

N A A T A P

Native American and Alaskan Technical Assistance Project

PROJECT GUIDE:

Selecting an Architect- Developing RFQs and RFPs

*Part of A Series of Guides for Planning, Designing
and Constructing Adult and Juvenile Correctional and
Detention Facilities on Tribal Lands*

The Native American and Alaskan Technical Assistance Project (NAATAP) was created pursuant to an interagency agreement between the National Institute of Corrections and the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

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Purpose

The purpose of each NAATAP Guide is to communicate substantive information concerning a range of subjects that are relevant to the development of adult and juvenile detention and correctional facilities in Indian Country. This series of guides grew out of a recognition that there were common concerns and questions being raised by Tribes and consultants developing new correctional facilities on Native lands throughout the country. The guides seek to provide research and information on issues of common concern to the Tribes. These guides also seek to document the knowledge and experience gained by Justice Planners International LLC (JPI) while providing technical assistance to tribes engaged in the facility development process.

Acknowledgements

JPI acknowledges the assistance of the many consultants who contributed their expertise in the preparation of this series of guides. These materials were developed and reviewed by individuals with diverse backgrounds, expertise and experience in planning and design of juvenile and adult correctional and detention facilities, as well as analysis, design and operation of justice programs, facilities and systems on a local, state and national level.

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Introduction

This guide is intended to provide a summary of the steps an owner should go through in preparing and publishing a Request for Proposals (RFP) or Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for architectural and engineering services. This guide also discusses the process of selecting an architectural and engineering firm once proposals or qualifications have been received from interested firms.

Overview

The first step in hiring an architect and/or engineering firm for your project is determining your project needs and scope of work. By establishing your needs up front and publishing them with your RFQ and/or RFP you will allow architects to submit proposals and qualifications that speak directly to your needs. This in turn would allow you to determine the best candidate for the project.

An important part of the RFQ/RFP process is developing a rating system that will allow you to rank the architects and develop a short list of qualified firms to interview. Also critical to the RFQ/RFP process is the establishment of an "consultant selection committee" and the development of overall evaluation criteria.

Typical steps involved in selecting an architect are as follows:

1. Prepare a brief description of the project
2. Issue RFQ to find interested and qualified firms *
3. Review RFQ submissions and create a list of firms to be included on the RFP distribution list *
4. Develop a detailed scope of work and guidelines for the submission of RFP's
5. Issue the RFP
6. Hold a pre-bid conference for interested firms (optional)
7. Review submittals, create a shortlist for interviews
8. Schedule interviews with selected firms (optional but strongly recommended)
9. Conduct interviews
10. Select firm

11. Negotiate scope and fee
12. Execute contract

* In order to expedite the architect/engineer selection process in less complex projects, these steps can be omitted and RFQ could be incorporated with the RFP.

Request for Proposals vs. Request for Qualifications

There are many means to determine an architect's qualifications for your project and there are many terms for the written requests that are used to obtain information on the architect's qualifications. Unfortunately, many of these terms are confused or misused. The most commonly used terms in this area are: RFQ (Requests for Qualifications) and RFP (Requests for Proposals). The differences are as follows:

Request for Qualifications – This is typically the first step of the selection process and is used when the owner has not defined the scope of work for their project. The RFQ requests information about architectural firms and the teams that they will provide to complete the design and engineering tasks. It will typically ask for firm information, project team members, project experience and any other unique qualifications that the firm may have that would be reason to select them for the project.

The RFQ traditionally will not ask for a fee for the project. After the qualifications have been received by the owner, reviewed and ranked, the owner is then ready to go to the next step and publish an RFP, which will summarize the scope of work and request a fee proposal. As noted above, an RFQ could be incorporated into the RFP in the interest of expediting the overall process.

Request for Proposals – After a short list of qualified architectural firms has been selected, the RFP process will allow the firms to provide a detailed project approach and fee proposal for the project. The RFP will provide the architectural firms with a detailed scope of work for the project, including relevant terms and conditions. This process

allows the architect to provide a fee based on concrete project information with a full understanding of the project complexities and scope.

In smaller projects, where the project does not have a difficult scope, it is possible to skip the RFQ and issue an RFP directly in order to streamline the process. In such a case, the RFP should be published as widely as possible in order to maximize the number of quality responses.

