

# How to select consultants

**The quality of any project, large or small, is significantly influenced by the skills of the design consultants.**

**Design consultants are often engaged early in project definition and concept development phases where the opportunity to influence the quality of outcomes is the greatest.**

**Selecting consultants with the right expertise is an important step in project development.**

The procurement of the right consultants is an important part of the initial stages of the design process for a project. Consultants will become part of your project team, providing specialist knowledge throughout the life of your project to ensure the best possible design outcomes, so they need to be engaged with care.

## Who we will engage?

The criteria for selecting consultants will vary from project to project, depending on the complexity of the project and the tasks required. For example, a complex urban renewal project involving transport infrastructure and green infrastructure will require urban designers, landscape architects and traffic and transport engineers.

Factors such as track record, previous experience, demonstrated capacity for design excellence, resourcing and capacity, technical expertise, and value for money are all important considerations when engaging consultants.

It is essential to understand the skills and expertise required to carry out the project and choose consultants suitably matched to the task. Identifying the key personnel who will be involved on the project is also important, including the particular expertise they can contribute and the amount of time they are able to dedicate to the project.

When selecting design consultants, the size and experience of the organisation are not always the best measure of capability. Smaller

and emerging firms can bring new insights and energy to projects. Where the size or complexity of the project is an issue, emerging firms can partner with more experienced ones to provide the full range of skills required.

## When will we engage consultants?

Core consultants, such as architects, engineers, urban designers, and landscape architects, should be engaged at the outset of the project, and for the life of the project. This will provide value from the start and ensure consistency and continuity throughout the design process. Other specialist consultants might have smaller contracts to provide specialist advice just at the early stages of the process.

The procurement of consultants should be considered as part of the project scope definition and the brief development. These will influence the requirements for competitive tendering.

## Coordination and collaboration is vital

Ensuring coordination across different specialists and disciplines is paramount. This means allowing consultants to work collaboratively so that input from different disciplines can be integrated in a holistic manner. Allow time for the consultant team to coordinate and integrate their work streams properly and in a timely way. Coordination of consultant inputs is usually undertaken by the lead design consultant, most commonly

the architect.  
(See GANSW advisory note: Collaboration).

### **Government Architect's Prequalification Scheme**

Consultants can be selected through the Government Architect's Prequalification Scheme. The scheme is focused on the delivery of design excellence, quality and innovation in the built environment.

GANSW maintains a register of prequalified design professionals. The consultants on this list include architects, landscape architects, urban designers, and other professionals involved in the strategic development stages of projects, such as those who can provide expertise in developing a business case or engaging with stakeholders. The scheme also includes a separate capability area for emerging practices and a separate capability for Aboriginal cultural engagement and advice.

The scheme is available to all NSW Government agencies through Buy NSW. The list of prequalified consultants is available from the Buy NSW website for use by other levels of government and the private sector.

### **How can GANSW help?**

GANSW can work with you to help you define your requirements; we can then recommend processes and potential consultants to best meet those needs. For example, we can help you:

- develop a 'long-list' of potential consultants for consideration, for invited tenders or direct appointment
- support the inclusion of smaller or emerging design firms
- develop a consultant brief or tender documents. (See GANSW Advisory Note: How to develop a design brief)
- evaluate selection processes including expressions of interest (EOI) and competitions
- establish appropriate selection criteria and weightings.

We can also help by participating in your evaluation of consultant submissions.

Early advice regarding each of these tasks will provide the greatest value for your project.

### **Further information**

- Better Placed: An integrated design policy for the built environment of NSW, GANSW website:  
<https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/government-architect-nsw/policies-and-frameworks/better-placed>
- Government Architect's Prequalification Scheme, GANSW website:  
<https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/government-architect-nsw/procurement-for-good-design/government-architects-prequalification-scheme>

- Government Architect's Prequalification Scheme, Buy NSW website:

<https://www.info.buy.nsw.gov.au/schemes/government-architects-prequalification-scheme>

### **Government Architect NSW**

GANSW provides design leadership in architecture, urban design and landscape architecture. In this role, GANSW works across government, the private sector and the community to establish policy and practice guides for achieving good design. GANSW provides strategic advice across design, planning and development to support good policy, programs, projects and places.

### **Contact GANSW**

GANSW makes every effort to keep its advice up to date. From time to time we will release new versions of these advisory notes. For further advice, or if you think there is information missing, please contact GANSW.

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