

Built environment design competitions

A guide to achieving excellence

هيئة فنون العمارة والتصميم
Architecture and Design Commission



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Foreword

The cities and towns of KSA are growing and intensifying at considerable speed. The ambition, of course, is to create places and spaces that are high quality and sustainable. However, uncontrolled growth threatens the accomplishment of these goals.

Ensuring the highest possible design quality in the built environment is a primary focus for the Architecture and Design Commission (ADC).

Design competitions as a procurement mechanism for projects of significance and/or substantial scale can help to embed high quality design standards. They allow for early and efficient competitor selection, ensuring that there is the potential for a good fit between the design team and the design challenge.

This guide outlines the process of preparing and delivering built environment design competitions to enable the procurement of design teams. The guide focuses on three built environment design disciplines: architecture, landscape architecture and urban design/masterplanning, as they follow similar competition processes.

Design competitions come in many shapes and forms. While in principle they are a good method to procure a design team, they must adhere to a robust and tested process, in order to provide successful outcomes. Consistency of process, and in turn, expectations, will help attract high quality design teams. The objective of this guide is to fulfil this requirement.

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Glossary

Client: The client is the entity that is responsible for the project that is the subject of the design competition. They commission the design competition and may appoint a competition manager.

Competition brief: The design brief is a concise document used by the client and competition manager to communicate the objectives and requirements to competitors.

Competition manager: The competition manager is an organization or company appointed by the client to manage the full competition process and act as an interface between the client and the prospective competitors.

Competition publication: The competition publication is a document issued to Competitors, outlining the full competition details, including the brief, rules, timeline, jury, and award information. This is issued at different times depending on the type of competition.

Competitor: The competitors are the built environment practitioners who choose to enter a design competition. A competitor team may range in size, from an individual to a consortium of several design firms and consultancies. In the context of competitions, "design team" often refers to the competitors.

Competitor database: A competitor database is an organized, up-to-date document that holds key information on built environment companies or individuals. This database is used by clients and competition managers to advertise new competitions and select competitors for invited competitions

Competitive dialogue: Competitive dialogue is a type of two-stage design competition where mid-competition engagements between the client, competitors and the jury are used throughout the competition to provide feedback and enhance outcomes.

Design competition: A design competition is a competitive process where competitors submit design proposals in response to a design brief.

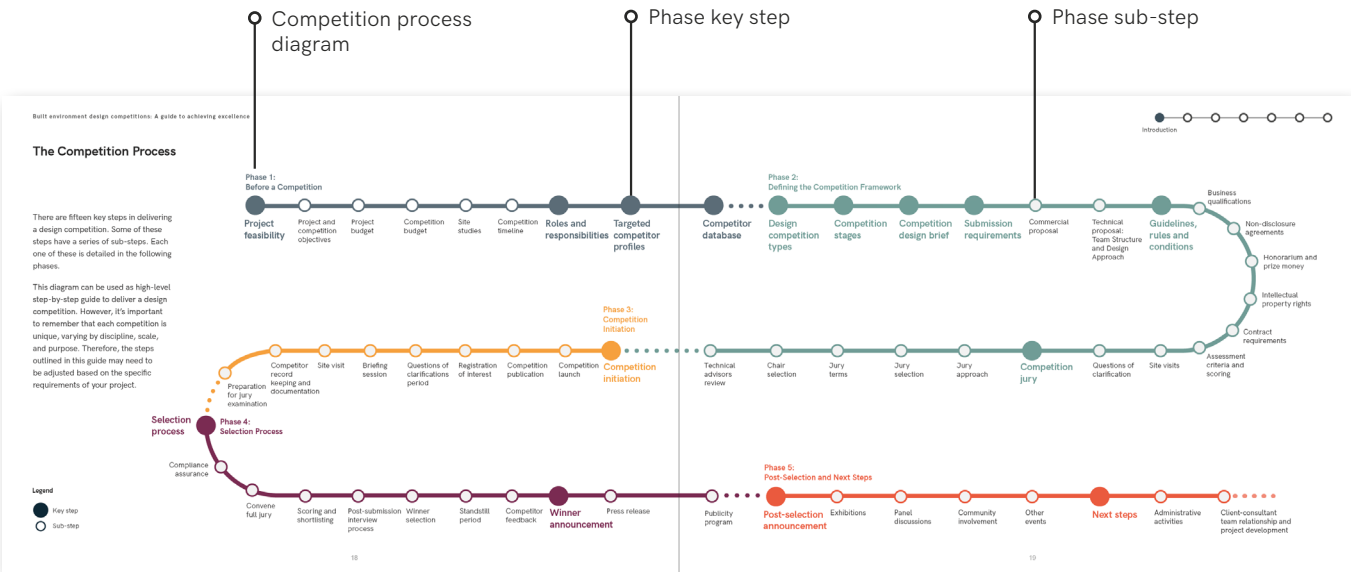
Honorarium: An honorarium is a sum of money awarded to shortlisted or winning competitors.

Jury: The jury is a group of respected peers with expertise relevant to the competition objectives who assess the competition submissions.

Technical advisor: Technical advisors offer specific technical expertise to inform the jury's decision.

How to Read this Guide

The content is structured around fifteen key steps, explained in detail over five phases, which contain detailed guidance. The text is supported by both Saudi and international case studies, key points for either clients or competitors, and step-by-step “how-to” cards.



Phase title

Phase steps

Page title

Navigation bar

1 Before a Competition

Project feasibility

Project and competition objectives

Project budget

Competition budget

Site studies

Competition timeline

Roles and responsibilities

Targeted competitor profiles

Competitor database

1.1 Project Feasibility

The competition should be planned within the context of the eventual built project, taking into consideration the following key factors:

- Project and competition objectives
- Project budget
- Competition budget
- Site studies
- Competition timeline

Project and competition objectives

Prior to launching the competition, it is important to clearly define the project vision and objectives, as well as any performance indicators that will be used to measure its success. This will, in turn, define the objectives of the competition itself and inform key decisions, such as the type of design competition, the number of stages, and the potential use of competitive dialogues. The objectives of competition managers should also be taken into consideration at this stage.

Case Study

Faculty of Arts, Coventry

The high-profile competition for the new Faculty of Arts building, at the University of Warwick, resulted in an award-winning building that was completed on time and on budget. The inclusion of a realistic project budget in the competition brief contributed to this success, allowing competitors to produce alternative proposals within the client's budget.

Introduction

The Competition Principles

All competitions should adhere to the following three principles:

- **Equality**
- **Design Excellence**
- **Fairness**

This competition guide explains how to achieve this to best-practice standards.

Equality

It is important that a competition respects and treats all potential and/or invited competitors equally and respectfully. Information shared and exchanges with must be the same across all competing teams. In short, there should be no biases held by the competition promoters, the client and, most importantly, the jury.