Architect Selection Committee

A selection committee should be formed to draft the RFQ and RFP, participate in dissemination of the RFQ and RFP, collect references for applicants, evaluate qualifications, interview candidates and rank the firms for selection. Whenever possible the group should include the Tribe's project manager, Tribe's construction manager (if different), a representative from the department responsible for administration of the architect's contract, facility director, key administrative staff, Tribal council representative and other service providers and professionals that are going to be affiliated with the project.

Determination of Owner's Needs and Goals

Prior to requesting qualifications or proposals, the Tribe must determine its own specific needs and goals for the project. The more detailed the information on the project, the greater the architect's ability to develop a detailed and accurate proposal.

The three factors that will have the greatest impact on the design and construction process are project scope, budget and schedule. With information on the project scope, budget and schedule and how the owner has prioritized them, the architect can develop an accurate cost estimate for the project.

Development of Project Scope of Work for RFP's

As noted above, in order to obtain the most accurate information from the architect, it is important to provide the architect with a detailed scope of work for the project. This scope of work will typically include the following:

Project Type: The architect will need to know whether the project is new construction, renovation, additions, etc. This information will allow the architect to know the complexity of the project and to understand the type of information to include in its proposal. This will affect the project team that the architect puts together as well as the fee for the project.

Project Size: It is important to provide the architects with the estimated project size. This should identify approximately how many square feet will be new construction, additions and/or renovations. For correctional facilities, total number of beds should be provided. It is also critical to state, if there would be individual bedrooms or dormitory-style housing and if the bedrooms should be wet (with individual toilets) or dry. This information will allow the architect to better understand the nature of the project and the size of the project as it relates to project budget.

Program Summary: It is important that the owner determine the types of programs that will occupy the facility. Program specifications should be developed for the facility that describes all functions that will take place in the facility, how those functions interact with other activities in the facility, as well as spatial needs and adjacency requirements. Different components of the facility such as intake, food services, recreation, education and health services should be listed and clearly defined.

Project Budget: The owner should provide the architects with an estimated budget for the project. This will allow the architects to have all the pieces of the puzzle to provide an accurate fee for the project. The budget should include funds allocated to construction costs, soft costs and total project costs.

Project Schedule: The owner should provide the architect with targeted completion time frames. The architect will need to provide a proposed schedule in the RFP. It will be important to see how detailed this schedule is and how it relates to the completion time frame provided.

Compiling a Listing of Architects

It is important to determine the process by which you will identify architecture and engineering firms that you wish to target through your RFQ/RFP process. Some of the factors that should be considered are as follows:

1. **Type of Firm** – The type of project and scope of work should have a great impact the project team that is ultimately selected for the project. If it is a typical straightforward construction project you may look to the local area for architects that are experienced and have the capacity to do the work. It would be unwise to assume that an architect with no experience in correctional area could design such a facility. Therefore, it is important that you request qualifications from specialists in this area.
2. **Geographic Location** – It will be necessary to consider specifying an acceptable distance limit from the project site. While it is generally not necessary to have local architect on the project, using a firm located on the other side of the country can pose logistical problems.
3. **Number of Responses** – It will be important to pre-determine an acceptable response for the project. You will want to receive enough proposals so that the selection process is meaningful. However, due to the size and location of many Native American correctional facilities, it may be hard to find enough interested firms that have proper experience. If you think this is the case, you may want to distribute your RFQ/RFP widely.

After you have identified to the type of architectural team you will need, the next step is to communicate your need for professional services and the associated RFP or RFQ. This can be done in a variety of ways. They are as follows:

1. **Advertisements for Projects** – Placing public notices of projects in

newspapers and trade or professional publications is often used to advise architectural firms and professionals of the needed service. This communication will reach a large number of firms in the professional consultant community and will typically yield a large number of responses. If you use this approach the advertisement should specify a person to contact within your organization or refer them to a website where they can download a copy of the RFP/RFQ. A good place to advertise would be the newspaper Indian Country Today.

2. **Directories/Websites** – Most professional organizations will make mailing lists of member firms available for this purpose. Depending on the specific type of project this can be very helpful. A great source for selecting an architect is at the American Institute of Architect's website: <http://www.aia.org>.
3. **Referrals/Recommendations** – Another great method of determining architects that should be considered is to talk to owners and other Tribes that have completed projects similar to yours. Ask them who they requested proposals from, who they short-listed and the reasons they selected their architect. Various NAATAP forums and the NAATAP listserv are good venues for this research.

