Guide to PROCURING ENGAGEMENT SERVICES

CONSULT AUSTRALIA

Introduction

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Consult Australia is the industry association that represents the business interests of consulting firms operating in the built and natural environment.

Our member firms' services include, but are not limited to: design, architecture, technology, engineering, surveying, legal, and management solutions.

We represent an industry comprising some 48,000 firms across Australia, ranging from sole practitioners through to some of Australia's top 500 firms. Collectively, our industry is estimated to employ over 240,000 people, and generate combined revenue exceeding $40 billion a year.

Consult Australia has long-recognised the importance of stakeholder engagement. Increasingly, this field is rightly identified as critical to achieving a range of strategic and operational objectives for public and private-sector clients alike.

As the importance of effective engagement is better understood at all levels of project development, delivery, in government and the private sector, it is critical that the purchasers of professional engagement services are informed and have the capability to procure those services effectively.

With the leadership provided by Consult Australia member firms AECOM, GHD, KBR, Parsons Brinckerhoff, Sinclair Knight Merz, and with thanks also to Flinders Group, Consult Australia is proud to have developed this *Guide* to improve the understanding and procurement of engagement services.

Megan Motto
Chief Executive
Consult Australia

Introduction

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is an international association of members who seek to promote and improve the practice of public participation in relation to individuals, governments, institutions, and other entities that affect the public interest in nations throughout the world.

We are delighted to partner with Consult Australia in support of this *Guide to Procuring Engagement Services*. I am confident that this will prove an important contribution to helping advance and extend better public participation and engagement processes across Australia.

Supporting an improved understanding of engagement and the benefits of effective engagement, the procurement process outlined in this *Guide* will help build the capability of those procuring engagement services and ultimately deliver better outcomes for all stakeholders.

Michelle Blicavs
Chief Executive
International Association for Public Participation

Thank You

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Section ONE

THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

1. The Purpose of this Guide

This *Guide to Procuring Engagement Services* aims to support organisations to:

• enhance their understanding of engagement
• identify the need for engagement
• ascertain when engagement services external to their own organisation need to be acquired
• develop their capability to procure engagement services that meet their needs.

This *Guide* has relevance for project leads and procurement professionals at all levels.

It is important to recognise that there is no 'one size fits all approach' to engagement, and that achieving effective engagement is about tailoring the approach to the situation at hand. Engagement services take a number of forms including but not limited to: technical review and advice, planning, delivery, issues management, strategic communication, capacity building, reputation management, evaluation and monitoring, training, facilitation and other support functions.

Section 2 of this *Guide* explores the benefits and risks associated with effective engagement.

Section 3 explains the procurement process for engagement services in detail across eight steps:

1. Making the decision to procure professional engagement services
2. Assembling the procurement team
3. Developing the business case
4. Writing a brief
5. Going to market
6. Evaluating tenders
7. Signing the contract
8. Debriefing unsuccessful consultants.

For some, this *Guide* may be a first step towards the procurement of engagement services, and for others it will serve to confirm an existing process.

To further enhance readers' understanding of engagement and capability to successfully procure engagement services additional references and reading have been included at the end of this *Guide*.

MORE THAN EVER MEMBERS OF OUR SOCIETY EXPECT TO BE ENGAGED ON MATTERS THAT IMPACT THEM OR IN WHICH THEY HOLD AN INTEREST. FAILURE TO MANAGE THESE EXPECTATIONS CAN BRING PROJECTS TO A GRINDING HALT. THE SOLUTION IS ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES THAT ARE SPECIFICALLY TAILORED FOR THE PROJECT FROM ITS EARLIEST STAGES THROUGH TO COMPLETION. TO ENABLE THIS, ENGAGEMENT MUST BE AN APPROPRIATELY RESOURCED AND INTEGRATED PART OF THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT WITH THE SUPPORT OF SENIOR MANAGERS FROM ACROSS THE PROJECT DISCIPLINES.

Section TWO

UNDERSTANDING ENGAGEMENT

2. Understanding Engagement

WHAT IS ENGAGEMENT?

Engagement is the process by which government, organisations, communities and individuals connect in the development and implementation of decisions that affect them. Engagement is used as a tool to achieve outcomes, develop understanding, educate and/ or agree to solutions on issues of concern.

The level of engagement appropriate for each situation can range from a one-way transfer of information (providing and/or receiving information) through to consultation (seeking and receiving stakeholder views) and even actively involving or empowering stakeholders in the decision making process.

Engagement is a broad term that includes the concept of public participation and can also incorporate aspects of community, stakeholder or public relations, consultation, and government and media relations. Throughout this document, references to 'engagement' include all of the above with a focus on external, rather than internal engagement.

The International Association for Public Participation[1] (IAP2) Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation have been developed specifically for use in the development and implementation of engagement processes:

IAP2 Core Values for the Practice of Public Participation[2]

1. Public participation is based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process.
2. Public participation includes the promise that the public's contribution will influence the decision.
3. Public participation promotes sustainable decisions by recognising and communicating the needs and interests of all participants, including decision makers.
4. Public participation seeks out and facilitates the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
5. Public participation seeks input from participants in designing how they participate.
6. Public participation provides participants with the information they need to participate in a meaningful way.
7. Public participation communicates to participants how their input affected the decision.

As noted by IAP2, the purpose of the core values is to help make better decisions which reflect the interests and concerns of potentially affected people and entities.

DEFINING ENGAGEMENT ACROSS AUSTRALIA

Across the public and private sectors there is a growing awareness of the role that appropriate engagement and early stakeholder involvement play in successful project/service delivery. As a result, many organisations have developed engagement related policies and procedures that include their own definitions of engagement. Below is a sample of definitions drawn from the public sector, however, a similar range of definitions could also be sourced from the private sector.

'Engagement' is [...] a generic, inclusive term to describe the broad range of interactions between people. It can include a variety of approaches, such as one-way communication or information delivery, consultation, involvement and collaboration in decision-making, and empowered action in informal groups or formal partnerships.

ACT Government[3]

The term community engagement broadly captures public processes in which the general public and other interested parties are invited to contribute to particular proposals or policy changes. Community engagement has the potential to go beyond merely making information available or gathering opinions and attitudes. It entails a more active exchange of information and viewpoints between the sponsoring organisation and the public, however this public is defined.

NSW Government Planning NSW[4]

Community engagement is the many ways that government, communities and citizens connect in the development and implementation of policies, programs, services and projects. It is a process to achieve outcomes.

Queensland Government Department of Main Roads[5]

Community engagement is about involving the community in decision making processes, which is critical in the successful development of acceptable policies and decisions in government, the private sector and the community.

South Australian Government & the Local Government Association of South Australia[6]

Community engagement is the process of communicating, cooperating and working with communities to gather information, build relationships and inform government decision making.

Tasmanian Government Department of Premier and Cabinet[7]

'Community engagement' is [...] a planned process with the specific purpose of working with identified groups of people, whether they are connected by geographic location, special interest or affiliation, to address issues affecting their well-being.

Victorian Government Department of Sustainability and Environment[8]

The terms employed to describe the processes for facilitating public input and/or participation in decision-making are often used interchangeably – 'consultation', 'citizen engagement', 'public participation', 'stakeholder involvement',' community engagement', to name a few. Regardless of the terminology they all lead to one goal – to bring people together to interact and achieve results that are of benefit to all parties.

Government of Western Australia Department of Premier and Cabinet[9]

[3]ACT Government. 2011. Engaging Canberrans: A Guide to Community Engagement. P5
[4]NSW Government Planning NSW. et al. 2003. Community Engagement in the NSW Planning System. P. 6
[5]QLD Government Department of Main Roads. Community Engagement Resource Guide. P. 9
[6]South Australian Government and the Local Government Association of South Australia. March 2008. Community Engagement Handbook: A Model Framework for Leading Practice in Local
[7]Government in South Australia. P. 1
[8]Tasmanian Government Department of Premier and Cabinet. March 2013. A Tasmanian Government
[9]Framework for Community Engagement: Consultation Paper. P. 4
[10]Victorian Government Department of Sustainability and Environment. 2005. Effective Engagement Book 1: An Introduction to Engagement. P. 10

WHAT DOES COST EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT LOOK LIKE?

