

761—20.9(307) Negotiation—architectural, landscape architectural, engineering and related professional and technical services. This rule prescribes procedures followed by the project management bureau for the procurement of architectural, landscape architectural, surveying, general engineering consultant, construction inspection, engineering and related professional and technical services by negotiation where selection is based on qualifications in compliance with 23 CFR Part 172. Contract costs are negotiated after a qualification-based selection.

20.9(1) *Registration of firms providing professional and technical services.*

a. A firm wishing to provide professional and technical services to the department as a consultant may register to receive information through the GovDelivery portal available at the department's website at www.iowadot.gov. The firm is responsible for keeping the firm's information updated. For information, persons may contact the consultant coordinator at the Project Management Bureau, Iowa Department of Transportation, 800 Lincoln Way, Ames, Iowa 50010, or by telephone at 515.239.1803.

b. The department will maintain a list of work categories, descriptions and requirements for each work category online.

20.9(2) *Request for professional and technical services.* Prior to selecting a firm with which to initiate negotiations under this rule, the department will document the need for outside services, a description of the needed services, the time frame within which the work must be performed, and the method of selection to be used. One of the following methods is to be used to select a firm with which to initiate negotiations:

a. Complete process. More information can be found in subrule 20.9(3).

b. Small contract process. More information can be found in subrule 20.9(4).

c. Sole source or emergency selection. More information can be found in rule 761—20.7(307).

20.9(3) *Complete process.* The complete process method will use the following process and will be used unless another selection method is justified:

a. *RFP.* The department will prepare an RFP that will include the scope of the work, duration of the contract, list of applicable work categories, evaluation criteria (excluding cost), any established disadvantaged business enterprise or targeted small business goal for the proposed work, type of contract anticipated, submission details including the point of contact for the RFP for any questions, the time by which the RFP should be received by the department and anticipated date of selection. The RFP will not request any cost information to be submitted by the proposing firms.

b. *Website.*

(1) The RFP will be posted on the department of administrative services' website no later than 48 hours prior to the issuance of the RFP.

(2) The RFP will be posted on the department's website. The notification of the RFP being posted will be sent to all users who have signed up to receive the notification via GovDelivery. The notification will include the link to the website where the RFP is posted. More information can be found in subrule 20.9(1).

(3) The department will post any questions received on the RFP and answers thereto on the website indicated in the GovDelivery notification.

c. *Selection committee.* The department will appoint a selection committee to become familiar with the RFP, review the firms that have responded to the RFP to determine if they meet the requirements of the work to be performed, and evaluate the firms that meet the qualifications per the evaluation criteria. The selection committee will, if necessary, interview the firms, score the firms, document the committee's decision and provide the scoring to the consultant steering committee.

d. *Evaluation criteria.* The selection committee is responsible for establishing criteria for evaluating each firm submitting a proposal, assigning weighted values to the criteria, and rating each firm on each criterion. Evaluation criteria are tailored to the needed services. Typical evaluation criteria are listed below. The list is intended as a guideline only; it is not exhaustive, nor is each criterion mandatory.

(1) Staffing expertise consistent with special project needs.

(2) Past experience with similar types of work.

(3) Current workload and commitment of key personnel.

(4) Specific qualifications of key staff who will be forming the firm's project team.

(5) Resources the firm has available and proposes to use on the project, including the firm's use of equipment and automated technology and the firm's compatibility with equipment and technology used by the department.

(6) Identification of proposed subconsultants and the work the subconsultants will perform.

e. Consultant steering committee. A consultant steering committee is responsible for reviewing the firms as scored by the selection committee, determining the order of preference for negotiations, and documenting its decision. The number of firms selected is to include at least two alternate firms. The committee is to document its reasoning when the number of selected firms is fewer than the minimum. The consultant steering committee is to consider not only the selection committee's scoring but other factors such as:

(1) A firm's ability to complete required tasks in the time allotted, taking into account other work currently under contract.

(2) The volume of work a firm has with the department, both existing and potential.

(3) The department's goal of having a breadth of experienced firms capable of providing quality services to the department.