There is no set number of architecture firms that should be targeted through your RFP or RFQ. It is important, however, for the owner to manage the information to ensure an adequate and manageable response to the RFP/RFQ.

Writing the Request for Proposals

Once the Tribe has determined its scope of work, the type of information it will need from the architect and who it wants to send it to, it is important to develop an RFP that will allow you to easily rank the firms who respond.

A typical RFP will have this format:

1. **Owner information** – Background Information about the owner
2. **Communications & Questions** – This should identify who within your organization should be contacted in regards to proposal questions, facility questions etc.

3. **Scope of Work** – A detailed summary of the scope of work should be provided.
4. **RFP Format** – This will identify the overall format for the proposal. It should tell when the proposal should be completed and arrive to the owner, it should provide an address for the proposal to be sent, it should give a time deadline that allows for overnight delivery to arrive, it should explain proposal format such as binding styles, quantity of pages, tabs, etc. and should identify the total number of proposals requested. For this, you need to determine who will be reviewing the proposals and have extra copies for your files.
5. **RFP Questions** - These include all the information you want to learn about the firm and how they would provide the services for your project. A detailed list of these questions is provided in the next section.
6. **Appendices** – Include any photographs or drawings you may have of the facilities.

There are many styles and types of RFPs. There is no standard version that will fit all of your needs. It is important that a section of the RFP requests corporate and professional information about the applicant firms in order to qualify who they are, where they are located, the branch of firm that will be responsible and the project team that would participate on the project. This section is typically for information purposes and not to be ranked. The other sections will identify the firm's experience and qualifications to complete the job. Each question will need to be carefully phrased so the response can be ranked. The questions should request quantitative information to assist you in ranking the firms.

A Typical Request for Qualifications/Proposals

A typical RFQ would include requests for the following types information:

1. Provide the following information about your company:
 - a. Name of Firm
 - b. Address of Firm
 - c. Telephone & Fax Numbers
 - d. Primary Telephone and Correspondence

2. Brief History of the Firm
 - a. Size of Firm/Staff
 - b. Years in Business
 - c. Organization chart of Firm
 - d. Distance from Tribe

3. Design Team Background
 - a. Architectural Team
 - i. Principal in Charge
 - ii. Director of Correctional Design
 - iii. Project Manager
 - iv. Project Architect
 - v. Interior Design
 - vi. Functional programming and space programming
 - b. Resumes of Team Members
 - i. Name
 - ii. Office Location
 - iii. Phone Number
 - iv. Years of Service with Firm
 - v. Education
 - vi. Professional Experience
 - vii. Pertinent Experience
 - c. Consultants
 - i. Structural Engineer
 - ii. Mechanical/Electrical Engineer
 - iii. Security Consultant
 - iv. Kitchen Consultant
 - v. Interior Design
 - vi. Civil Engineer
 - vii. Technology

4. Representative Projects – List a minimum of five (5) projects completed by your firm that best represents a similar scope, budget, program and complexity. For each project, please include:
 - a. Completion Date
 - b. Name and Location
 - c. Budget
 - d. Graphic Description
 - e. Photographs

5. Project Experience – List the last five new construction projects for which bids have been received or recently completed. Please include:
 - a. Completion Date
 - b. Name and Location
 - c. Budget
 - d. Graphic Description
 - e. Photographs
 - f. Total Square Footage
 - i. Additions
 - ii. Renovations
 - g. Cost per Square Foot – Exclude Site Costs and Architectural Fees
 - h. Change Order Percentage
 - i. Owner Representative

6. Cost Effective Design
 - a. Please list the cost per square foot for your new construction projects in the past five years. Please exclude all Site Costs and Professional Fees.
 - b. For projects completed in the last five years please list the Cost Estimate, Bid Amount, and Difference. Please list any changes in scope if appropriate and if this change in scope resulted in an increase in your fee.

7. Licensure
 - a. Is the principal licensed to practice architecture in your State?
 - b. Has the Principal or Project Architect have or had their license suspended to practice architecture your State

8. Legal Proceedings

- a. Identify any on-going legal proceeding or pending legal proceeding (arbitration, complaint, or court action) filed by an Owner or contractor against your firm for any project in the past five years.

9. Project Approach

- a. Describe your firm’s management approach for these projects. Please include your approach and the benefit each step has for the owner.
- b. Please describe any unique aspects your firm may employ in the design of the project.