Successful engagement demands careful risk and issue management, is likely to form part of a broader risk mitigation strategy on a project, and will most probably have been considered early in the planning process.

Engagement processes may not provide consensus, or remove disagreement and/or conflict. However, at a minimum engagement should create a 'no surprises' operating environment by giving the project team access to local perspectives and knowledge, and by giving the affected parties access to information about the project.

Building on the IAP2 Core Values, effective engagement is often described in terms of a balanced combination of characteristic 'principles' or attributes. These help guide industry leading engagement processes and include:

Clear, relevant and timely communication

Clear, relevant, timely communication should help ensure that all participants (internal and external) have all the relevant information and are encouraged to participate in a productive manner. Effective engagement should innovate to connect participants and maximise their involvement.

Transparent decision making

Engagement should provide clear feedback processes and reporting that links the engagement with the decision making process, providing clarity and transparency for participants.

Inclusiveness

All relevant stakeholders should be identified, understood, respected and involved as early as possible and throughout the engagement process. Effective engagement will create an accessible environment that encourages diverse participation and creates new connections between participants.

Collaboration and cooperation

A cooperative approach should encourage participants to appreciate each other's perspectives and seek mutually beneficial outcomes.

Integrity

Genuine engagement will build trust throughout the process, identify shared benefits and outcomes beyond self-interest, and foster mutual respect.

These attributes also point to the existence of more than one type of effective engagement and the need for a tailored approach for each situation.

Ultimately, effective engagement aims to add value and provide better outcomes in relation to policies, programs, services and projects.

IAP2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

The IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum is widely used and quoted to assist with the selection of engagement activities based on desired goals.

The Spectrum shows that differing levels of participation are legitimate depending on the goals, timeframes, resources and levels of public/stakeholder concern in relation to the decision being made. In addition, the Spectrum defines the promise being made to the public/stakeholders at each participation level.[10]

There is an increasing trend across Australia by local government and some state government owned corporations to operate in the collaborative part of the spectrum with internal and external stakeholders. This collaboration includes an internal commitment by senior management to engage and asking impacted stakeholders how they wish to be engaged, prior to engagement occurring.

This higher degree of stakeholder discussion and input is less common in the private sector. It is important to recognise that many projects simply do not lend themselves to this type of stakeholder discussion and input into the decision-making process, and thus must operate at the lower levels of the spectrum. This does not necessarily mean a less satisfactory approach, as some very successful outcomes can be achieved through a concerted information or consultation program. The key is to match the level of engagement to the project needs, the items that are negotiable and the amount of public/stakeholder interest.

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decision.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and issues are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advise and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
EXAMPLE TOOLS	• Fact sheets • Websites • Open houses	• Public comment • Focus groups • Surveys • Public meetings	• Workshops • Deliberate polling	• Citizen Advisory committees • Consensus-building • Participatory decision-making	• Citizen juries • Ballots • Delegated decisions

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF ENGAGEMENT?

Effective engagement can deliver a range of benefits for projects, government, organisations, communities and individuals:

Benefits for projects may include:

- mitigating risk
- increasing efficiencies through reduced costs and time (e.g. reduced risk of social conflict with associated delays and costs; or quicker and smoother permitting and approvals processes)
- generating more innovative project outcomes (e.g. increased local knowledge leading to improved designs or construction methodologies)
- managing reputations
- developing and maintaining a social license to operate
- helping to ensure compliance with relevant legislation.

Benefits for government and other procuring organisations may include:

- improving relationships between government, organisations, community and stakeholders
- creating opportunities to 'health-check' the above relationships in relation to specific issues, and work more closely on issues of concern
- enhancing credibility and public accountability

- informing and creating better policies, programs, services and projects by improving the timeliness, relevance, value and acceptability of decisions
- providing more democratic outcomes through decision making that reflects a diversity of stakeholder ideas and perspectives and meets the 'the greater balance' of stakeholder needs and expectations
- providing early notice of emerging issues so that all stakeholders are better placed to deal with those issues in a proactive way.

Benefits for communities and individuals may include:
- establishing a shared vision or buy-in to decisions that foster accountability amongst all stakeholders, ownership of solutions and cohesion
- increasing community capacity and stakeholder awareness about issues enabling community cohesion, consensus and compromise
- enhancing opportunities for a diversity of voices to be heard by increasingly accountable government/s
- sharing knowledge that contributes to better decisions and solutions that reflect stakeholder priorities and needs.

EXPERIENCE SHOWS THAT WHEN THE COMMUNITY UNDERSTANDS THE PROBLEM, AND CAN BE INVOLVED IN BEING PART OF THE SOLUTION, BETTER PROJECT OUTCOMES CAN BE ACHIEVED.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF INEFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT?

Engagement can also inevitably involve risks. For example, conflict and tension between stakeholders can be heightened as awareness and understanding of issues is increased and differences of opinion are discussed. In some cases where conflict and tension already exists between stakeholders, its resolution can be an objective of the engagement.

Other risks are related to ineffective engagement, for example:

- not identifying and reaching intended stakeholders (this may include failing to engage a representative sample of individuals from large interest groups)
- not engaging early enough for outcomes to be influenced (for example engaging after decisions have been made)
- not fostering realistic stakeholder expectations and being clear from the outset about what can be negotiated and what cannot (for example spending large quantities of time discussing issues that are outside of scope of a particular project)
- not ensuring adequate resources and time are available to undertake the required engagement
- not providing clear and concise information
- not recognising and designing the engagement to account for issues beyond the project that may influence the opinions of stakeholders or their willingness to participate in the process (such as poor past experiences with engagement leading to a lack of trust and cynicism with the process, consultation fatigue, or pre-existing relationships between stakeholders)
- not providing closure for your process by giving adequate feedback to participants.

For each project, the likelihood and consequences of specific risks will vary, as will the strategies necessary to mitigate them. All risks associated with engaging should be considered in parallel to the risks of not engaging.

Some risks can be mitigated early by implementing a rigorous process for the procurement of engagement services. Section 3 of this *Guide* has been written to aid managers of the procurement process to achieve adequate rigour in their process.

ENGAGEMENT IS NOT ABOUT TELLING - IT IS ABOUT OPEN AND HONEST COMMUNICATION, SETTING LIMITS AND PARAMETERS AND MONITORING AND EVALUATING CONTENT AND PROCESS THROUGHOUT THE ENGAGEMENT.

Section THREE

WHAT ARE THE STEPS OF THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS?

3. What are the steps of the Procurement Process?

WHAT IS PROCUREMENT?

Procurement is the formal process of obtaining goods or services for a fee that is agreed as part of the process. This *Guide* examines the procurement of professional engagement services provided by consultancies to fulfil the specific objectives of a project being undertaken by the procuring organisation. The aim of the procurement process should be to attract the highest quality respondents by using a process that matches the intended outcomes of the project. Poorly designed procurement processes can result in wasted time and money, redoing work, damage to the procuring organisation's reputation and relationships with stakeholders, legal challenges and inadequate project outcomes. With this in mind, it is essential that the complexity of the selected procurement process:

- reflects the project's objectives, budget, complexity and risk exposure
- achieves value-for-money outcomes
- reflects organisational strategy and objectives.

While there is no single best approach, a rigorous procurement process is critical to the ultimate success of an organisation and their project. It is the role of the manager of the procurement process to ensure that the implemented process delivers the right outcomes. This *Guide* defines an eight-step process for procurement that can be followed by the manager. Where a procuring organisation already has procurement guidelines and/or policies in place these should be adhered to in the first instance. Comparison of the existing guidelines and/or polices with the eight steps may provide confirmation that a robust process is already being implemented or highlight areas where improvements can be made.

EIGHT STEPS TO PROCURING ENGAGEMENT SERVICES

The procurement process can be broken into eight steps:

Step 1: Making the decision to procure professional engagement services
Step 2: Assembling the procurement team
Step 3: Developing the detailed business case
Step 4: Developing the brief
Step 5: Going to market
Step 6: Evaluating the tenders/quotes
Step 7: Signing the contract
Step 8: Debriefing the unsuccessful consultants.