(4) Other items unique to the particular contract.

f. Completion of selection process. After selection committee and consultant steering committee activities are complete, the department will determine whether negotiations may begin. If negotiations are approved, the department will proceed to negotiate with the firm that is first in order of preference.

g. Notification to firms. The department will post the results of the selection on the website identified in the GovDelivery notification. For firms not included on the ranked list of firms, the department will also provide a matrix showing the high, low and average scores for each item evaluated and that firm's score for each item.

20.9(4) *Small contract process.* The small contract process may be used to identify a single firm with which to negotiate when the estimated work under the contract can normally be completed within a 12-month period and the estimated cost of the contract will not exceed \$150,000.

a. Selection committee. The department will appoint a selection committee to identify at least three firms that meet the requirements of the work categories involved in performing the work; document the names of the firms considered, if necessary; interview the firms; select a firm with which to initiate negotiations; and document the committee's decision.

b. Completion of selection process. After selection committee activities are complete, the department will determine whether negotiations may begin. If negotiations are approved, the department will proceed to negotiate with the selected firm.

20.9(5) *Selection dispute resolution.* Rescinded by 2026 Iowa Acts, Senate File 2463, section 4, effective July 1, 2026.

20.9(6) *Negotiation of contract.* The purpose of negotiations is to develop a contract that is mutually satisfactory to the department and the selected firm.

a. The firm must submit a detailed cost proposal, including a detailed cost proposal for each proposed subcontract. The department will prepare an independent estimate of the cost of the proposed services, including a detailed estimate of the firm's staff hours needed to complete the contract. Significant differences are to be evaluated and resolved to the satisfaction of both parties. If it is impractical to make an independent estimate, the department will evaluate the acceptability of the firm's cost proposal on the basis of the reasonableness of the individual elements of the price proposed.

b. The department may perform a preaudit. A preaudit typically includes:

(1) An analysis of the firm's cost proposal and financial records for the method of accounting in place to ensure that the firm has the ability to adequately segregate and accumulate reasonable and allowable costs to be charged against the contract.

(2) An analysis of the firm's proposed direct costing rates and indirect overhead factors to ensure the firm's propriety and allowability.

c. For contracts with federal funding, the department will verify federal suspension and debarment actions and eligibility status of firms prior to entering into an agreement or contract.

20.9(7) *Unsuccessful negotiations.*

a. If a mutually satisfactory contract cannot be negotiated, the department will formally terminate the negotiations and notify the firm in writing. Termination of negotiations is without prejudice and at the department's discretion. The substance of terminated negotiations is confidential.

b. The department will then initiate negotiations with the firm given next preference, and this procedure may be continued until a mutually satisfactory contract has been negotiated. If a satisfactory contract cannot be negotiated with any of the selected firms, the department will either:

(1) Direct the selection committee to select one or more firms with which to continue negotiations, or

(2) Redefine the scope of the project or work and start over. More information can be found in subrule 20.9(2). Once negotiations are terminated, negotiations cannot be reopened with the same firm.

20.9(8) *Evaluation of performance.*

a. The department will evaluate all firms under this rule annually based on the contracts that were active during the fiscal year. Both the firm's performance and quality of the final product shall be evaluated. The evaluation considers:

(1) The quality and adequacy of work performed.

(2) The ability to meet established schedules and budgets.

(3) General administration of the contract, including substantiation of cost billings, payments to subconsultants, and documentation of claims.

(4) Cooperation shown by the firm in responding to requests for information and in revising procedures and products according to directions.

(5) Coordination exhibited by the firm in communicating with the department, subconsultants, agencies and others to accomplish tasks and resolve problems.

(6) Ingenuity displayed in solving unique and unusual design problems encountered during performance of contract objectives.

(7) The ability to obtain an acceptable end product with appropriate department staff guidance.

b. The firm is to be given an opportunity to review, comment on and sign the evaluation.

[ARC 9126C, IAB 4/16/25, effective 5/21/25; Editorial change: IAC Supplement 7/8/26]