Qualifications-Based Selection (QBS) is a competitive procurement process that requires a public agency to hire design professionals (engineers, land surveyors, architects, etc.) based on their qualifications and competence.

What Does California Law Require for QBS?

QBS prohibits the use of cost as a factor in the initial evaluation and selection of design professionals. Instead, firms are ranked based on their qualifications, experience, and demonstrated competence. After identifying the best-qualified firm, only then may a public agency enter into negotiations for a fair and reasonable price.

California statute requires all government agencies—both state and local—to utilize QBS. It is a fair, competitive selection process. In the 2007 Professional Engineers in CA Government v. Kempton decision, QBS was upheld by the California Supreme Court as a “fair, competitive selection process,” in accord with the requirements of Proposition 35 (2000).

Apart from statute, studies find that QBS delivers the best quality and value. QBS projects provide cost-effective, safe, durable results, and ultimately high client satisfaction—the hallmarks of a successful public project.

For additional information about QBS statutes, process, or studies, please contact the ACEC California office.