

## How a Detailed RFP Helps You Find the Right Architecture Firm

Finding the right architecture team can make all the difference in the success of your construction or renovation project. But how do you do that? One of the keys is writing a good request for proposal (RFP). And by “good” we mean one that gets you all the information you need to identify the firm that will be your ideal partner as you move forward.

### Information and Insight: Essential to a Strong Client/Firm Relationship

Two things are essential to the architecture firm selection process: information and insight. And it’s important to note that this is a two-way street. You need to share information and insights with each firm you are considering, and they need to provide information and insights in return.

Keep the considerations below in mind as you prepare your RFP and review responses.

#### What you should share

First, you need to share information about this engagement—essentially the who, where, what, when, and why of your project, your team, and your goals.

- **Who:** Is it an individual, group, or committee that is behind this initiative?
- **Where:** Where is the construction site? Include a survey, satellite images, and existing drawings if available.
- **What:** What is the project? New construction? Renovation? Addition? If a structure is being modified, what’s the current size and the proposed size?
- **When:** What is your proposed timeline?
- **Why:** What is the reason for the project? Are you relocating to the area? Has your organization outgrown its existing space?

You should also provide additional insight about this project to the firms you contact.

- What is your mission on this project?
- What is your vision for the finished space?
- What are your aspirations for interactions with the firm?

By giving an architecture group this information, you help them provide a clear and complete response.

#### What you should expect from architecture firms

In responding to your RFP, a firm should provide you with the who, where, what, when, and why of the team of architects, engineers and other consultants that will take on your project. The questions you should ask include:

- **Who:** Who are the architects and consultants that will manage this project? This information should include the names of key team members, their resumes, and their qualifications.
- **Where:** Where are you located and where do you propose having meetings?
- **What:** What is your proposal in terms of process, phasing, and fees?
- **When:** What timeline (with ranges) are you proposing for various phases of the design process?

- **Why:** Why is your team best suited for this project? Tell us about your previous work (portfolio), relationships (reference letters), and solutions to challenges you've faced.

Beyond those basics, you want to gain deeper insight into the firm you would be working with by asking questions like:

- What is your design process and what do you see as the proper relationship between our team and yours? (Hint: The client is part of the design team.)
- What do you see as the proper relationship between the design team and the construction team? (Hint: We all become part of the construction team.)
- What is your team's mission and what are its expectations for a project like this?
- What are the key components of success and what challenges do you expect to face?
- How have you worked through challenges in the past and how do you propose to do so with any potential hurdles you see in our project?

### **Our Approach to RFP Interactions**

How does our firm approach the RFP process? We take detailed information from clients and use it to generate detailed responses that help them compare our services to those of other firms. And while we're happy to conduct business electronically where appropriate, we're also big believers in in-person interviews, especially once a client has narrowed down their options.

We find connecting face-to-face to be the best way for the parties to understand each other's communication style, commitment to success, and other intangibles that are essential to a positive and productive relationship.

### **Finding the Right Partner is Crucial**

Whether your project is a minor renovation or major construction, it's important that you pick the right partner. The team you choose will be your collaborator for many months, and in some cases years. You want to be sure that you both trust them and enjoy working with them, and your RFP is the starting point for making that determination.

If you have questions about our architectural services, please contact us at your convenience.