

BEST PRACTICES FOR ADMINISTERING A QUALITY BID PROCESS

In a public bidding process, the objective is to get the best bid, from the best contractor for the job, who can deliver quality work, on-time, and on-budget. Consider the following best practices in administering a public bid process:

1. **Design bidder qualifications specifically for the project.** There should be a *clear rationale and relationship* between the project needs and the required bidder qualifications. For example, if creating qualifications to build a municipal skate park, is it critical that the bidder have experience building skate parks, or is it sufficient that the bidder has comparable experience building municipal parks? Is there something unique about skate parks where the specific experience is required? Moreover, the *amount of information* the Municipal Owner requests should match the project. For example, the Municipal Owner may not need an extensive bidder qualification process to pave a municipal parking lot.
2. **Make sure the criteria are clear, objective, and measurable.** The bidder should know whether it meets the criteria or not prior to submitting the bid. The criteria must be clear and objectively measurable for that to happen. There should be no need for interpretation of the criteria.
3. **Be involved in determining the project specifications and bidder qualifications.** Many municipal owners retain outside consultants to design the project specifications and bidder qualifications. These consultants oftentimes use standard “one size fits all” qualifications that do not necessarily match the project needs. This can inadvertently disqualify otherwise qualified and responsible bidders who can perform the work. The Municipal Owner should be involved in determining the specifications and qualifications to make sure it is getting what it wants and to make sure it receives competitive bids.
4. **Evaluate bidder qualifications with an eye to whether the bidder meets the criteria or not.** The natural tendency is to compare contractors with each other. That is the wrong comparison; the Municipal Owner must evaluate bidder qualifications to determine whether the bidder meets the set criteria. Evaluation of bidder responsibility or qualification is not meant to determine whether one bidder has *better qualifications* than another. The test is whether the bidder meets the criteria or not.
5. **Use a formal and transparent bid opening process.** The Municipal Owner should appoint a single person to answer all bid related questions. The questions and answers should also be publically posted to benefit all bidding contractors. The bids should be opened at the time and place and according to the rules specified in the bid advertisement. The Municipal Owner should have at least two people present at the bid opening and open it to the public. The Municipal Owner should also publish the bid results and rationales in a timely manner.