Design Excellence

Design competitions should be utilized as an opportunity to elevate the importance of design excellence. This can be supported through high quality competition management across all stages, as outlined throughout this guide. Increasing the number of successful design competitions can provide an expanding portfolio of high-quality built environment projects at all scales, from the building, to the neighborhood, to the city, promoting a culture of design excellence across the Kingdom.

Fairness

All competitions must adopt regulations and systems that ensure a process that is fair and transparent. This approach must be applied from the launch of the competition through to the announcement of the winning team.

Who is this Guide For?

Different types of entities are involved in running and participating in design competitions for procurement. This guide seeks to support four key user groups in delivering successful competitions:

- **Public entities**
- **Private entities**
- **Mega-projects**
- **Design practices**

Public and private entities, as well as those promoting mega-projects, generally take on the role of client in competitions. They may at times also participate as jurors. Designers are generally the competitors, but may also take part in competitions as jury members or work with other entities to inform design competition content. These roles are further described in 1.2 Roles and Responsibilities.

Public entities

Local and regional entities are the priority audience for the guide. They may have limited experience of the competition process, and resource constraints may hinder their management capacity. This guide should be used as the benchmark for using competitions to procure built-environment projects.

Private entities

Private-sector entities may have established approaches to procurement, including competitions, but can use the guide to support and refine their processes.

Mega-projects

Characterized by established approaches and extensive experience, their unique processes may diverge from standard competition, such as longer timelines and internal juries. Mega-projects can still benefit from applying the guidance relevant to their project needs.

Design practices

Architects, urban designers, planners, landscape architects and other designers actively engage with competitions but may not always be aware of best-practice standards. They should use the guide to understand and assess the quality and fairness of competitions they choose to enter. The guide will also offer design professionals an insightful overview of the full competition process.

CLIENTS

Look out for these boxes for key information for clients, as well as other general readers.

COMPETITORS

Look out for these boxes for key information for competitors.

Built Environment Competitions

Design competitions serve as a method to select the most suitable designer for a project. These competitions are applicable across various sectors of design, encompassing interior, graphic, and industrial design. This guide focuses on three built environment design disciplines:

- **Architecture**
- **Landscape Architecture**
- **Urban Design and Masterplanning**

These are logically grouped together as the overall competition process is the same for all three disciplines. The design briefs you will develop for a discipline-specific competition will differ, but it should be acknowledged that, in some cases, a masterplanning competition may call for landscape architecture as one of its team's areas of expertise or, similarly, an architecture-led competition may require masterplanning expertise.

Architecture competitions



It is expected that architectural competitions will focus largely on civic buildings and institutions. If the intention is to commission the project from design to construction, the competitor may include engineering disciplines and cost consultants as part of their team.

While architecture competitions can commission housing, residential uses are often an integral part of a wider area plan and are, therefore, more likely to be part of a masterplanning competition.

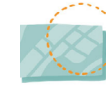
Landscape

Architecture competitions



Competitions aimed at landscape architects could encompass any aspect of the public realm, and can range in scale from a neighborhood square, to streets, to a public park or cornice. Teams might comprise ecologists, horticulturalists, water management specialists or particular expertise in nature-based solutions.

Urban Design and Masterplanning competitions



Masterplanning competitions usually address projects that aim to develop, or redevelop, a large area, in existing urban areas or in areas outside of an urban agglomeration. They generally include a mix of land uses and will require a truly multi-disciplinary team if they are being taken through to delivery. Team members, beyond masterplanners and urban designers might include people with expertise in urban infrastructure, architecture, landscape architecture, transport planning and economic development.

Types of Built Environment Competitions

There are five main types of competitions in the built environment disciplines:

- **Design competitions**
- **Ideas competitions**
- **Competitive interviews**
- **Young designer competitions**
- **Student competitions**

This section provides an overview of the key differences between these types of competitions. This guide offers specific guidance tailored to design competitions.

Design competitions

A design competition is a competitive process where design teams submit proposals for new built environment projects. There are two main types of design competitions: “open” and “invited.” Design competitions can be comprised of a “single-stage” or a “two-stage” process. Competitive dialogues may be part of certain competitions (see Section 2.2), typically in two-stage invited competitions.

The competition manager or client outlines the task, defines the timeline, and specifies evaluation criteria, all of which are communicated to competitors in advance. Submissions are then evaluated by an independent professional jury, who ultimately select the winner. All of this is described in more detail in this guide.

Competitions ensure that the focus is high quality design and, implicitly, good value for money. Furthermore, competitions allow client teams to efficiently assess available talent and evaluate whether a design team’s values align with their vision.

Design competitions can take time, which can sometimes discourage clients from choosing this approach. Instead, they may choose direct appointments, or a process focused on qualifications, past experience, text-based description of their approach, and fee. This is often referred to as an EOI (Expression of Interest), which precedes any design component.

These procurement methods may be perceived as more efficient and can provide satisfactory results. However, they frequently miss the opportunity for new talent and innovative ideas to emerge; elements often key to successful design competitions.

In summary, successful design competitions can:

- Ensure a good fit between client and consultants.
- Provide opportunities for new talent and emerging practices.
- Provide choice and diversity of design consultants.
- Encourage multi-disciplinarity.
- Allow for a forum for community and stakeholder engagement (e.g. When public exhibitions are used).
- Give a project a high profile in the industry and beyond.
- Be calibrated to different stages of a project.

CLIENTS

This guide focuses on design competitions, but certain processes, like the jury selection or competitor interviews, can apply to other competition types.

Ideas competitions

Ideas competitions generate creative concepts without committing to procurement. They encourage bold, innovative proposals for design challenges but do not necessarily lead to the appointment of a design team for implementation. These are generally competitions that are open to all.

Competitive interviews

Clients use competitive interviews to select a design team early in a project. The process begins with an open or invited expression of interest (EOI), where designers submit their profiles and examples of previous work relevant to the project. Initial thoughts or approaches to the project are outlined and no detailed design approaches are submitted. Subsequent to this a shortlist of teams are invited to participate in a competitive interview (or dialogue) process where design propositions are tabled and responded to by the client and/or jury.

Young designer competitions

Some competitions are exclusively open to designers within a specific age range. These competitions aim to help young designers launch their careers. Typically, the age limit is under 40.

Student competitions

Designers participating in student competitions must be enrolled in an accredited course or be recent graduates. Student competitions are often ideas competitions and do not necessarily result in built projects. However, they provide valuable professional experience, enhance students' portfolios and can support their career development.

