
- B. Are methods important? If so, what are your expectations? Art vs. Science?
- C. What are you paying for? Technical expertise? Objectivity? Innovation? Extra staffing? Protection?

Developing the Scope: Starting Points

- A. Grant applications
- B. Budget worksheets
- C. Other/prior projects
- D. "Standard" receptive projects
- E. Consultant-provided

RFQ vs. RFP

- A. RFQ may or may not be based on a defined scope, but the consultants' submittal is not a basis for going directly to the contract.
- B. RFP means that you do have a scope and the consultant has been selected based on a favorable response.

Planning a Wedding: A Checklist

- A. Do you have a pretty good idea of how long it takes to do things?
- B. Do you know what people's time is worth?
- C. Do you understand what makes up overhead?
- D. Is your schedule realistic, and if not, have you made that clear?
- E. Are the number and emphasis of meetings specified?
- F. Have you factored the number of reviews and that time into the schedule?
- G. Are level of detail expectations clear?
- H. Have you described your product specifications?
- I. Do you have particular formatting protocols?
- J. Are you clear about materials being furnished to the consultant?
- K. Have you been clear about who you are working with? Principals, Project Managers, Technical/support staff
- L. Do you understand the roles and relationships between the Prime and the subs? Have the lines of communication been established?

- M. Have you decided on a "fee basis"?
- Hourly (Time and Expenses)
 - Fixed Sum including reimbursable expenses
 - Fixed Fee with separate reimbursable
- N. Have you decided on an invoicing process?
- Periodic (monthly) time and expenses
 - Phase completion
 - Product completion
 - Standard form or templates
 - Written project status reports

Change and Flexibility

- A. Have you anticipated probable changes in your process, schedule, or outcomes and addressed them in the scope somehow?

Boring Boilerplate

- A. Insurance: What is your policy regarding "general" liability and professional liability coverage?
- B. Do you understand the "hold harmless" provisions?
- C. Are there "tiered" relationships within the client/consultant agreement which are driven by funding agency requirements or other outside factors?
- D. WMBE: Are there goals and requirements? How are they applied to the fee?
- E. Are there business license requirements for the consultant?
- F. What about digital file transfers?
- G. Who owns the products? (reports, maps, work papers?)
- H. Is the termination clause clear and agreeable to all parties?
- I. Has everything been reviewed by the attorneys?

III. Working Effectively with Consultants and Project Management

Cornerstones for Successful Consultant Relationships

- A. In order to have a successful client/consultant relationship and thus a greater chance of a successful project, it is critical that the scope of work be defined:
1. What products are expected - the scope must clearly set forth what the client expects from the consultant and what the consultant needs from the client.
 - Are the products: reports; drawings; computer readable media (if so what format); draft or final; assistance with meetings, workshops, hearings, etc...?

2. When products are expected - the scope must clearly set out timelines for project activities.
3. Payment Information - scope should contain details on when payments will be made, how much the payments are and what is required before a payment will be released.
4. Roles and Responsibilities - the scope must clearly spell out who has responsibility for each project activity and product. Key items include:
 - Who is the Project Manager for the client - this person must be:
 - identified and experienced (should be individual not team)
 - available to the consultant
 - knowledgeable about and understand the project
 - responsible for keeping officials and community informed
 - given the authority to direct the consultants efforts (This includes a clear path for how changes to scope of work are approved)
 - Who is the Project Manager for the Consultant - this person must be:
 - identified and experienced with the type of project and client concerns (should be individual not team)
 - available to client
 - knowledgeable about project
 - responsible for keeping consultants on task and client informed
 - given the authority to negotiate changes in scope of work
5. A Communication Strategy - communication, usually lack thereof, is a common denominator in projects that fail of leave one party or the other unhappy. Communications must be at a level that is understood by the client.
6. Evaluation Process - an established and understood process for evaluating progress on the project, consultant's performance, how well the scope of work is being followed and how well the goals for the project are being met will also help ensure successful projects.

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For further information see: Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Report Number 443;
"Selecting and Retaining a Planning Consultant"
Kelly, Eric Damian