In some circumstances the precise order of these steps may vary slightly depending on the issue, available resources, the engagement consultant and the stage at which the services of an engagement consultant are sought. Some organisations may also combine some of the steps.

STEP 1: Making the decision to procure professional engagement services

The procurement process begins by deciding whether or not your organisation requires the services of a professional engagement consultant. This decision should:

- be made long before the Invitation to Tender/Quote is developed and issued
- involve the right internal stakeholders (project management, procurement and engagement specialists, as well as technical disciplines relevant to the project).

Involving the right mix of expertise in the early decision making will establish sound foundations for assembling an informed and competent procurement team moving into the next steps of the process.

The decision making team should consider:

- What are the drivers for procuring engagement services (e.g. desire to manage project cost, time or risks, and/or broader organisational objectives and strategies)?
- What are the objectives and potential benefits of the engagement? How do these align with the project and/or procuring organisation's objectives, strategies and values?
- What are the potential risks of not engaging? If these risks are considered to be of very limited consequence and likelihood then there may be no need to engage.
- What skills and resources are available in-house to support engagement? Are there any skills-gaps? How might existing skills and resources be leveraged to maximise their value (e.g. combining in-house expertise with procured resources to form integrated teams)?
- What other projects are already using engagement services and are there any overlaps or duplication that should be considered?
- Given that engagement can happen at any stage, what is the optimal time at which to engage with stakeholders and the broader community (often the earlier the better)?

In short, the decision to procure professional engagement services should be based on the objectives of the project and your organisation's ability to fulfil these.

ENGAGEMENT THAT IS EFFECTIVE IS BUILT ON TRUST, RESPECT, LISTENING AND CYCLICAL COMMUNICATION (BETWEEN THE CLIENT, STAKEHOLDERS AND YOURSELF).

STEP 2: Assembling the procurement team

To ensure an effective Invitation to Tender/Quote, it is critical that the right procurement team be assembled from the very beginning of the process. This team must include members that:

- are familiar with the more technical aspects of the project
- have realistic expectations about what engagement can achieve for the project
- have an experience-based understanding of the complexities of engaging stakeholders and the broader community.

Many of the participants in the procurement team will have been identified and consulted during the decision making of Step 1 (above). As previously stated, the team should consist of competent and experienced project management, procurement/legal and engagement specialists, as well as any other technical disciplines relevant to the project (including, where possible, representatives of the 'end users' of the project products or outcomes). Importantly, the specific project manager who will oversee the implementation of the project should be part of the procurement team.

The size and responsibilities of the procurement team will vary depending on the scale and complexity of the services being sourced. For some small projects, it may not be necessary to have a large procurement team—a knowledgeable Project Manager and the relevant procurement/legal specialists may suffice. However, for large and complex infrastructure projects, members of various organisations and disciplines may collocate with the client to manage the planning, design, construction and commissioning of the infrastructure.

As the procurement process progresses, the weight of contribution (based on relevant knowledge and experience) from each discipline within the team will shift. However, it is vital that all disciplines remain involved throughout. This will:

- maintain a holistic view to ensure the best outcomes from the procurement process
- facilitate acceptance across the procuring organisation of the need for the consultant's services (and subsequently eliminate any perceptions of the organisation's own staff being overlooked).

Poorly skilled or structured procurement teams can make poor decisions that:

- increase costs for procurement and project delivery
- create time delays due to re-tendering and/or redoing work.

THE COLLECTIVE WISDOM OF MANY IS GREATER THAN THE INPUT OF A FEW.

STEP 3: Developing the detailed business case/issue paper

With the procurement team in place a detailed business case (sometimes called an issues paper) can be developed that will enable internal approval for the procurement of professional engagement services, and the associated budget. The procurement team must work collaboratively to define what the organisation needs to achieve through the project. This will ensure the procurement process is focused on the end products/outcomes and the right consultant is selected to deliver these products/outcomes. This business case will form the basis for the tender documents and brief outlined in further detail in the subsequent sections of this guide.

STEP 4: DEVELOPING THE BRIEF

What is a brief?
The brief is the document that explains to the consultant what the procuring organisation expects from the project and specifically what services they are seeking from the consultant. It describes the rationale, purpose, objectives, costs, risks, constraints, timeframes and other requirements of the project. Developed for inclusion in the tender documents, the brief forms the basis of the contract between the procuring organisation (the client) and the consultant. While it is important to produce a comprehensive brief, there are opportunities throughout the procurement process to provide extra information that adds to the brief.

What are the characteristics of a good brief?
An effective brief attracts high quality responses (Tenders/Quotes) from consultants. This enables the procuring organisation to select the consultant that understands their needs, represents the least risk to their project/organisation and demonstrates the greatest ability to achieve effective project outcomes. A clear and comprehensive brief is essential for all parties to understand and agree on the requirements of the project and the time and budget available to fulfil them. A well written brief uses plain English and avoids bureaucratic language and acronyms. A well written brief will also:

- make the expectations of the procuring organisation clear (including the level of engagement that is required)
- allow more accurate and detailed pricing
- make tender evaluation easier by allowing ready comparison of proposals
- reduce the opportunity for scope creep and variations (that are usually priced at higher rates)
- reduce the risk of time delays, cost over-runs and disputes.

TRUE ENGAGEMENT REQUIRES FLEXIBILITY, COURAGE, AN OPEN MIND AND A WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE IN DIALOGUE THAT CAN SOMETIMES BE CHALLENGING FOR THE PARTIES INVOLVED. BY BEING COMMITTED TO ENGAGE AND APPLYING THESE PRINCIPLES GREATER PROJECT OUTCOMES CAN BE ACHIEVED.

Who should write the brief?

While there should only be one lead author of the brief document, all members of the procurement team should contribute to ensure all relevant matters are appropriately addressed. The authors should have an intimate knowledge of the project and the outcome goals. The brief should be reviewed in the context of project implementation, and a legal and a commercial viewpoint, before it is internally approved by managers at the appropriate level within the organisation prior to release.

What is a Return Brief?

If your organisation does not have the necessary skills to fully develop all aspects of the brief, a consultant can be employed to do this on your behalf. This is often referred as a 'Return Brief' or a 'Reverse Brief'. The need and budget for this assistance should be identified as part of the development of the business case. It is important that this assistance be treated as a separate contract. Any potential conflicts of interest or limitations on the eligibility of the assisting consultant to later tender/quote for the project described in the brief should be clearly outlined upfront.

What are the project constraints?

To ensure that consultants have the information needed to appropriately respond to an Invitation to Tender/Quote, the procurement team must do some broader thinking about the project constraints and include this information in the brief. This preparation will pay dividends by attracting quality responses. It will also eliminate some of the issues that can cause problems during the implementation of the project. Some of these issues include:

Timing engagement to avoid school holidays, times of religious and cultural significance, or other major events: Failure to do this from the outset can create the public perception of taking short cuts and not being genuine in your efforts to engage. Subsequently, engagement timeframes may need to be extended to counter public outrage.

Engaging beyond the physical study/project area: It is often necessary to engage stakeholders and the broader community from outside the physical study/project area (e.g. a group located in another region but with interest or influence in relation to your project). Defining a physical boundary for engagement without understanding the full impacts of your project can limit the effectiveness of any proposed methodologies presented by consultants.

Adapting to political cycles and changes: Political cycles/changes will impact a project's timeline if key engagement activities conflict with election campaigns, governments operating in caretaker mode, or changes in the priorities of the party in power.

Managing engagement fatigue: It is important to ensure proposed methodologies incorporate information gathered through past engagement activities for the project to avoid frustrating stakeholders and/or the broader community with repetitive engagement activities. A coordinated approach with other like projects occurring in the area may also be required so the stakeholders/community are not overloaded with multiple requests from several projects.