CASE STUDY



ARCHITECTURE

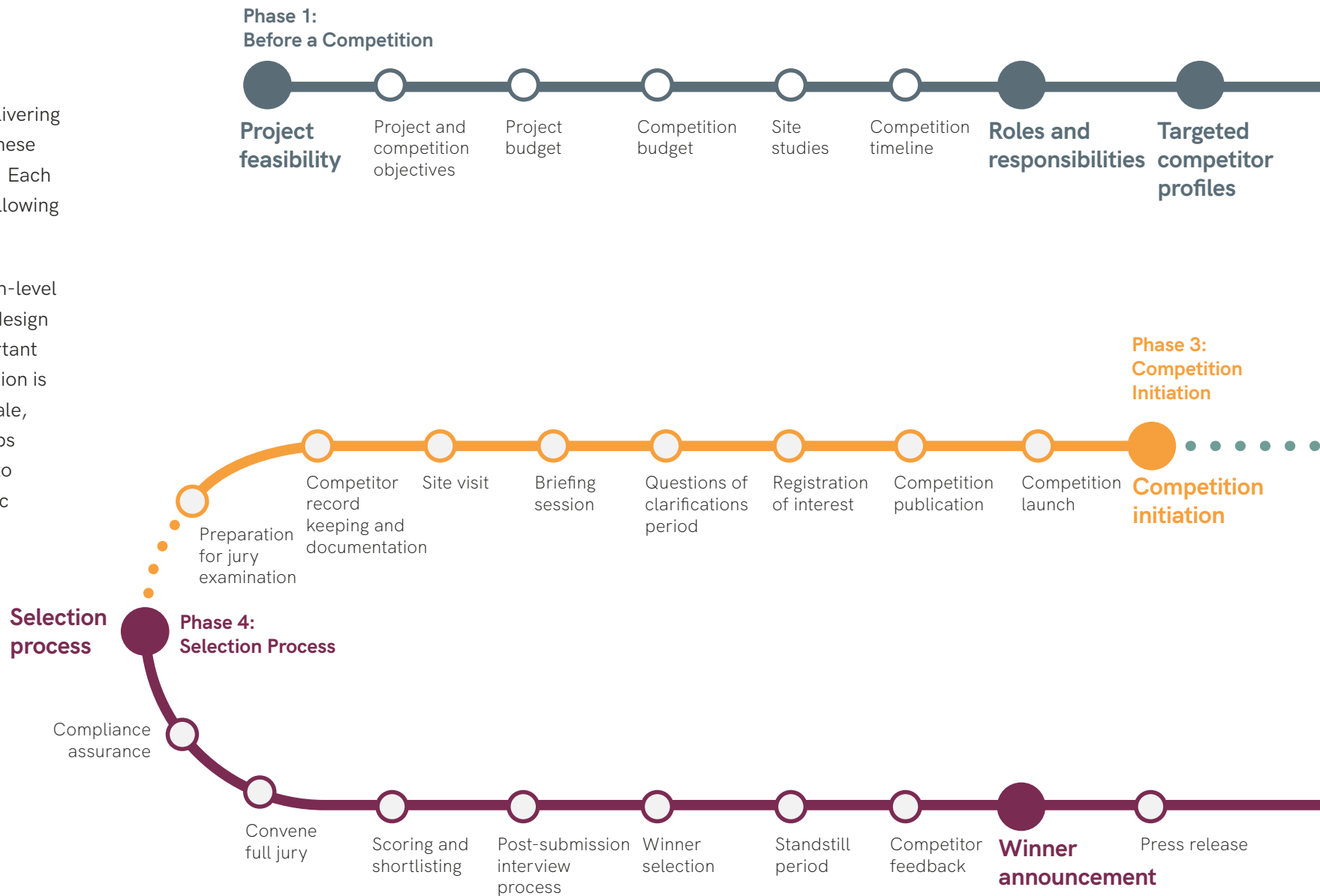
King Fahad National Library and Plaza, Riyadh

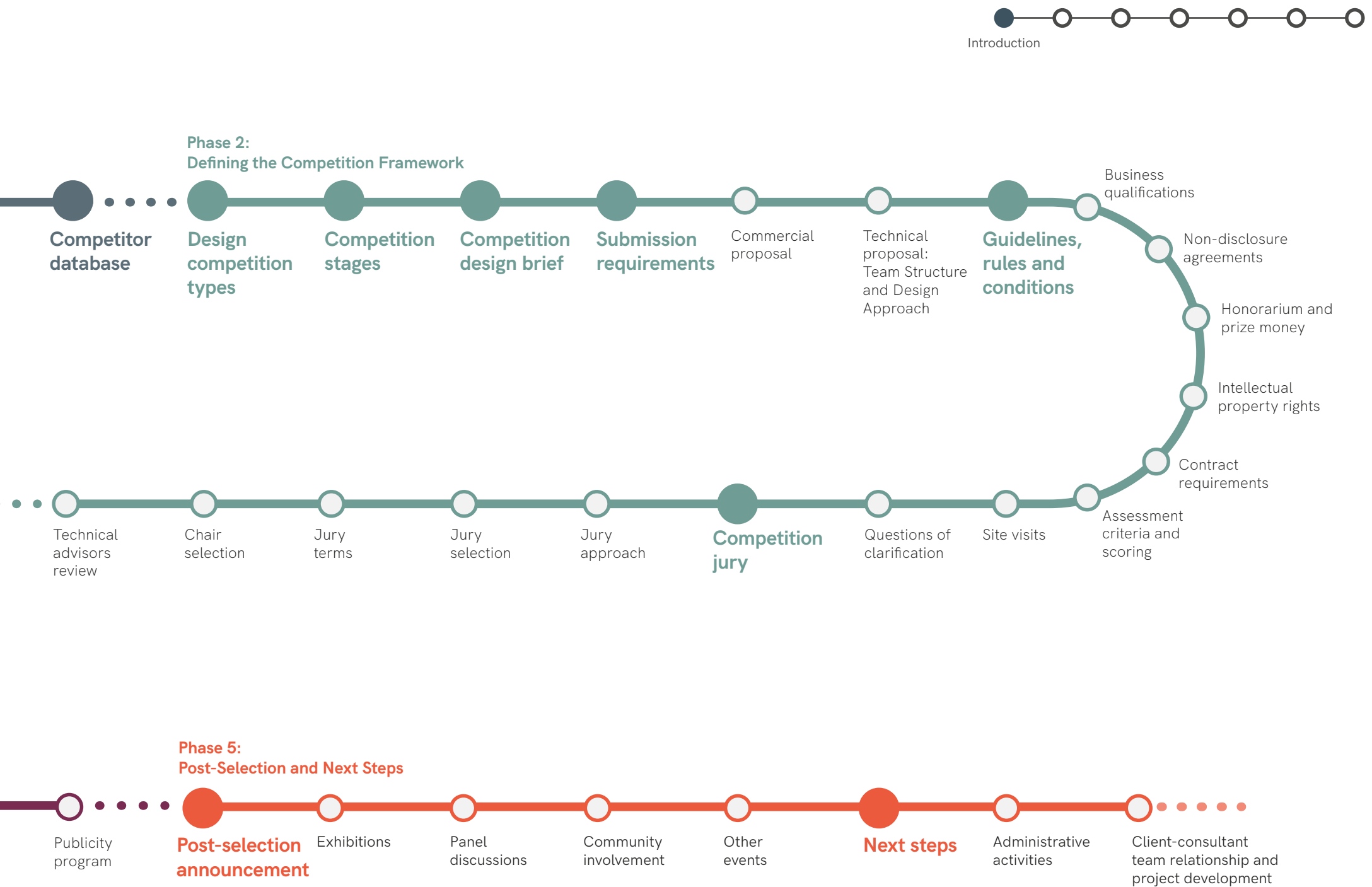
Born out of an international competition, the project demonstrates how successful competitions result in high quality design outcomes. Today, the building and adjacent square are both well-used public spaces, activated by pop-ups and seasonal events.

