Australian Institute of Architects

CLIENT INVITE TEMPLATE

—

Requests for Tender for Architectural Services

Penguin Parade | Terroir | Photo: Peter Bennetts

INTRODUCTION

This Client Invite template has been prepared for use in conjunction with the Australian Institute of Architects guideline “Expressions of Interest and Requests for Tender for Architectural Services”.

The guideline sets out best practice models for EOIs and RFTs to assist the procurement teams from Local, State and Federal Government departments, as well as education institutions to optimise their architect selection processes.

It offers advice specific to the commonly used processes of EOI and RFT to ensure that the information provided is relevant and easily prepared in a cost effective, resource efficient manner whilst achieving the best outcome for all participants.

An EOI allows the formulation of a shortlist of candidates with the capacity and capability to undertake the works. The RFT then seeks further information about the team’s project understanding, methodology, and ability to communicate, along with a fee proposal. The Institute recommends this two-staged, quality-based selection process of EOI followed by RFT.

The primary purpose of this RFT template is to assist clients wishing to procure the services of an architect on how best to assemble the information required in accordance with the guideline.

An RFT is aimed at the selection of a design team based on demonstrated capability, capacity, experience and a fee proposal. Capability includes the ability of the team to fully appreciate the opportunities and challenges of the project and demonstrate an appropriate design methodology and skills to develop a positive working relationship with the client and stakeholders.

No fewer than three and no more than five architects should be shortlisted for an RFT to avoid excessive evaluation time and effort by the client while ensuring a good market spread.

An RFT should not request, nor receive, a specific design proposal for the project.

Prior to undertaking an RFT process, the client should prepare an adequately developed brief to elicit informed responses from prospective architects. A fully formed project brief and budget information saves all parties time, money and effort by allowing the architect to tailor their proposal directly to the project requirements. This also gives the client the best opportunity to provide a uniform basis upon which to evaluate proposals.

This template guides the preparation of the RFT document to be sent to the participating architects in order to obtain the information required to assess an architect’s capability and availability for the project.

In order to allow adequate time for architects to develop a well-considered proposal, it is recommended that a minimum of 2-3 weeks be allowed for simple projects with a minimum of 3-6 weeks for complex, high cost or major infrastructure projects.

CLIENT'S INVITE

3.1 PROJECT DEFINITION

A clear and concise description that sets out the critical outcomes, opportunities and constraints of the project provides an invaluable touchstone for architects to return to when formulating their response. A fully formed project definition saves all parties time, money and effort by allowing the architect to tailor their proposal directly to the project requirements. This also gives the client the best opportunity to provide a uniform basis upon which to evaluate proposals.

The project definition should explain the broader context, include measures of success and align with all relevant government or institutional policies and strategic frameworks.

It should contain the following information:

- Project vision, strategies and objectives
- Project description
- Proposed floor area and summary schedule of uses and areas
- Functional requirements and operational considerations
- Site description
- Site visit date (where practicable)
- Key stakeholders
- Governance and reporting requirements
- Project management arrangements
- Supporting information (site surveys, feasibility studies etc.)
- Project delivery model

3.2 SCOPE OF SERVICES

The scope of services is important in defining expectations of the architectural service. These requirements should be detailed in direct relation to the project size and complexity. It should set out project deliverables, consultant and sub-consultant roles and responsibilities.

It is critical to identify if the client is seeking architectural services or a more complex role of Principal Design Consultant or Head Design Consultant, entailing the architect manage a wider consultant team retained by the client. There may be other requirements that should be identified, which may include community consultation, 3D visualisation, and geotechnical, remediation, environmental or other site investigation studies.

It is important for the client to ensure the scope of services:

- Identifies the type of commission being considered (full or partial architectural services)
- States the basis upon which the fee will be paid, the method of engagement of other consultants and any other responsibilities
- Includes a clearly defined approvals process
- Clearly sets out responsibilities for the coordination of inputs from other consultants
- Whether a full list of sub-consultants is required (and if so, allowing extra time for receipt of their submissions and coordination of the consultant team)

3.3 PROJECT BUDGET

The project budget is a primary indicator of project quality and complexity. It is therefore crucial information in determining the required experience and size of the architectural team, and essential for architects to prepare a fee proposal in an RFT.

It is therefore important for the client to ensure the budget:

- Is current
- Is provided on suitable advice from a quantity surveyor
- Has been subjected to feasibility testing and benchmarking to reflect the desired building quality
- Is clearly stated as a total building cost
- Includes all associated costs of project delivery, and land acquisition if necessary
- Makes allowance for costed risk and contingency for the type and location of the building
- Takes account of the lifespan, maintenance and operational costs of the building

3.4 PROJECT PROGRAMME

Fast tracked and shortened design processes inevitably compromise the quality of a building, so it is important to allow adequate time for all stages of the process, including early visioning, strategic briefing and preparation of schematic, design development, tender and construction documents that deliver full design resolution, and to enable builders to offer competitive tenders.

It is important to ensure that the programme:

- Gives indicative milestone dates for design commencement, construction commencement, completion, commissioning and opening
- Includes the consultant selection and appointment timeframes
- Makes realistic and adequate provision for client and authority approvals
- Includes allowances for potential delays
- Includes programme risk factors based on similar project delivery experience

3.5 CLIENT–ARCHITECT CONTRACT

The Institute recommends the architect and client have a signed, written agreement that clearly defines the services to be provided and fees to be paid. This should be executed before the architect commences work on a project.

