



Tips and Tools for Inclusive Contracting

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Design-bid-build vs. design-build

How to market your A&E firm for these project delivery methods

Nearly all Washington State Department of Transportation construction projects use either the design-bid-build or design-build method for delivering a project. In this issue of Tips and Tools, we look at the purpose of each method, how they differ, and how small minority-, women- or veteran-owned businesses can market themselves to WSDOT and our prime contractors.

The contract basics

Design-bid-build: For decades, this was WSDOT's go-to method of project delivery. WSDOT designs the entire project to 100% design level, and then solicits bids from contractors to construct WSDOT's design. WSDOT also sets diversity and inclusion goals for the project's construction contractor. Under the design-bid-build scenario, architectural and engineering firms work primarily with WSDOT in the design phase, and not in the construction phase.

Design-build: Design-build is a newer, alternative project-delivery method to promote project innovation and efficiency, and achieve critical schedule requirements. In this method, WSDOT completes a preliminary design (to about the 30% level), and then solicits competitive proposals from teams consisting of construction contractors and their consultant designers. The selected team finishes the project's design and completes all construction. WSDOT also establishes diversity and inclusion goals for the design-builder.



The \$455 million SR 520 Montlake Project, now underway in Seattle, is a design-build project.

Where to focus your company's marketing

The project-delivery method WSDOT uses on a particular project should dictate where a small architectural or engineering (A&E) business targets its marketing, according to John Villager, an engineer on the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Program.

"First, if it's a design-bid-build project, you don't focus on prime contractors at all, because they will have little if any need for designers," Villager advised. "Rather, you market yourself to WSDOT and larger design consultant firms. On the other hand, for a design-build project, you need to market both to large construction firms and to the companies that are likely to become a project's lead designer."

Ron Paananen, Engineering Manager for the SR 520 megaprogram, said opportunity exists for small firms that can market themselves as a certified minority-, woman-, or veteran-owned

business enterprise (MSVWBE). "Whether it's on a federal, state or local public works project, prime contractors are very interested in working with small businesses that have gone through the certification process," Paananen said. "If a prime contractor has a need and sees that your firm is certified, you may be perfectly positioned to land a contract."

He added that firms with MSVWBE certification also should be sure to market any specialized skills or services they can provide, such as document control, maintenance of traffic, field inspections, CAD services, and so on.

WSDOT's website lists the projects the department will be working on over the coming two years. It's a good source for mining potential A&E business opportunities.

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.

Design-bid-build and design-build: the key differences

Design-bid-build	Design-build
WSDOT completes 100% design, sometimes hiring an A&E firm to assist. Winning contractor uses WSDOT's design to construct project.	WSDOT creates preliminary (~ 30%) design (sometimes using an A&E firm to assist), issues RFQ and RFP to complete design and build project. Winning contractor includes design consultants and subcontractors in proposal.
On some projects, design-bid-build provides the best value when it is important for WSDOT to be more prescriptive in the design.	Finished parts of design may start construction before 100% design is complete. Design-build is used to meet critical schedule requirements, allows for more contractor innovation than design-bid-build. Can be faster, more innovative than design-bid-build. Is used to meet critical schedule requirements, allows for more contractor innovation than design-bid-build.
Used for smaller, more traditional highway projects.	More creativity and flexibility on what typically are larger, more complex projects, allowing more opportunities than design-bid-build for subcontractors and diverse businesses.
Contractor selection is based solely on low bid.	Bid price is important, but proposed design also factors into WSDOT's contract decision. Lowest-priced bid may not win contract.
WSDOT assumes all design risk. A consultant / A&E firm is responsible for any services provided to WSDOT.	The design-builder assumes the risk for both project design and construction. A consultant / A&E firm is responsible for any services provided to the design-builder.
WSDOT closely manages the entire design process. WSDOT has direct relationship with consultants (A&E firms) that assist with design. Design and construction contracts are kept separate.	Design-builder manages the consultants / A&E firms it hires for project.
Important to understand WSDOT's program far in advance, and when consultants may be used for design. WSDOT may use on-call teams for some design work. Firms need to market to local WSDOT project managers as well as likely prime design firms.	Firms need to be aware when design-builder will be used, and market themselves to likely lead designers at least a year before the Request for Qualifications is issued. WSDOT's website posts an advance schedule of future contracts.
Work is generally done under a cost-plus, fixed-fee basis.	Prime contractors bid a total fixed price for both final design and construction. Subcontractors/A&E firms need to negotiate their scope and fee with the contractor.

Useful websites

- wsdot.wa.gov
- same.org
- acec.org
- agc.org
- omwbe.wa.gov
- des.wa.gov
- tabor100.org
- namc.org
- compto.org
- wdva.wa.gov

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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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