Mandatory requirements: The use of certain systems, databases or geographical limitations may be imposed as a precondition by the procuring organisation.
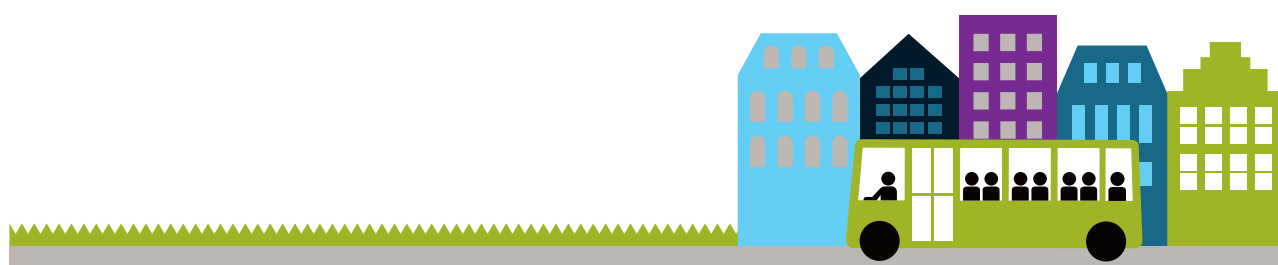
What are the budget limitations?

Budget limitations will impact how effectively you can engage, who you engage, when you engage, what you engage about, and how engagement is monitored and evaluated. You must align what you require for your project with what your budget allows for. There are likely to be trade-offs in terms of meeting budget constraints while still delivering an effective engagement program.

Procuring organisations need to be aware that consultants will propose different engagement methodologies to achieve the objectives stated in the brief and as such their Tenders/Quotes will be costed differently. The inclusions and exclusions will also vary between tenders/quotes. Some respondents will run a thorough and realistic 'bottom-up' budget for all activities, whereas other consultants may present minimalist budgets with subsequent options for variations post-contract award. Navigating this budget terrain once again requires an experienced client-side practitioner to understand the real cost of delivering engagement services when the participation and interest of the stakeholders/community cannot be known at the time of tendering.

Provision of a budget template for completion by consultants noting the essential engagement elements will provide a strong framework to compare deliverables. A second template might be provided for consultants to list their optional extras or recommended additional actions, to enable assessment of the various approaches and the cost implications of this.

What information should be included in the brief?

The following elements should be included in a comprehensive brief to allow consultants to provide the most appropriate methodology, resources and budget as part of their Tender/Quote.

Historical context and project drivers

Understanding the historical and broader social, economic and political context of the project and any constraints to the successful delivery of work will assist consultants to develop effective and realistic options.
Procuring organisations should describe:

- Why they have the project (e.g. does it fall within the responsibilities of a particular government department? Was it previously the responsibility of another party?).
- What drivers prompted the need for the project (e.g. economic, social, environmental or all three? Is it responding to future needs, existing risks or filling a gap?).
- What are the boundaries of the project (what is negotiable?)?
- What previous stages of the project have been completed and over what timeframes did these occur?
- What stages are intended to occur into the future and over what timeframes will these occur?
- What public commitments have been made in relation to the project (political or otherwise)?
- Has the project been referenced in strategic planning documents? If so where?

Past engagement

Procuring organisations should provide an overview of sensitivities associated with past engagement on the tendered project, or other projects delivered by themselves or other organisations that have impacted the current stakeholders/community of interest.

A summary of past engagement might include:

- a description of any instances where the project has been started before and stopped for some reason. This should include the dates of when any engagement occurred, an outline of the type of engagement undertaken, the outcomes of these efforts and an indication of any data that might be available (if any).
- the connection your organisation has now or has had in the past with the stakeholders/community of interest. This should include an assessment of the quality of any existing relationships with the stakeholders/community as well as how the stakeholders/community perceive the procuring organisation (i.e. their reputation). Any past commitments and whether or not they were fulfilled should also be documented.
- key areas of risk, opportunity or stakeholder/community contention identified to date.

Desired level of engagement

Procuring organisations should clearly state their organisational commitment to engagement (if any), and the extent to which the organisation and/or project is comfortable with conducting engagement. This can be influenced by many factors and change over time. For example, the organisation's values, any major changes the organisation might be undergoing (e.g. privatisation, sale or restructure), managerial priorities, organisational culture, other projects, or litigation activities/rulings.

Timing

The brief should be clear in describing any time constraints that might influence the engagement process. For example, a brief that requires engagement with a community throughout school holidays will require a different set of considerations to engagement during the school term. Clarity in relation to desired timings will help respondents provide a better quality brief and options for the client.

Where engagement outcomes will impact on the delivery of a broader project, or form part of a broader project's critical path, it is highly recommended that a qualified engagement specialist, who understands lead times for coordinating the full process of engagement (e.g. minimum periods for public notification, printing and distribution timeframes, etc), is involved in developing this part of the brief.

Measuring desired outputs and outcomes

Procuring organisations should clearly state if they wish to include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the engagement process as part of the services tendered, as this will need to be reflected in the engagement plan/program and budget (e.g. through lessons learned workshops, stakeholder surveys or other methods of assessing opinion or behaviour change as a result of the engagement).

Measuring what is done ('outputs', such as the number of newsletters distributed or number of workshops facilitated) and how it is done (e.g. the timeliness of information dissemination or enquiry responses by the consultant) can provide an indication of consultant performance. However, the real value of the engagement is only revealed when the 'outcomes' or the change created through the engagement is assessed.

Continuously monitoring the engagement outcomes throughout a project will allow the engagement to be adjusted if it isn't proving to be effective and the lessons learned can be used to improve the engagement on future projects.

It is also important to distinguish between stakeholder/community satisfaction with the engagement process and satisfaction with the project or its outcomes. It is possible to achieve high levels of satisfaction with the engagement process (e.g. they feel that they were informed and/or involved appropriately) whilst at the same time the stakeholders/community are not satisfied with the project and/or its outcomes.

Roles, responsibilities and reporting

The brief should clarify the consultant's role in developing, delivering and reporting on the project's engagement activities. Will the consultant be responsible for the full development and delivery of the engagement and simply report to the procuring organisation, or will the procuring organisation take a more active role in the development and delivery? Further refinement of the roles and responsibilities assigned to each party inevitably occurs once the project is awarded but providing as much information as possible upfront improves the quality of the Tenders/Quotes that are submitted.

It can be useful to clearly state the procuring organisation's expectations in relation to:

- graphic design and the management of collateral printing/publication
- use of geographic information systems and the associated data
- frequency of progress reports and meetings
- maintenance of engagement records. (e.g., is a particular tool/database preferred? Will the consultant be required to use the procuring organisation's existing stakeholder record database or create a new database?)
- use of any social media or other online tools. (The procurement team should think about the availability and skills of internal staff who will work with the consultant to make these tools a reality. If there is not adequate internal capacity then the consultant will have to build these technical costs into their Tender/Quote).

It can also be useful to provide:

- an organisational diagram showing who the contracted Engagement Lead will report to. If this is a dual report to both the procuring organisation's Communication/Engagement Manager and Project Manager then show this in the brief.
- if possible, the level of experience of the procuring organisation's engagement team members as this will inform the consultant of the level of coaching/support required, which can have a budget impact.

Industry Tip

One of the best project team structures is to have the winning consultant's communication/engagement lead report directly to both the Communication/Engagement Manager and Project Manager of the procuring organisation.

What other documents should be included in the Invitation to Tender/Quote?

In addition to the brief itself, the Invitation to Tender/Quote should include the items outlined below. As with the brief, all other documents presented as part of the invitation should be reviewed from a project implementation, a legal and a commercial viewpoint, and internally approved by managers at the appropriate level within the organisation before they are released.