The Competition Process

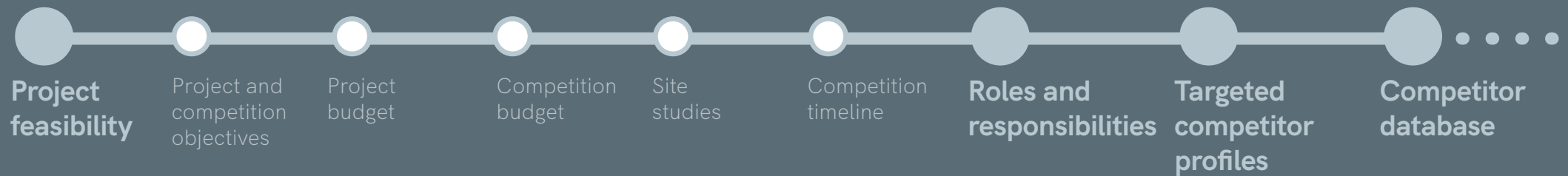
There are fifteen key steps in delivering a design competition. Some of these steps have a series of sub-steps. Each one of these is detailed in the following phases.

This diagram can be used as high-level step-by-step guide to deliver a design competition. However, it's important to remember that each competition is unique, varying by discipline, scale, and purpose. Therefore, the steps outlined in this guide may need to be adjusted based on the specific requirements of your project.





1 Before a Competition



1.1 Project Feasibility

The competition should be planned within the context of the eventual built project, taking into consideration the following key factors:

- Project and competition objectives
- Project budget
- Competition budget
- Site studies
- Competition timeline

Project and competition objectives

Prior to launching the competition, it is important to clearly define the project vision and objectives, as well as any performance indicators that will be used to measure its success. This will, in turn, define the objectives of the competition itself and inform key decisions, such as the type of design competition, the number of stages, and the potential use of competitive dialogues. The objectives of competition managers should also be taken into consideration at this stage.

CASE STUDY



Faculty of Arts, Coventry

The high-profile competition for the new Faculty of Arts building, at the University of Warwick, resulted in an award-winning building that was completed on-time and on-budget. The inclusion of a realistic project budget in the competition brief contributed to this success, allowing competitors to produce deliverable proposals within the client's budget.

Project budget

The project budget reveals the level of ambition, the project constraints and even longevity. It is important to set a realistic budget for the project as this should be included in the competition brief and forms the basis of the competition submissions. The project budget should include both the construction budget and the budget for the fees allocated to the consultants who will design and deliver the project. The competitors' design proposal and consultant team fee proposal will refer to this project budget in calculating what seems reasonable, yet competitive.

In the case of some projects, especially those at the masterplanning scale, the provision of a construction budget may be challenging. As a solution, projects of a similar scale can be utilized as a budget benchmark. Alternatively, a cost per square meter can be used to estimate an overall budget. It is important to note that these figures should be viewed as high-level approximations.

Competition budget

Competitions cost money to organize and manage. However, any project will require a budget allocation towards procurement. Competitions can save time and money and are an efficient way to generate design ideas and find a team which is the right fit for the job, both in terms of skills and collaborative potential. The cost of a competition must be considered in the context of the full cost of the design and delivery of a building/open space/masterplan. Competitions that are well-organized will not only lead to the selection of the right team but also raise the profile of the project, reducing separate expense on media coverage.

Site studies

Prior to launching a competition, studies should be conducted on the project site to ensure feasibility. At a basic level this should include engineering investigations to understand geotechnical, soil, contamination and structural conditions. For regeneration or expansion projects, data pertaining to the current context, previous uses, and historically or culturally significant info should be compiled. This information is to be included in the competition publication at a subsequent stage. For more details, refer to Section 6.1.

It is also important to understand the planning and regulatory context to ensure the envisioned use, scale and massing are permissible. No doubt, the economic and commercial setting will have already been established.

CLIENTS

Gathering site information will not only inform the project brief and budget but will also assist in the collection of base data materials to be shared with the competitors and jury.

Competition timeline

Design competitions often demand a significant investment of time which should be planned for from the beginning to ensure that enough time is allocated for each step. The diagram below provides a high-level proportional indication of a typical competition timeline. The timeline will vary and will be affected by the number of competition stages and the deliverables required from the competitors.

CLIENTS

A timeline is often included in the competition publication, highlighting key dates and interim submissions. Clients should endeavor to comply with the timeline and inform competitors promptly when there are expected delays.

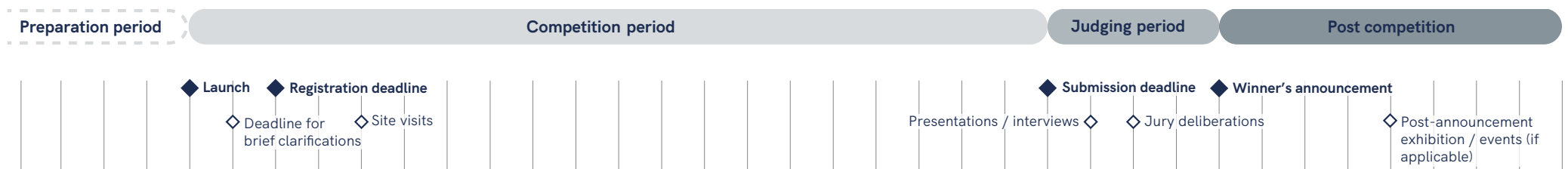


Diagram showing a sample competition timeline, highlighting key milestones and activities against the number of weeks. Refer to Section 2.2 for further details regarding competition types.

◆ Key milestones
◇ Competition activities

1.2 Competition Roles and Responsibilities

It is important that competition roles and responsibilities are clearly defined from the start, ensuring efficiency and clarity.