10. References

- a. Please provide a minimum of five references to contact.

11. Unique Qualifications – Please state why your firm should be selected by the owner

An RFP should include the questions listed above. In addition, the RFP may request the following information.

- 1. Proposer's understanding of the problem
- 2. Proposed approach to design and client relationships
- 3. Staff positions for the project
- 4. Timeline
- 5. Fee proposal including breakdown by task and personnel

Finally, the RFP should identify a clear point of contact and phone number for questions. It should clearly state when responses are due.

Customizing a Request for Qualification/Proposal

Once you have developed a framework for your RFP/RFQ it is important to ask questions that are important to you. You should understand not only the experience and capabilities of the architectural firm, but what makes them successful and what specific characteristics and practices have made them who they are today. In doing this, you will need to figure out what unique qualities you are looking for in the architectural

firm that you will eventually hire. You should also consider what, if any, specific back ground or understanding of you as the client the architectural firm will need to have to successfully design the project. Some examples of important strengths an architectural firm should have are:

Correctional Facilities experience – The architect will not only need to understand ACA standards, but the specific standards that are enforced by the state or federal jurisdiction where it will be constructed.

Cultural Sensitivity – The firm you select should be sensitive to Native American culture. The architect should be able to design a facility that reflects the Tribe’s customs and culture.

Development of a Rating System

Prior to publishing/distributing the RFP it is important to determine how the responses will be rated. An overall rating and weighting process will need to be determined for the RFQ/RFP. You should select the criteria and assign weights that are most appropriate for your Tribe and your project. An example of RFP evaluation sheet that could be used is as follows:

RFP RANKING CRITERIA	WEIGHT
1. Prior successful correctional facility planning and design experience on Indian reservations	20 points
2. Prior successful correctional facility planning and design experience outside Indian reservations	20 points
3. Staff experience and team qualifications	20 points
4. Understanding of the problem	10 points
5. Sensitivity to Indian culture	5 points
6. Bonding/Insurance capacity/history	10 points
7. Appropriateness of proposed timeline	5 points
8. Availability / location	10 points
TOTAL	100 points

The weighting and ranking of each component in the RFQ or RFP will need to be determined by the owner ahead of time. This should be discussed and formulated with the selection committee before finalizing the RFQ/RFP .

The following example demonstrates how a question related to the firm's past projects could be quantitatively evaluated.

RFP/RFQ Question: Representative Projects – List a minimum of five (5) projects completed by your firm that best represents a similar scope, budget, program and complexity. Please include:

- *Completion Date*
- *Name and Location*
- *Budget*
- *Graphic Description*
- *Photographs*
- *Total Square Footage*
 - o *New construction*
 - o *Additions*
 - o *Renovations*
- *Cost per Square Foot – Exclude Site Costs and Architectural Fees*
- *Change Order Percentage*
- *Owner Representative*

To develop a quantitative rating system for this question you will have to look at multiple factors.

1. Does the architect have the necessary experience to complete the project?
2. Are the projects of similar scope and size?
3. Were the projects completed recently?
4. Were they successful projects?
5. Are the projects architecturally pleasing?
6. Was the change order percentage reasonable?

All of these factors can have their own rating and the average will be used for the overall rating for the question.

Note that it is sometimes more difficult to develop a rating system for questions that are subjective in nature. An example of a question like this is as follows:

RFP/RFQ Question: Project Approach

- *Describe your firm's management approach for these projects. Please describe the benefit each step has for the owner.*
- *Please describe any unique methods your firm may employ in the design of the project.*

This type of subjective question could be rated in the following way:

Does the management approach allow for the architect to understand our needs, goals and design philosophies?

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Complete Understanding | Rating 9-10 |
| 2. Significant Understanding | Rating 7-8 |
| 3. Satisfactory Understanding | Rating 5-6 |
| 4. Minimal Understanding | Rating 3-4 |
| 5. No Understanding | Rating 1-2 |

Finalizing the Request for Qualification/Proposal

Once completed, the RFQ/RFP should be distributed and reviewed by the Selection Review Committee or the appropriate people designated by owner. The RFQ/RFP should also be reviewed by the Tribe's contracts officer and legal counsel.

Once reviewed and approved the RFP/RFQ should be made ready for publication.