OTHER DOCUMENTS	WHAT IT COVERS	WHY IT IS IMPORTANT
A letter/email of invitation	• states the intention of the procuring organisation to enter into a contract for consulting services for the specified project. • provides the name and address of the procuring organisation. • provides the contact details for a representative of the procuring organisation.	Clearly identifies who the client is and directs all enquiries to the appropriate person.
Instructions to the tendering/quoting consultants	• defines the tendering/quoting activities that consultants will be required to participate in and the timeframe for each (e.g. deadline for making submissions, and whether electronic or hard copy submissions are required). • provides the timeframe for announcing the successful consultant and providing feedback to those that weren't successful. Note that unreasonable timeframes for the preparation of proposals or overly onerous processes can compromise the quality and price of the proposals you receive or cause some high quality consultants not to submit a proposal at all. • are distinct from the project tasks required of the successful consultant: these are defined in the brief and become part of the final contract. The instructions should also state: • the process for asking questions of the procuring organisation to clarify any content provided in the brief and other accompanying documents. • whether or not the content of the brief and other documents should be treated as confidential. • any protocols to be adhered to relating to the public announcement of the appointed consultant.	Allows the consultant to determine the costs and resources required to prepare a proposal and influences their decision of whether or not they will pursue the opportunity.
Draft Contract (The consultant can also provide their standard terms of engagement for use by the procuring organisation – see subsequent section on appropriate terms and conditions).	Establishes the terms and conditions for the consultant's engagement on the project, including but not limited to defining: • payment schedule (e.g. milestone-based, time-based). • ownership of copyright / Intellectual Property Rights and ability to use ideas submitted as part of proposals. • level of required insurance (e.g. professional indemnity, public liability). • allocation and consequences of risks (e.g. liquidated damages clause in the event of failure to deliver to schedule). • change management. • clauses for dispute resolution, termination and/or variation of the project.	Allows the tendering/quoting consultants the opportunity to provide their standard terms and conditions or review and comment on the terms and conditions provided by the procuring organisation to ensure that the contract protects the operational, legal and commercial interests of both the procuring organisation and the consultant.

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OTHER DOCUMENTS	WHAT IT COVERS	WHY IT IS IMPORTANT
Schedules for response	Outlines the items that the consultant will need to provide information on in order to respond to the Invitation to Tender/Quote. These can relate to: • company registered details • company systems for quality, health, safety and environmental management • company insurances • intended use of sub-contractors • Quality Assurance information • environmental policies • any conflict/s of interest • all aspects of the evaluation criteria that will be used to assess the quality and suitability of the Tender/Quote (Step 6). It should be stated if the consultant is required to use the schedules in the format they are provided, or if they are able to respond using their own format. Any word/page limits for responses should also be clearly stated.	These schedules will be used to evaluate the proposal and will form an important part of the final contract with the successful consultant.
Evaluation criteria (See subsequent section)	Criteria for assessing the merit of each proposal. It is important that the criteria is reflected in the schedules to be completed or that a request is made for a supporting document to contain criteria not able to be responded to in the schedules.	Brings as much transparency as possible to the selection system.
Any other special provisions related to the project	For example, any existing communication policies, protocols, procedures or guidelines that the procuring organisation has and the tendering consultant will be expected to adhere to. Any previous project or engagement reports that should be considered in developing the engagement methodology to be presented in the Tender/Quote.	

More on Terms and Conditions

In developing the brief it is important to consider what contract terms are appropriate and the levels of Public Liability and Professional Indemnity insurance required for engagement project delivery.

State government tenders normally require up to a $10M Public Liability cover and up to $5M professional indemnity cover for stand-alone engagement or communication work in excess of $100,000. Local government tenders normally require up to a $10M Public Liability and up to $1M Professional Indemnity cover for engagement or communication work ranging from $10,000 - $100,000 in value.

However, community engagement and/or communication briefs are sometimes linked to insurances required from engineering companies for the design and construction of major infrastructure. It is important that stand alone engagement briefs reflect appropriate insurance levels for the work being done and not those required for design and construction of multi-million dollar infrastructure projects as the risks being covered are different.

Preferred terms (Australian Standard 4122-2010) for engaging with consultants should be considered if they are not already used within the organisation. It is important that conditions of contract be fair, clear and equitable for both government and consulting firms. AS4122-2010 provides a standard agreement with contractual terms that are:

- aligned with the standard of care and duties of a professional consultant under common law
- consistent with government policy and the intent of relevant legislation
- reflect the importance of sharing risk between client and consultant
- based on the principle that each party in a project remains responsible for its own actions
- consistent with the terms of professional indemnity insurance readily available in the marketplace
- inclusive of a monetary limit on the liability of the consultant.

AS4122-2010 is designed to deliver fair and proportionate allocation of risk in line with current industry leading practice while also meeting government requirements.

AS4122-2010 may not be appropriate in every situation, but should be the standard agreement used when engaging professional service consultants. A bespoke contract should only be used in situations where there are project specific special needs that necessitate it.

What are the consequences of not getting the brief right?

One of the main reasons the procurement process and associated project will experience problems is a poorly defined brief. Procuring organisations must allow enough time to properly prepare a brief that is easy to comprehend, clearly defines the work required and tender response requirements, and provides all critical information pertaining to the project. A poor brief can result in:

• Tenders/Quotes being difficult to evaluate and differentiate
• consultants not bidding at all
• consultants being unable to provide definitive fees and costs in their proposals or over pricing to reduce their risks in quoting incorrectly
• consultants providing extensive lists of 'assumptions', 'qualifications' and 'exclusions' in their proposals
• projects not meeting expectations, deadlines and budgets, or failing to deliver desired outcomes
• significant project mistakes, variations and disputes due to the project requirements and processes being uncertain and the need for re-tendering.

STEP 5: GOING TO MARKET

When presenting the Invitation to Tender/Quote to market, the first thing that needs to be considered is whether the engagement services required constitute an independent package or whether they are part of a multidisciplinary project. There are advantages and disadvantages for each of these options (Table 2).

Table 2: Some of the advantages and disadvantages of presenting engagement services as an independent project or part of multidisciplinary projects.

	INDEPENDENT PACKAGE:	COMPONENT OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY PROJECT:
ADVANTAGES	• allows high quality consultants that specialise in engagement to submit a proposal. • the procurement team is more likely to include engagement specialists.	• can streamline procurement of several discipline areas into a single process with potential time and cost savings. • takes advantage of the existing integration and efficiencies between discipline teams within multidisciplinary consultancies.
DISADVANTAGES	• may result in multiple procurement processes running for the same project. • may require the successful consultant to establish new working relationships with any other relevant disciplines within the project team.	• the procurement team may not have specialist engagement skills or experience. • may eliminate high quality consultants that specialise only in engagement. • if the tendering/quoting consultant has had to sub-contract engagement specialists pricing could be higher (profit margins built on profit margins).

The second thing to consider is how broadly the opportunity will be advertised. How this should be done depends on how the procuring organisation has decided to source their consultant, for example:

Sole source: Offering the work to a single consultant ('sole sourced') with whom you have an existing relationship will drastically reduce procurement costs and time; may limit the need for detailed documentation (depending on the relationship); but may conflict with organisational policies relating to competitive costing, and limit the introduction of new and innovative ideas.

Panels and other pre-qualification structures: Using panels and other pre-qualification structures offers a way of reducing the field of consultants that the opportunity will be offered to. To avoid time delays, such structures should be established in advance of the Invitation to Tender/Quote for a specific project. Furthermore, the criteria used to assess those accepted as 'pre-qualified' should accurately reflect the type and value of the projects the mechanism will be used to service. For example, using the size of the consultancy as one of the main criteria may mean that smaller, innovative and high value consultancies are unnecessarily ruled out. A mismatch will result in suitable consultancies being excluded from tendering/quoting for the work.

Open market: Presenting the opportunity to the open market can lead to a high number of consultants responding (though some consultants will not bid on the open market), but demands considerable resources and time to evaluate each tender and select the successful consultant.

Industry Tip

Some consultancies discourage their staff from submitting Tenders/Quotes for invitations that have been released to the open market. For these consultancies, the cost of competing for an open tender with a larger pool of consultants is not worth the investment. If an organisation has a particular type of consultancy in mind to deliver the work, it may be prudent to inform them that the invitation is coming to market.