The five key roles in a competition are:

- **Client**
- **Competitors**
- **Competition manager**
- **Jury**
- **Technical advisors**

Client

The client is the entity that holds the project that is the subject of the design competition. They may be a public or private entity and are typically the land/property owner. The client should define a project brief, budget and timeline, as these will impact the competition. If the client does not have sufficient in-house expertise or capacity to run the competition, the client can commission a competition manager and share with them as much information as possible. The client should not have any communication with the competitors or jury once the competition has launched.

Competitors

The competitors are the built environment professionals team(s) that choose to enter a competition. The team composition will vary depending on the project/competition requirements, which may need specific expertise or experience. The competitors will be asked to define the team lead.

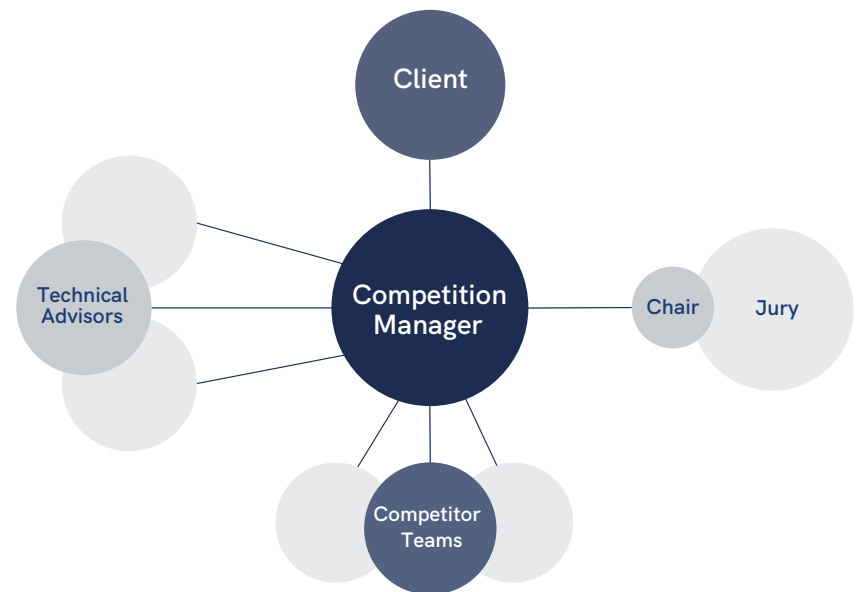


Diagram showing the relationship between the key roles involved in a design competition.

Competition manager

When commissioned by the client, the competition manager, or sponsor (these titles are interchangeable), guides the full competition process. They work with the client to ensure their objectives are conveyed through the competition and to provide advice as needed on issues such as honorarium, competition deliverables, jury selection, etc. The manager prepares and publishes all information associated with the competition, and also organizes its launch and, in some cases, post-competition activities. The manager is the single point of communication, liaising with the client, the competitors, the jury, and technical advisers.

In some cases, a client may hold competitions relatively frequently. In this case, they may consider developing their own in-house competition management team.

Jury

The jury is a group of respected peers that will assess the competition submissions. Jury members must declare that they do not have any conflicts of interest to ensure unbiased assessments. Their collective expertise should reflect the requirements for the project and should span knowledge of both the local and global context. For more detail, refer to Section 2.6.

Technical advisers

These advisers offer specific technical expertise required for a competition project. Their remit is often to reassure the jury that the project performs well technically and is ultimately deliverable. To this end advisers might include engineers, quantity surveyors, sustainability experts and people with highly specific knowledge relevant to the project. The type and level of detail of their assessment will depend on the competition discipline and brief. Their reviews occur prior to the jury convening so that their input can inform the decision.

1.3 Targeted Competitor Profile

At the outset, it is crucial to determine the types of practices and teams that are considered suitable for meeting the competition challenge. This involves more than just identifying the lead discipline within the built environment. It is essential to recommend or clearly specify the type of practice and expertise that should lead the competition response in your competition publication and other announcements. When determining which competitor profiles to target, several key factors come into play, including:

- **Lead discipline**
- **Level of experience**
- **Procurement requirements**
- **Team composition**
- **Practice location**
- **Design approach**
- **Motivation to participate**

Lead discipline

The choice of the lead consultant depends on the nature of the core project. For instance: an art museum project would typically be led by architects with relevant experience with civic buildings, while a public square would be best overseen by landscape architects.

Level of experience

Competitions may require different levels of competitor experience. For example, in some cases the winning competitor will be engaged to deliver a completed built-project, whilst in others they may only develop a concept design. In the latter case, they may then pair with what is referred to as an 'architect of record' (this is outside the competition process).

Furthermore, some complex projects demand high levels of previous experience in delivering projects of a similar type to the competition subject. In these instances, the competition will be targeted primarily at practices with a considerable track record of similar projects.

Procurement requirements

Some clients may have particular procurement obligations and requirements that must be followed. For example, some public clients may be required to procure local teams, or to provide equal opportunities to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Furthermore, local KSA classifications of practice sizes may impact the choice of competitors to target.

These considerations must be accounted for early in the process to ensure a successful competitor selection and targeting.

CLIENTS

These factors are often connected and considering them collectively ensures a comprehensive approach to targeting the right competitors.

Team composition

Additionally, you may choose to suggest the team composition. This can be highly prescriptive or left to the discretion of the competitors. Clients may express a desire for a team that combines both a substantial track record and emerging talent. This can allow for diversity of team members' age, practice scale as well as experience.

Suggestions might also be put forward regarding team members representing diverse disciplines, from other designers, to engineers, cost consultants, social value experts and ecologists. This will reflect both the type of project and the stage of design development required (in reference to RIBA¹ or other Work Stages).

Practice location

Certain projects may be highly context-sensitive and require a deep understanding of local setting and situation, especially in relation to cultural issues or concerns. However, in some instances an international perspective is advantageous, allowing lessons learned from elsewhere to inform design proposals. Teams may be encouraged to bring both a global and local perspective to a project.

Design approach

There may be projects where the objective is to bring fresh thinking and innovation to a project, and it is less important whether or not a practice has produced designs and delivered similar projects. The focus may be on practices' approach to the project, regardless of the project typology.

“Architecture competition organizers should encourage smaller practices to enter, making a practice’s size and diversity key criteria for entry.”²

Motivation to participate

As you move forward in planning your competition, it is essential to assess how certain decisions (such as shortlist competitor numbers and process, timelines or deliverable requirements, or honoraria) may impact competitors' motivation to participate.

Competitors are generally less likely to engage in competitions if their chances of winning are slim. For example, if the shortlist is too extensive (especially in invited competitions), or if the timeline is too tight and the expected deliverables are overly lengthy, potential competitors may be hesitant to participate. Striking the right balance across these factors is crucial.