A clearly written and appropriate agreement is the most effective way to avoid misunderstandings and disputes and the associated costs and risks. Standard contracts are available from the Australian Institute of Architects and the Association of Consulting Architects.

Standard contracts allow the client and architect to work confidently through the parties' rights and obligations before the project starts.

The following contracts are available to engage architects and are recognised as standard arrangements in the architectural profession and the building industry:

- Australian Institute of Architects Client and Architect Agreement 2009
- AS4122: 2010 incorporating Amendment 1 (however, this contract is not suitable for services that are to be novated)

The contract to be used should be nominated in the RFT.

3.6 SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

It is not unusual for clients to request special requirements such as information relating to sustainability in design, Building Information Modelling (BIM), and other specialised requirements that may be project specific or in line with local procurement or delivery policies.

Special requirements may also stipulate other policies such as requirements for innovation, research and value adding.

These should be described in the detail required so that the architect can respond in a manner that enables the client to evaluate their expertise in meeting these requirements. Experience has demonstrated that the best results are obtained where these requirements are specific and well defined, relevant to the project deliverables and align with all relevant client policies, business objectives and strategies.

3.7 SUBMISSION LODGEMENT AND TIMEFRAMES

Clear submission lodgement procedures, including timing, delivery method and response format are essential, whether in digital, hardcopy or via an online E-portal. For the purposes of probity, it is critical that clients maintain transparency and fairness in the tender process. Competing architects must be treated fairly and evaluated objectively. Failure to do so will result in fewer responses in the future as practices decide not to pursue opportunities with clients that have demonstrated poor probity in the past.

Submission requirements should be minimised to enable succinct, readily comparable responses, and to mitigate costs to all parties in preparation and evaluation. Submissions without page or word limits produce excessively large documents, as respondents attempt to enhance their submission and cover all possible angles by including superfluous material.

For RFTs, the Institute recommends written responses be limited to the following pages per question:

- Executive summary (1 page)
- Key personnel and resourcing (3 pages)
- Project experience (3 pages)
- Project understanding (1 page)
- Methodology and stakeholder engagement (2 pages)
- Professional recognition and innovation (1 page)
- Fee and overall hours (1 page)

Assessment of architect's submissions is significantly improved and expedited by requesting carefully targeted, specific responses, rather than long generic statements covering issues typical in all architectural design commissions. To ensure submissions are concise and include only necessary information, clients should include a clause stating extensive marketing documents or generic practice information should not be included and will not be reviewed. Deliverables should be clearly specified, and no additional materials submitted should be considered in the assessing submissions.

Appendices cause confusion and lengthen submissions and should not be requested or allowed.

It is important to ensure submission requirements:

- Are proportional to the project's size and complexity
- Detail specific physical or digital lodgement details with time, date and preferred format
- Detail procedures for fair and timely clarifications
- Detail procedures for non-conforming submissions
- Avoid addenda within five business days of submission closing
- Clearly state any conflict of interest or probity measures
- Adhere to stated evaluation timeframes
- Allow adequate time for architects to develop considered proposals. The minimum time recommended for an RFT is 2-3 weeks for simple projects while 3-6 weeks should be allowed for complex, high cost or major infrastructure projects.

3.8 RFT EVALUATION CRITERIA

The evaluation criteria at the RFT stage are primarily aimed at identifying practices that meet the desired level of expertise and capability.

When conducting the evaluation, it is recommended that this process:

- Is overseen by a Probity Advisor
- Includes and identifies a balanced evaluation panel composed of three or five members, including a suitably experienced registered architect
- Includes evaluation criteria relating to experience, capability and capacity
- Includes justifiable weighting and corresponding page limits for each criteria. These may vary, but no weighting should constitute more than 40% of the total.

  For example, an RFT may be evaluated as follows:

  - Executive summary 0%
  - Key personnel and resourcing 20%
  - Project experience 20%
  - Project understanding 20%
  - Methodology and stakeholder engagement 20%
  - Professional recognition and innovation 10%
  - Fee and overall hours 10%
- Includes evaluation scoring, for example, scoring criteria may be:

Evaluation scoring of Criteria	
Scoring Criteria	**SCORE**
Not acceptable. Has not met the minimum requirement.	**0**
Has only met some minimum requirements and may not be acceptable.	**1-4**
Acceptable.	**5**
Acceptable. Has met all requirements and exceeded some.	**6-9**
Acceptable, has far exceeded all requirements.	**10**

3.9 OFFER OF FEEDBACK

The feedback component demonstrates the client's commitment to a fair and transparent process and acknowledges the respondent's commitment in preparing submissions. Many clients and architects prefer face-to-face or teleconference for the interaction this facilitates. Two-way feedback helps both parties improve future RFT processes, and assists architects to understand their strengths and weaknesses, improve future offers, and maintain relationships with clients for future work.

Feedback provides the greatest benefit when it:

- Is prompt
- Includes either written and/or verbal debriefing for respondents
- Identifies how the reviewers undertook the assessment
- Explains the scores achieved for the different evaluation criteria
- Gives the number of respondents and the number shortlisted

Please allow around 30-40 minutes for feedback sessions in order to cover these aspects in the detail required.

LODGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

When advising architects regarding the lodgement requirements, it is helpful to provide the following information:

- The place for lodgement
- The closing date and time
- Requesting that submissions should follow the Institute's RFT Architect's Response template
- Nominating the number of copies of the RFT Response that should be provided
- Requesting submissions to clearly identify the RFT number and project name
- Indicating whether late, facsimile or e-mail tenders will be accepted
- Explaining how enquiries concerning the RFT should be made by nominating a contact person and their contact details.

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