The third thing to consider is the mechanisms to communicate the Invitation to Tender/Quote to potential respondents. For example, will you be posting information electronically online (often preferable now for consultants), distributing hard copies, or utilising a tender service? Procurement specialists within your organisation will be able to provide guidance on the preferred mechanisms of your organisation.

The final item to consider is the actual tendering/quoting activities that the consultants will be required to participate in and the timeframe and format that the responses will be required to take for each. The complexity and cost of the tendering/quoting activities should reflect the value, duration and timeframes of the project, and the number of suitably qualified consultants who may realistically pursue the opportunity. Overly onerous and expensive tendering/quoting activities and/or unreasonable timeframes for preparing proposals can compromise the quality of the proposals you receive or cause some high quality consultants not to submit a proposal at all.

Industry Tip

If you are uncertain of how much time to allow for response activities, consider asking several consultants what the period of time is that they would reasonably require to prepare a high quality response to the Invitation to Tender/Quote.

Typical activities as part of responding to an Invitation to Tender/Quote can include:

- attending an industry briefing where the procuring organisation will talk through their situation and the requirements of their project as well as answering questions from consultants
- preparing and submitting a written proposal within defined word or page limits from which a short-listing is created
- presenting to a selection panel (that may include time for further questions from the consultant) from which the successful consultancy will be determined.

Setting the closing date for responses

Consultancies often need to redirect resources from delivering work to respond to Invitations to Tender/Quotes. Organisations need to consider the scope of the brief, and the size and complexity of the project and scale the timeframe accordingly. That is, consultants will require more time to respond appropriately and comprehensively for a more complex project.

Providing early advice to consultancies that you would like to encourage to bid for your project ensures that they will have resources available when the invitation is released to the market.

In addition, it is important to be mindful that there are peak times of year when organisations tend to flood the market with invitations (i.e. the end of financial year and prior to Christmas). Consultants are aware that the tight timeframes for responding to invitations at these times relate to budget cycles, and annual program cycles, but it is still difficult for them to redirect resources to deal with the demand during these peak times.

Industry Tip

Using the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) Engagement Spectrum (Section 2) can help define the level of participation your organisation anticipates will be appropriate. This level may change once the project is awarded and strategies are developed.

Advertise and issue the Invitation to Tender/Quote

It is becoming common practice for Invitations to Tender/Quote to be presented to the market electronically. This is often achieved through a direct email to known consultants, with a hyperlink to the brief or with the brief attached. Some larger organisations will advertise in print and electronic media, and then use an in-house service to manage the tender process (e.g. consultants register for information, and then submit the proposal through a 'portal' before a stated deadline). Others will post the tender on an online tendering site, which notifies organisations registered with an interest in that particular service area.

Some organisations continue to issue hard copy briefs via the post or courier. While this is unusual, briefs in this form are typically issued to consultants that are being sole sourced, or sourced from a panel.

Issuing addendums

Regardless of how the Invitation to Tender/Quote is issued, it is crucial that there is a mechanism that allows the procuring organisation to issue addendums to consultants that have registered their interest. As consultants ask questions, a project team may realise that matters in the brief need to be clarified or re-scoped, when this occurs the brief may be modified and an addendum needs to be issued. It is important that all interested consultants receive these addendums. If an addendum significantly changes the information presented in the initial Invitation to Tender/Quote the deadline for submissions should be revised and extended. Unrealistic timeframes may reduce the quality of Tenders/Quotes that the procuring organisation receives.

Holding a briefing session for consultants

Consultants always appreciate an opportunity to hear an organisation's project team talking about the project, the nature of the brief, and their expectations. These sessions are typically open forums, and provide consultants with a more detailed sense of what the project entails, as well as an idea of how hotly contested the opportunity will be.

Typically, organisations will record the questions that are asked in these forums and issue this record to all consultants that have registered an interest.

Briefing sessions are usually provided on projects that will require a larger investment from the organisation, or projects that are contentious and have a possible impact on the organisation's reputation. Sometimes a client will make the briefing session mandatory, i.e. if a consultancy does not attend the briefing session then they may be precluded from submitting a Tender/Quote.

The value of a briefing session varies greatly for engagement consultants. If the engagement component of the project is being delivered as part of a multidisciplinary brief, then there may be limited opportunity for engagement consultants to ask questions about the engagement process and expectations. However, if the engagement component of the project is being delivered as a stand-alone brief, there will be more opportunity to explore the engagement process, client expectations and challenges.

Organisations should consider the value of conducting briefing sessions for each discipline, or as a subset of the main briefing session. For example, a briefing that focuses on engagement could be delivered by engagement professionals, with the support of other members of the overall project team.

Responding to consultant questions and requests for information

For consultants to respond to a brief they sometimes need to ask questions and seek clarification. Clarifying elements of the brief that are not clear, or could be interpreted in multiple ways is an important part of the process of responding to briefs. Organisations need to ensure that they respond to requests for information efficiently, so that consultants are able to continue their Tender/Quote preparation.

When asking questions, consultants have an expectation that an engagement question will be answered by an engagement professional. There is an inherent assumption in this expectation that engagement questions will be answered by someone who understands the question and why it may have been asked, and can provide an answer with enough detail that the consultant can provide a more comprehensive response to the brief.

The forum for asking these questions can either be:
- during the briefing session
- via email
- via telephone.

The process of asking questions can be a risk for consultants if the question or its response is shared with competing consultants and thereby reveals an idea or approach that would have differentiated the consultant from other respondents. An important consideration, regardless of an organisation's method of capturing and responding to questions, is the need to protect intellectual property and commercial-in-confidence information and mitigate the risk that such information is shared with other consultants through the reporting process.

The best way a procuring organisation can determine the worth and confidentiality of ideas or information included in questions from consultants is to have a senior engagement practitioner included as part of the procurement process. This professional will be able to quickly determine, each time a question is asked, what information needs to be protected and what information can be shared with other consultants. This professional will add enormous value to the process and assure consultants that their information is in good hands.

Respecting Intellectual Property and Commercial in Confidence

It is important for organisations to respect that when consultants respond to briefs, particularly those that call for innovation, they are investing an intangible asset in the form of intellectual property. This information is sometimes also Commercial in Confidence.

There are a diverse range of engagement professionals in Australia. These professionals bring their experience, ideas and innovations to the consultancies they work for, and the briefs they respond to. Regardless of a consultant's circumstances, good ideas, innovations and questions that explore the value of these ideas and innovations, need to be treated with respect. Ideas, innovations and approaches are a consultant's livelihood and to have them given away without financial recompense can be quite damaging. This is particularly the case for unsuccessful bidders who have offered up ideas or approaches that the client organisation is keen to try.

There is a reputation risk for organisations that use intellectual property or commercial-in-confidence information without permission or reimbursement. If realised, this risk may impact the future availability of consultants bidding for projects, or the inclusion of more innovative ideas and solutions in those bids.

STEP 6: EVALUATING THE TENDERS/QUOTES

This section provides guidance on how to evaluate the proposals presented in response to the Invitation to Tender/Quote. The evaluation process aims to award the contract to the most suitable consultant. This should not necessarily be the consultant with the lowest price and special attention should be paid to what is actually being promised and any inclusions/exclusions. Remember, inclusions/exclusions can be negotiated prior to the contract being signed and such negotiations may influence the price. When entering into negotiations the procurement team should be well informed of the project requirements, what their minimum final position can be, and the current market situation. They must also understand their level of authority and ensure that decision-makers are involved in the negotiations.

Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation criteria—specific to the needs of the project, your organisation, or both—should be presented as part of the Invitation to Tender/Quote documentation. These criteria should pertain to what the procuring organisation believes will be the most important characteristics of the successful consultant. Table 3 provides an example of an evaluation criteria that may be applied, however most organisations have their own internal processes for evaluating Tenders/Quotes against their nominated criteria and these should be applied to engagement Tenders/Quotes in the same manner they would to any other type of Tender/Quote (e.g. project management, design or construction Tenders/Quotes).

Table 3: Example of evaluation criteria that may be applied (sample only).