Once you have agreed on the desired competitor profile, you may consider using a competitor database.

CASE STUDY



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KSA Pavilion, Osaka 2025 Expo

The winning entry by world-renowned architects Fosters + Partners was supported by digital media experts Squint/Opera and multi-disciplinary studio 59 Productions. The design centered on KSA's ongoing transformation, connecting past and future through stories of people and places.

1.4 Competitor Database

A competitor database is a structured collection of information on built environment companies or individuals. This database can help filter competitors based on specific criteria, such as discipline, practice scale, area of expertise, or country of origin.

Whether you already have a designer database from previous procurement processes or decide to build one from scratch, it will prove valuable. The database can be useful for shortlisting purposes in invited competitions, and for marketing your competition to broader audiences in open competitions. The more up-to-date the database is, the more useful it will be. It should therefore be viewed as an ongoing resource that is continually updated and tailored to the procurement eligibility criteria posed by the client.

HOW-TO

Build a competitor database

Competitor databases are useful for tracking existing or new relationships with potential designers and streamlining shortlisting processes based on your targeted competitor profile.

Step 1: Select the right tool

- ☐ Choose an appropriate tool for creating your competitor database. You can use an Excel spreadsheet or create a custom page within an existing application.
- ☐ Ensure that the selected tool is easy to update and robust enough to handle large amounts of data.

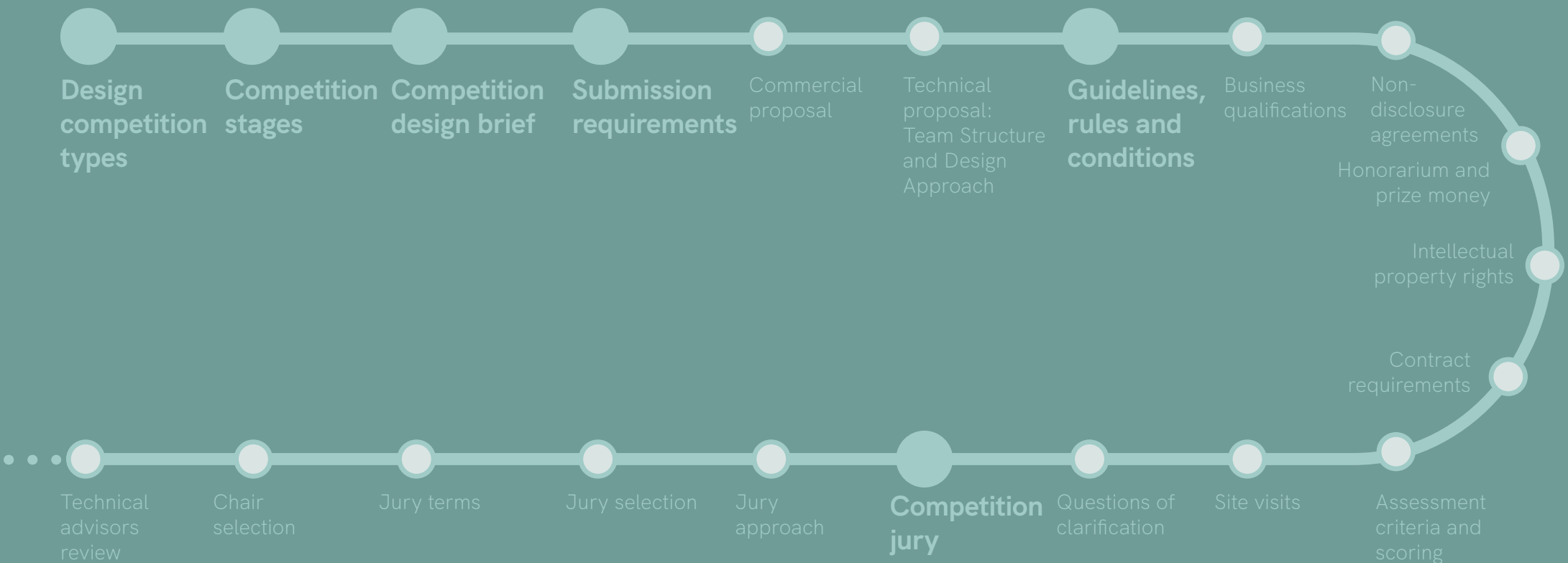
Step 2: Compile your contacts

- ☐ Add designers you have previously worked with to the database. Include details such as their names, disciplines, practice sizes, locations, and previous experience.
- ☐ Additionally, research and add other designers you are interested in collaborating with. Make sure to differentiate between existing and new contacts in the database.

Step 3: Filter for your competition

- ☐ Based on the targeted competitor profile filter the database to create a longlist of potential competitors.

2 Defining the Competition Framework



2.1 Design Competition Types

It is important to identify the type of competition you would like to organize. Your selection will be in relation to the scale of the project being commissioned, its budget, timeline, and the type of consultant teams you would like to attract.

It will also depend on how open or fixed the client would like the proposals to be. For example, is a team being procured based on how they think and approach the challenge or what they envision is the appropriate solution to the challenge? This will influence the composition of the team the competitors will assemble.

The type and duration of the competition should also reflect the budget and organizational resource available as part of the overall project. There are broadly two types of competitions:

- **Open competitions**
- **Invited competitions**

Open competitions

As the name implies, in an open competition, anyone can provide a response to the call for entries. This will naturally only be attractive to those who are interested in the competition subject. In the first instance, the competition announcement will set the tone in terms of expected deliverables and outcomes. This will provide an indication of the disciplines and level of experience expected to be the best fit for the ultimate commission. Submissions are often, though not necessarily, anonymous.

Invited competitions

The client or competition manager will compile a list of practices that are considered able to fulfil the project brief. The selected practices are then approached directly and invited to form their teams of relevant experts that will support their design proposal. Additionally, it is advisable to maintain a list of backup teams in case any of the invited practices decline the invitation to participate.

CASE STUDY



Madinat Al-Irfan, Oman

Five teams were carefully chosen and invited to participate in this single-stage invited competition. The goal was to develop a sustainable masterplan framework for a new downtown area in Muscat, incorporating local heritage, addressing complex topography, and envisioning a modern Omani city center.

