



Tips and Tools for Inclusive Contracting

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On-call rosters of prequalified firms

Good news for A&E consultants looking to work with WSDOT



Maryna Ya
Consultant Services Office,
Development Division

Small and minority-owned firms have a better shot at winning architectural and engineering contracts with the Washington State Department of Transportation. For certain WSDOT projects with an estimated cost under \$2 million, the standard competitive process is replaced by an abbreviated and streamlined process for prequalified firms.

Traditionally, WSDOT would post an advertisement for a needed architectural and engineering (A&E) service, and firms would respond to it. Based on the response and WSDOT's review, the

department put qualifying firms on an "on-call" list for a fixed period of time.

During that time, those listed companies were the only ones allowed to work on a project in that particular discipline. The process made it difficult for small firms owned by minorities or women to win a WSDOT contract due to the rigid structure and timing of the program.

Now, WSDOT maintains a list of prequalified companies, with no limit to the number of firms ready and able to work with the department, and no cutoff time to submit qualifications.

"The roster has worked well to allow a broader pool of firms to bid on projects," said Maryna Ya.

Here's how the process works:

- WSDOT solicits interest from consultants who want to be prequalified to provide professional services.
- The Consultant Services Office (CSO) website posts advertised documents for prequalification, including the categories of services sought.
- The consultant completes the "WSDOT Consultant Prequalification" form and submits it to the CSO and approved. Each category of work has a unique roster.

- As consultant services are needed, WSDOT solicits consultants from that roster's prequalified list. WSDOT then evaluates and scores the responses, and makes a selection.

The program streamlines the process, meets the needs of project managers, and gives all firms – including underutilized disadvantaged business enterprises, small business enterprises, and small firms owned by minorities, veterans and women – an equal chance to compete for work.

- **Email questions to the Consultant Services Office at:** csosubmittals@wsdot.wa.gov

- [View CSO open advertisements](#)

Tips and Tools

The Washington State Department of Transportation periodically publishes Tips and Tools to provide small businesses owned by minorities, women or veterans with useful information on potential contract opportunities with WSDOT and other government agencies.

WSDOT's prequalification roster:

Questions and answers

Q: Why did the state go to a prequalification system as opposed to sticking with the on-call process?

A: To better suit the needs of WSDOT project managers and promote inclusion.

- Prequalification provides advantages over on-call agreements, including more opportunities for fair/open competition, and inclusion.
- Prequalification provides more flexibility for agreement types, budgets, and schedules (removes the constraints of the on-call master agreements).
- Prequalification provides advantages over the current open competitive process, including streamlining the process for advertisement, selection, and agreement negotiation. Indirect cost and direct labor rates are established up front upon initial prequalification.

Q: The qualification standards seem extremely low (more like a self-certification). Do you feel that this process is compiling the most qualified consultants for the state?

A: The intent of the prequalification system is to give all firms, including SBE and MSVWBE firms, an equal chance to compete for work. The most qualified firm to perform work on a project will be determined through the project scoring criteria of the second tier process. We believe the two tier process is effective in selecting the most qualified consultants.

Q: What was the legal basis for WSDOT making this change in practice?

A: Although there is no legal basis required to make a change in practice, we have counseled with our assistant attorney general regarding legal parameters. This was a business decision to implement a new practice to better meet the needs of WSDOT project managers and promote inclusion.

Contact:

Regina Glenn

Diversity and Inclusion Manager,
WSDOT Megaprograms

Phone: 425-295-4626

Cell: 425-503-7212

GlennRe@consultant.wsdot.wa.gov

Q: How is a firm/team determined to be prequalified (other than just checking a box on their form)?

A: The initial prequalification application is self-certification. This is followed by a separate administrative financial review process resulting in a Master Pricing Agreement. Upon completion of the above steps, and as consultant services are required, project specific qualifications are requested and evaluated through the RFAI (request for additional information) process.

The WSDOT Megaprograms are:

- SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program
- SR 99-Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program
- I-405/SR 167 Corridor Program
- Puget Sound Gateway Program

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