CRITERION	DESCRIPTION	WEIGHTING** (Sample Only)
Relevant company experience	• number and nature of similar projects the organisation has worked on. • significant achievements on these projects.	15%
Relevant team experience	• number and nature of similar projects the individuals being put forward for this project have worked on and how recent that experience is. • roles of the people involved and the achievements attributed to those people so you can see if the people, who carry the knowledge of the project, are part of the consultant's nominated team. • if you require people on the project that have very specific experience, then ask for this (e.g. 'Linear urban infrastructure > $100M'). Be sure, however, that this is really required as it may limit responses to your invitation, and you may overlook highly component consultants with transferable skills and knowledge that have achieved exceptional results for similar but not identical projects • it is sometimes helpful to ask for 'back-up' personnel to be nominated so that you can assess the depth of the consultant's team and their ability to replace team members should unforeseen circumstances mean that an initially nominated person becomes unavailable.	15%
Team member qualifications	• academic qualifications, professional training, years of experience, industry group membership and industry achievements that, in isolation and in combination, present a complete picture of the skills and capabilities of the people who may work on your project.	10%
Availability of team	• current commitments of the nominated team and when they are due to end, so you can see the extent of resourcing that can be provided by each consultant at the time that you require it.	5%

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CRITERION	DESCRIPTION	WEIGHTING** (Sample Only)
Methodology	• how the consultant will manage and deliver the project including a strong justification for why this is the best course of action. • outline of the key risks and opportunities and how they will be addressed as part of the methodology. • identify any lessons from other projects that may support the methodology developed for this project. For this criterion, it is important to specify how much detail you would like the consultant to go into. Is an overview of key tasks and activities proposed enough, or do you want a complete communication strategy as part of the tender (note confidentiality intellectual property rights if the latter)? Be aware that the amount of detail requested in this section may affect the ultimate pricing of the project, as tendering time will need to be recouped if a detailed response is required. It may also limit the number of consultancies responding to the request for tender during busier times of the year.	20%
Innovation	• unique approaches or 'outside the box' thinking to address project challenges. It should be noted that asking for innovation where it is unlikely to be approved due to cost or internal policy is not an effective use of the consultant's or the reviewer's time.	5%
Triple bottom line	• consideration of any broader requirements related to, for example: environmental performance, corporate social responsibility, or equal opportunity.	5%
Price	• the budget proposed to complete the project defined in terms of total cost and total hours. • possible value adds brought by the consultant's team at no extra cost. To get an 'apples with apples' comparison, it is recommended that specific details be requested, or a template provided for consultants to complete. It can be useful to ask for the number of hours allocated to key tasks, or to reach key milestones or deliverables to allow this assessment.	20%
Referees for similar projects	• referees for projects and nominated people to confirm the consultant's and their people's capabilities.	5%

**If possible, provide weightings for the criteria selected so consultants can understand what attributes are most important to your organisation. This will enable a full, complete and relevant response to the tender (more focus will be placed on the elements weighted higher). It will also assist consultants to understand if their capabilities fit with your requirements–if they cannot provide a credible response to highly weighted criteria, they may decide not to respond to the Invitation to Tender/Quote.

Assessing the Tenders/Quotes

Once the Tenders/Quotes are received, the task of ranking submissions using the nominated evaluation criteria and selecting the preferred consultant begins. Below are a few points to consider against each criterion that may help your organisation to pick the right consultant for the job.

Relevant company experience

The experience held by a company can be just as important as that of the individuals who have worked on the projects. Company experience and lessons learned can provide excellent tools, templates and processes that are 'implementation ready'.

It is important to assess how many of the consultant's nominated team were involved with the projects put forward to demonstrate the consultant's experience, particularly if the project is highly relevant to in terms of challenges, issues or operational objectives.

It can also be useful to request details (e.g. qualifications, specialist practice area) of all staff being listed as available to the project. There is a risk that some personnel listed may specialise in areas unrelated to your project or organisation's needs, and therefore be inappropriate should additional resources be required. Usually there is a need for a wide variety of experience, but it is important that the right level of experience is allocated to the tasks at hand.

Team member experience and qualifications

Identifying the experience and qualifications needed to manage the challenges of a particular project will assist choosing the right team to deliver the project. Some items to consider are:

- number of years of experience or experience in a particular field
- formal qualifications
- ability to justify the selected engagement process in the event of legal challenges
- technical knowledge relevant to the project, policy or issue
- the ability to work well with the stakeholders/community as well as manage the media.

It is important that 'years of experience' be qualified against the particular role being offered. Consider whether the years of experience relate to engagement specific roles or if it includes roles in other fields (experience in other fields can be an asset in some situations). Also consider the amount of experience that the individual holds operating at different levels of responsibility (e.g. coordinator vs. manager, or manager on small project vs. manager on large complex project). Remember that fewer years of experience is not necessarily a disadvantage if that experience is highly relevant or the individual is highly motivated and skilled.

It is important to recognise that while academic qualifications are desirable, there are some highly skilled and experienced engagement professionals who do not possess university degrees.

The following Engagement Professional Pre-Qualification matrix is designed to support the assessment of engagement professionals experience and qualifications (Table 4).

Table 4: Engagement Professional Pre-Qualification Assessment

LEVEL	YEARS	ROLES	ACADEMIC[11]	INDUSTRY	PROJECTS
1	<3	• Communication officer • Engagement support	• Tertiary degree • Industry group training (IAP2 etc)	Associate or student member: - IAP2 - PRIA (Public Relations Institute of Australia) - PIA (Planning Institute of Australia) Social Planning Chapter	• <5 projects • One or two industry sectors only
2	3-5	• Community Liaison Officer	• Tertiary degree • Industry group training (IAP2 etc)	Associate member: - IAP2 - PRIA	• Five to 10 projects • One or two industry sectors only
3	6-10	• Community Liaison Officer • Communication/ Engagement Manager	• Tertiary degree • Industry group training (IAP2 etc)	Member: - IAP2 - PRIA	• 10-20 projects • Multiple industry sectors (transport, water, resources, planning etc)
4	10-15	• Communication/ Engagement Manager • Strategic Advisor • Project Management Team member	• Tertiary degree / Post Graduate degree	Member: - IAP2 - PRIA Industry recognition: - Awards - Papers written - Committee	• 20-50 projects • Multiple industry sectors (transport, water, resources, planning etc)
5	15+	• Communication/ Engagement Manager • Strategic Advisor • Project Management Peer review • Third-party auditor	• Tertiary degree/ Post Graduate degree	Member: - IAP2 - PRIA Industry recognition: - Awards / Papers written - Executive - Committee /advisory group roles	• More than 50 projects • Multiple industry sectors (transport, water, resources, planning etc)

[11]It is important to recognise that while organisations like IAP2 are performing an excellent role in up-skilling community engagement professionals world-wide, not all members of the profession have completed IAP2 training, particularly those who have been practicing in the industry for a long period (more than 10 years). Generally however, these people will be members of IAP2 or other peak communication industry bodies and will be able to demonstrate experience. It is also important to note that IAP2, PRIA and other professional bodies do not 'endorse' or 'qualify' firms or individuals. These organisations offer membership, networking and learning opportunities and some formal training opportunities, but do not endorse any organisation or individual as holding a particular level of skill, understanding or ability.

Availability of team

Consideration should be given to the current commitments of the nominated team and when they are due to end, so you can see the extent of resourcing that can be provided by each consultant at the time that you require it. It is sometimes helpful to ask for 'back-up' personnel to be nominated so that you can assess the depth of the consultant's team and their ability to replace team members should unforeseen circumstances mean that an initially nominated person becomes unavailable.

Methodology

A core skill of engagement professionals is being able to clearly and concisely convey detailed information using language and a format that is easy to comprehend. When assessing the methodology, consider if the consultant has demonstrated this core skill. Has all the necessary detail has been provided using plain English? Have tools such as figures, flow-charts and diagrams been used to enhance the clarity of the document?

Also consider if the consultant has justified:
- why the nominated methodology was chosen
- how the nominated methodology addresses any risks or opportunities presented by the project
- how any lessons from other projects have been incorporated into the methodology
- how the values and objectives of the procuring organisation have been addressed.