Advantages and disadvantages of competition types

	ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
OPEN COMPETITIONS	- The client will receive a wide range of design solutions from individual practitioners and teams, including emerging practices. - The design proposal may take precedence over the previous experience of practitioners, giving younger designers an opportunity to win the commission. - This approach can be used for projects of any scale. - Open to all participants, offering equal opportunities for everyone.	- Open competitions can attract a wide range of participants, including inexperienced designers. As a result, some proposals may be overly ambitious or unrealistic in terms of feasibility, cost, or constructability. - There is no pre-screening process to ensure the quality of submissions. As a result, clients may receive a mix of high and poor quality proposals. Evaluating and comparing such a diverse set of designs can be challenging and time-consuming. - The submission requirements of open competitions are often less extensive and thus the proposals will be less detailed. - Designers invest time, creativity, and resources without any guarantee of winning, often times with slim chances of winning, depending on the number of submissions. This can be a financial burden and may divert attention from other projects, discouraging some practices from participating.
INVITED COMPETITIONS	- The client can specifically select practices with relevant experience and expertise aligned with the project requirements, ensuring a focused and qualified pool of competitors. - Teams can be formed combining experienced practices (usually the lead consultant) with younger, potentially more innovative firms, encouraging fresh ideas and creative approaches that lead to exciting design proposals.	- A smaller pool of participants can limit the extent of design approaches and ideas generated through the competition process - Shortlisting practices does not guarantee their participation, and they may decline to participate regardless of being invited.

CLIENTS

In competitions where experienced professionals are invited, it is recommended to encourage them to join forces with emerging and local practices.

COMPETITORS

In open competitions it is imperative that competitors ensure their eligibility to participate as the requirements may vary across competitions.

This table outlines a non-exhaustive list of advantages and disadvantages to open and invited competitions.

2.2 Competition Stages

Competitions typically fall into the following stage-categories:

- **Single-stage**
- **Two-stage**
- **Two-stage with competitive dialogue**

Single-stage

In single stage competitions, teams are selected based on their submissions to a single call for entries. Typically, this type of competition requires competitors to provide information about their team, including its structure, relevant experience, and approach, illustrated through their design proposal.

A jury reviews all submitted material, taking into account the competition brief and deliverable requirements.

It is unlikely that a single-stage competition for a client seeking a highly professional team would occur with an open competition. However, a single-stage approach may be taken for an invited competition, as appropriate vetting will have already taken place to create the invitee list.

CLIENTS

In all competition types, competitors are expected to demonstrate compliance with various requirements. These may include professional accreditations, insurance and liability, health and safety practices, workplace equality, and financial information.



Diagram showing a sample single-stage competition timeline

Two-stage

This approach involves an initial stage that calls for an Expression of Interest (EOI) when design teams submit information pertaining to their team's skill sets, structure, relevant experience, and proposed project approach. The latter might include high level sketch ideas or a thought-piece, summarizing the competitors' interpretation of the EOI and

proposed design approach.

(Note: a thought-piece may also be included in the second stage of a two-stage competition.)

Following the first stage, the jury assesses the entries and selects a shortlist of competitors who will proceed to the second stage. In the second stage, a project-specific design proposal is required. The brief for this can vary in its level of detail.

CLIENTS

In the case of a two-stage competition, especially where there is a competitive dialogue, clients/competition managers should provide the competitors with a clear and fixed timeline and set of milestones to enable competitors to plan resourcing and production.

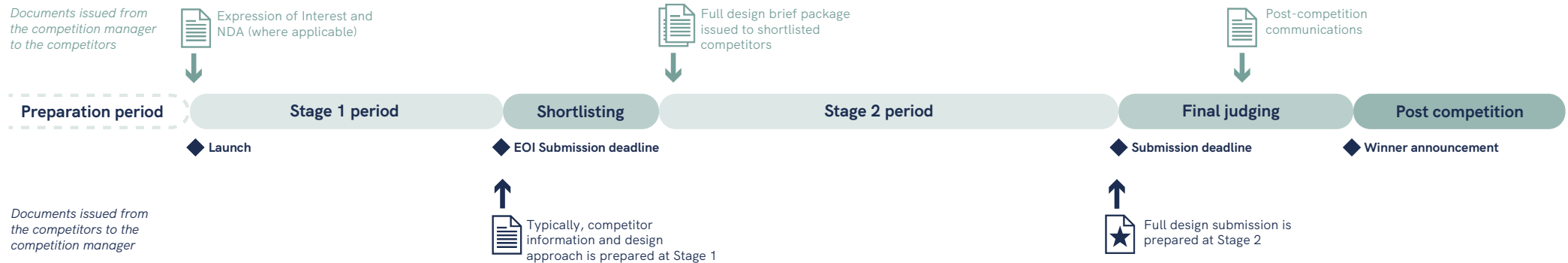


Diagram showing a sample two-stage competition timeline

Two-stage with competitive dialogue

Some competitions will benefit from mid-competition engagements to enhance the relationship between the competitors and the client and ensure that the proposals meet the project brief and client's needs. For this, a variation of a two-stage competition, called a "Competitive Interview/Dialogue" competition is suitable.

In this approach, 2-3 engagement sessions are used to allow the client to provide work-in-progress competition feedback. Jury attendance is optional. These sessions are organized as individual online or in-person reviews or workshops for each competitor. As such, the number of competitors significantly impacts the expected workload. Throughout this process, it is crucial for the client to maintain the same engagement procedure for all competitors to ensure fairness. When considering the number

of sessions, it is important to note that too many sessions can disrupt the design team's ability to develop the design and implement previous feedback.

Even though the client's involvement is critical in these sessions, it is recommended that the jury is also present. This can ensure a degree of fairness and transparency throughout the competition process, as well as improve the quality of feedback that competitors receive, due to the jury's expertise.

CLIENTS

To maximize the benefit of competitive dialogue sessions, it is important to ensure that the client representatives who attend are relevant, with sufficient project authority and expertise to provide useful, long-term feedback.



Diagram showing a sample two-stage competition timeline with competitive dialogue

2.3 Competition Design Brief

The competition design brief is a concise document that outlines the ambitions and main considerations for your project. It is a critical part of the process, as it sets clear expectations and goals for everyone involved, including, most importantly, the competitors. It will also help define goals, avoid misunderstanding, set standards and act as a reference point for all parties involved throughout the project. The clearer the design brief is, the greater the chances of receiving design proposals that fulfil the project ambitions.

The competition design brief should clarify what you want to achieve, what you expect from the working relationship and when, and if any limitations apply. It should outline both the qualitative and the quantitative aspects of the project. The project vision should be succinctly stated. As much as possible the desired character of the building/place should be

described. The brief should indicate the sphere of influence the project will have spatially, economically and socially. The brief is also an opportunity for the client to articulate their objectives and targets in terms of sustainability and resilience. It is important that it strikes a balance between requiring specific elements and being flexible, to allow a range of innovative proposals.

HOW-TO

Write a design brief



The design brief is the key method for the client to communicate the project objectives and needs to everyone involved, and to convey essential site information and requirements. This starts with a clear set of objectives.

Step 1: Clarify project objectives

- ☐ The client should hold internal workshops to determine and agree the core project vision and design objectives. Internal agreement on key aspects is essential for a successful brief.
- ☐ Agree the key functional and technical requirements for a successful proposal.

