SELECTION OF DESIGN PROFESSIONALS
Choosing the best-suited Architect, Engineer or other Consultant is an important early step in developing a successful project.

Generally, the design professional can be selected in one of the following ways;

- Qualifications Based Selection (QBS)
- Competitive Criteria including Fee (CCF)
- Price Competition (PC)
- Design Competition (DC)

Public agencies are required by Missouri law to use QBS.

Qualifications Based Selection is a procedure that comprises the following steps:

- The owner collects information about design professionals that could be suited to perform the services
  - This can be from previous experience, trade organizations such as AIA or ACEC/MO, other owners, newspaper or trade journal advertisements and the Internet.
- From this information, the owner would select several firms, usually about six, that will be asked to submit their specific qualifications for the services along with other information concerning their proposed approach and key staff that would be assigned to the project. The firms are then ranked based the apparent relative value that they would bring to the project. This request is commonly called a Request for Qualifications (RFQ). The following factors should be considered.
  - Overall experience of the team with similar projects
  - Capacity to meet the schedule
  - Management plan for the project
  - Shared vision of the project – creativity
  - Sub-consultants
  - Specific team to be assigned to the project
  - Location
  - Other requirements such as minority participation goals, sustainable design, etc.
- A short list, frequently three firms, is then selected on larger projects for formal interviews. On smaller projects the owner often determines which firm is best suited from the RFQ responses.
- The top rated firm is then invited to negotiate terms for performing the work. In the unusual case where mutual agreement is not possible, the owner would consider the second ranked firm.
- On projects where financing includes public funds, QBS is likely to be the mandated selection method. The Brooks Act requires the Federal Government to use QBS and many states including Missouri have similar laws. In Missouri, local jurisdictions may opt out by ordinance.
Most experienced owners, contractors and design professionals believe that this approach is the preferred method; one that creates the best team and results in the most satisfying results.

Competitive Criteria including Fee is similar to QBS but an added evaluation issue is the cost of the design services. The procedure can be similar to above except that the RFQ must contain enough specific information concerning the scope of the desired services to allow the interested design professionals to fairly assess the resources needed to complete the project. This is difficult to do accurately in many cases resulting in proposals that are based on different visions of the extent of the work to be accomplished.

Price Competition is sometimes used by owners who have a short list of design professionals that they believe are all fully qualified to perform the services. For this to be a fair process, the bids should be opened in a formal setting and the results shared with the bidders. The invitation to bid is referred to as a Request for Proposal (RFP). The RFP must be very complete and specific with regard to scope and schedule. Design professionals will usually not include any work that is not specifically stated in the RFP.

Design Competition is a selection procedure that can be of value when that project has unusual or monumental characteristics. It can lead to a robust examination of exciting alternatives. There are a few guidelines that can help an owner get maximum value from a DC:

- Carefully pre-select the participants so that any of them would be a comfortable partner if they prevail.
- Establish a stipend for each unsuccessful participant that will help significantly in defraying the cost of participating. Usually, the design entry becomes the exclusive property of the owner when the stipend is paid.
- Communicate a clear vision of the features that the successful entry should include.
- Establish the fee level that the successful firm can expect to receive.
- Share the results with the entrants and/or the public depending upon the nature of the project.

Compensation for design professionals can take several forms:

- Fixed Fee (Lump Sum)
- The actual hours worked times negotiated hourly rates
- Percent of construction cost.

Fixed Fee is the most common and may be the fairest method but is only applicable when the scope is fixed and clearly communicated.

A fee based on hourly rates is a useful method for smaller assignments with somewhat vague scopes.
Percent of construction is inherently problematic. It creates the appearance that the design professional is rewarded for increasing the cost of the work. Most believe that when this method must be considered, it is good practice to convert to a fixed fee at the point in the project where the scope is firmed up.

REFERENCES:
Federal Public Law 92-582 (Brooks Act 1972)
AIA Publications
  Qualifications-Based Selection: A process for Selection of Architects by Public Owners, January 1992
ACEC Publications
  Quality Based Selection for Procurement of Consulting Services
  Negotiating for Design Professional Services
  APWA Red Book on Qualifications-Based Selection
Missouri Statutes RSMo Section 8.291.5

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