Publishing the Request for Qualification/Proposal

Once the RFQ/RFP has been developed it will need to be distributed. The Tribe will have to decide how to distribute the RFQ/RFP package so that a sufficient number of qualified firms have ample time to respond. Will the RFQ/RFP be mailed or faxed to architects? Will the RFQ/RFP be published on a website or be emailed to architects. These questions will have an impact on the RFQ/RFP and will determine length, information provided, etc. For example, a large, fifty page RFP will cost the owner significant sum of money to fax and mail – so it will be important to pre-qualify the firms that will receive the RFP. However, if the first step of the process is a simple RFQ that is five to ten pages long, printing and mailing costs will not be a significant factor.

Receiving Qualifications and Proposals

The RFP/RFQ should clearly state the date, location and quantity of proposals to be submitted. The owner should be prepared to receive proposals from overnight mail carriers, standard mail, and walk-ins. The owner should be prepared to provide receipt of proposals to all walk-ins and time and date stamp all received proposals. The owner should also be prepared to handle phone calls and emergency situations from proposers.

In the interest of fairness it is recommended that the owner establish a policy that submittals received after the deadline will not be considered.

The owner should have a policy regarding questions. A common practice is to make a record of all the questions asked by various applicants, to answer them in writing and make them available to all prospective applicants.

The owner may want to decide if a public announcement of received proposals is appropriate or necessary.

Evaluating the Submittals

Once the submittals have been received the owner will need to complete an inventory on all proposals and prepare for delivery to the Tribe's Selection Committee. It is recommended that a meeting be held with the Selection Committee to distribute proposals and review the criteria on which the proposals will be ranked. Items that will need to occur during the ranking process should be addressed at this point. For example, it should be decided who will make the phone calls for checking client references.

Developing a Short List

After evaluating the responses submitted by architectural firms, the Selection Committee will typically find a small group of firms that they are interested in. Once the short list of these firms is developed a memorandum should be sent to the short-listed firms letting them know that

they were short-listed and what the next steps of the selection process will involve. Such next step may involve a request for a more detailed proposal from each of the short-listed firms, or it may involve scheduling interviews with each of the firms. As discussed above, there is not one way to do it. The important thing is to decide on the process beforehand.

Checking Client References

It is a good idea to call and talk to the owners of the recent projects that the architects have completed. This is usually the best way to get critical information about the performance of the firm that would not be available anywhere else. A brief list of interview questions should be prepared prior to the call. They should include questions about:

- Overall satisfaction with the firm
- Timeliness of submissions
- Responsiveness of the architect to client concerns and instructions
- Cost overruns, number of change orders
- Quality of work
- Satisfaction / problems with the building

Conducting Interviews

Since you will be working closely with your architect and his team for a number of years (until your facility is complete) it is a good idea to invite them for a presentation and face-to-face meeting. This will also allow you to ask questions about items that were not clear in their proposal. The architect should bring with him the key staff who will work on the project. During the interviews, allow about 20 minutes for the architect to make a presentation and use the remaining time for asking questions. On the Tribe's side, all members of the Selection Committee should attend the interviews.

A rating sheet should be developed to evaluate the performance of the firms during the interview. These scores can then be added to the scores from the proposal submissions and used in making the final decision on which firm to select.

Selecting the Firm

Based on internal discussions and overall scores, the Committee should make a final decision on selecting the architect. In many cases, this would be a recommendation to the Tribal Council and would require their ultimate approval. Once the selected architect is notified that they have been selected, the fee and the terms of payment will have to be negotiated. Your contract should be comprehensive and seek to cover every contingency in order to avoid disputes throughout the project. This task should be turned over to the Tribe's attorney or contracting authority.



ALSO AVAILABLE:

Project Guide: Adult Correctional Facility Design Resources

Project Guide: Alternatives to Incarceration of Offenders

Project Guide: Assessment of Project Status
& Technical Assistance Needs

Project Guide: Best Practices - In-Custody Programs
for Juveniles and Adults

Project Guide: Design Review

Project Guide: Existing Facility Evaluations

Project Guide: Objective Classification Analysis

Project Guide: Population Profiles, Population Projections
and Bed Needs Projections

Project Guide: Selecting an Architect-Developing
RFQs and RFPs

Project Guide: Site Selection

Project Guide: The NEPA Land Use Process for Proposed
Development of Correctional Facilities in Indian Country

Project Guide: Tribal Justice System Assessment