Innovation

The procuring organisation should consider what they mean by innovation and whether it will support better outcomes in delivery. For some projects, well established and commonly applied engagement techniques may be adequate to achieve the required outcomes in a cost effective way. Unique approaches or 'outside the box' thinking should be requested where they are likely to deliver better outcomes relative to the investment demanded as part of the Tender/Quote or broader methodology.

Triple bottom line

The procuring organisation should consider the ability of the consultant to deliver broader social, economic and environmental outcomes through the project.

If this is important to your organisation (particularly if the project is to align with values and objectives), then get the consultant to demonstrate their capability through policy documents or case studies (e.g. environmental performance, corporate social responsibility, or equal opportunity).

Price

Procuring organisations need to be aware that consultants will propose different engagement methodologies to achieve the objectives stated in the brief and as such their tenders/quotes will be costed differently. A lower budget due to less 'face-to-face stakeholder/ community time' may not necessarily be cheaper in the long run.

The structure of the consultant's nominated project team and the allocation of tasks to each individual will also influence the overall price. More hours at a lower hourly rate might appear to be better value for money, but the experience of the person delivering those hours should be factored in. A more experienced practitioner will cost more per hour (but will often take less time to complete a task). Good value–for-money is achieved when the tasks are assigned to team members with the appropriate level of skill and experience. For example, facilitation of meetings and management of stakeholder interface would be best allocated to a senior team member, while staffing project information lines (e.g. phone or email) and managing data recording would be best allocated to a more junior member.

The inclusions and exclusions will also vary between tenders/quotes. Some respondents will run a thorough and realistic 'bottom-up' budget for all activities, whereas other consultants may present minimalist budgets with subsequent options for variations post-contract award. Navigating this budget terrain once again requires an experienced client-side practitioner to understand the real cost of delivering engagement services when the participation and interest of the stakeholders/community cannot be known at the time of tendering.

Referees for similar projects

Consider if the referees provided are current (for projects delivered within the last three years) and relate to projects that are of similar size and scope to the project at hand.

STEP 7: SIGNING THE CONTRACT

Once the preferred consultant is selected and the negotiations are finalised, they will be notified in writing and the formalities of signing the contract must be completed before the project begins. This contract (see also Step 4: Developing the brief; More on Terms and Conditions) should have been thoroughly reviewed by project, legal and commercial experts within the procurement team and the consultant's team.

Once the contract is signed the procuring organisation may wish to make a public announcement of the contract. It is important that the consultants are reminded of the protocols issued as part of the Invitation for Tenders/Quotes in relation to making public announcements.

STEP 8: DEBRIEFING THE UNSUCCESSFUL CONSULTANTS

In addition to notifying all consultancies that tender/quote of the outcome of the process, it is good practice to offer a formal debrief to unsuccessful consultancies to help them understand why there were unsuccessful, and improve future bids. In some instances, the appointment of a consultant may be challenged by an unsuccessful consultant.

Section FOUR

COMMON TERMINOLOGY

10. Common Terminology

Brief

The formal document that explains to the consultant what the procuring organisation expects from the project and specifically what services they are seeking from the consultant. It describes the rationale, purpose, objectives, costs, risks, constraints, timeframes and other requirements of the project. Developed for inclusion in the tender documents, the brief forms the basis of the contract between the procuring organisation (the client) and the consultant.

Commercial in Confidence

Confidential information provided for a specific purpose that is not to be used for any other purpose than set out in the initial document.

Conflict of Interest

Occurs when an individual or organisation is involved in multiple interests, one of which could possibly corrupt the motivation for another.

Consultant

A firm or professional who provides specialist advice or services for a fee.

Consultation

The process undertaken to actively solicit stakeholder/community input to decision-making that will influence projects, policies or procedures.

Contract

An agreement having a lawful object entered into voluntarily by two or more parties.

Engagement: The process by which government, organisations, communities and individuals connect in the development and implementation of decisions that affect them. Engagement is used as a tool to achieve outcomes, develop understanding, educate and/ or agree to solutions on issues of concern (for further definitions of Engagement see 'Understanding Engagement' in this *Guide*).

Intellectual Property

A legal concept which refers to work or creations of the mind for which exclusive rights are recognised.

Invitation to Tender/Quote

A structured invitation for the supply of services released by the procuring organisation that contains all the information and documentation necessary for interested consultants to respond with a Tender/Quote.

Procurement

The formal process of obtaining goods or services for a fee that is agreed as part of the process.

Procuring Organisation

The organisation acquiring goods or services.

Stakeholder

Any person, organisation or group that is affected by or holds an interest in the project being considered or implemented.

Tender/Quote

A formal document that defines the services and price being offered by a consultant in response to an Invitation to Tender/Quote. It can also be referred to as a bid or proposal.

Section FIVE

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

11. References and Further Reading

There are a range of resources and reference material available online supporting the understanding of engagement activity from industry and academia as well as from local, state and federal governments. Included below is just a sample of more recent publications available for further reading:

Industry/academia

Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology Sydney and the Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government. June 2011. *Local Government and Community Engagement: an Annotated Bibliography.*
<http://www.acelg.org.au/upload/program1/1311314257_ACELG_Annotated_Bibliography.pdf>

International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). **www.iap2.org**

Involve. And Co. September 2011. *Pathways through participation: What creates and sustains active citizenship?*

Australian Capital Territory

ACT Government. 2011. E*ngaging Canberrans: A Guide to Community Engagement.*
<http://timetotalk.act.gov.au/storage/communityengagement_FINAL.pdf>

New South Wales

NSW Government Roads & Maritime Services. October 2012. *Community Engagement and Communications: A resource manual for staff.*
< http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/roadprojects/community_environment/documents/community_engagement_manual_oct2012.pdf >

Queensland

QLD Government Department of Infrastructure and Planning. 2010. *Community Engagement in Queensland Local Government - A guide*
<http://test.dsdip.qld.gov.au/resources/guideline/local-government/summary-community-engagement-guide.pdf>

QLD Government Web Centre. *Community Engagement* **<http://www.qld.gov.au/web/community-engagement>**

South Australia

South Australan Government and the Local Government Association of South Australia. March 2008. *Community Engagement Handbook: A Model Framework for Leading Practice in Local Government in South Australia.* **<http://www.lga.sa.gov.au/webdata/resources/files/ Community_Engagement_Handbook_March_2008_-_PDF.pdf>**

Tasmania

Tasmanian Government Department of Premier and Cabinet. March 2013. A Tasmanian Government
Framework for Community Engagement: Consultation Paper. **< http://www.dpac.tas.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/188860/A_ Tasmanian_Government_Framework_for_Community_Engagement.pdf>**

Victoria

Victorian Government Department of Sustainability and Environment. 2005. *Effective Engagement Book 1: An Introduction to Engagement.*
<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/105823/Book_1_-_An_Introduction_to_Engagement.pdf>

Victorian Government Department of Sustainability and Environment. 2005. *Effective Engagement Book 2: The Engagement Planning Workbook.* **<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/105824/Book_2_-_The_Engagement_Planning_Workbook. pdf>**

Victorian Government Department of Sustainability and Environment. 2005. *Effective Engagement Book 3: The Engagement Toolkit.*
<http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/105825/Book_3_-_The_Engagement_Toolkit.pdf>

Victorian Government Department of Primary Industries. 2008. *Community Engagement Guidelines for Mining and Mineral Exploration in Victoria.* **<http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/19578/CE_Guide_Exp_and_Min.pdf>**

Western Australia

Government of Western Australia Department of Premier and Cabinet. 2006. *Working Together: Involving Community and Stakeholders in Decision-Making.* **<http://www.nrm.wa.gov.au/media/10536/working_together_involving_community_and_stakeholders.pdf>**

Council of Australian Governments (COAG)

Ministerial Council on Mineral and Petroleum Resources. 2005. *Principles for Engaging with Communities and Stakeholders.* **<http://www. ret.gov.au/resources/Documents/mcmpr/Principles_for_Engagement_with_Communities_and_Stakeholders.pdf>**

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