Step 2: Compile necessary information

- ☐ Compile the information required to support the design proposals, (see Section 6.1, Base data package). Whilst competitors will conduct their own site research, the more relevant information is provided, the better they can fulfil the brief.

Step 3: Develop the document

- ☐ The information should be presented in a concise document, with a clear hierarchy between the core requirements and additional information. See Section 6.1 for a full list of contents.

This diagram provides a full list of the information required in the brief, which should be tailored according to the competition discipline and scale.

It is also important to note that the competition brief may differ from the project brief, depending on the objectives of the competition. For example, time constraints may require a simplified brief that competitors can respond to within the competition timeframe. Alternatively, a competition that seeks to find an innovative design team, may use a more open and flexible competition brief designed to inspire creative design approaches.

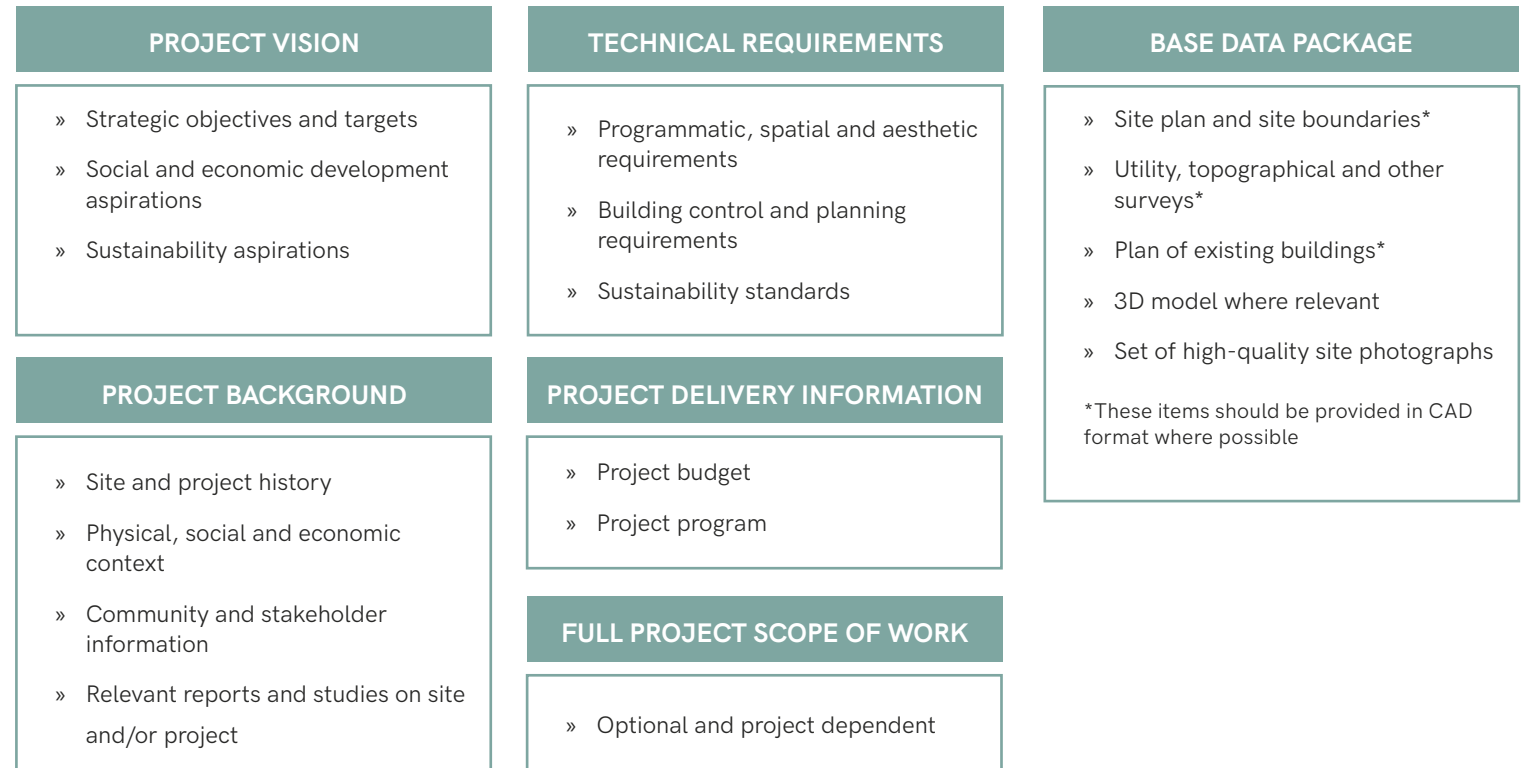


Diagram showing the sample content of a competition brief

2.4 Submission Requirements

Setting the submission requirements requires careful consideration. The competitors' submissions provide information about their experience, team members and structure, and financial standing. Most importantly, their design proposal will provide a sense of their approach and innovation they bring to the project brief.

The following pages provide further information on the submission requirements:

- **Commercial proposal**
- **Technical proposal: Team structure**
- **Technical proposal: Design approach**

This guide applies to all types of design competitions, whether they are open, invited, single-stage, or two-stage. The distinctions between these competition types and stages are in the level of detail required in the submitted proposals and the submission timelines.

In a one-stage competition, the technical and commercial proposals are submitted simultaneously.

In a two-stage competition the first stage will consist of an Expression of Interest (EOI). It is recommended that this has a maximum page limit and requests relatively high-level information pertaining to:

- Expertise and motivation for applying.
- A brief written description of the team's understanding of the design challenge.
- Appropriate examples of past projects.
- Client references.
- Financial information and levels of insurance cover held.

The second stage may allow for, or request that, some of the above is expanded upon or may just focus on the design proposal and/or thought-piece.

It will be important to stipulate the weighting of each requirement of the submission. The quality of the design proposal should be the most heavily weighted to ensure teams are committed to this critical aspect of the competition. It is recommended that this comprises at minimum 50% of the scoring. Team composition, structure and experience should be in the range of 20-30% with the remaining points being allocated to fee proposal, if applicable.

CLIENTS

It is important to adjust the required deliverables to the scale of the project, the budget, the timeline and the honorarium.

COMPETITORS

Make sure that submission requirements are carefully followed, including formatting and word/page limits. Failure to do this may result in disqualification.

Commercial proposal

The client will undoubtedly have an overall budget for the project. It is left to their discretion as to whether they disclose the amount allocated to consultant fees within the competition brief. Including a budget for fees for design services will allow for the winner selection to focus more on the quality of the design proposal and team composition and experience. Some clients may prefer to gauge the market and, therefore, not provide a budget. In either case, competitors are requested to provide a fee breakdown so that the client can understand how much time and resources are being allocated to each stage of the project and any expected expenses. Clients can also request information on hourly or daily rates for team members at different pay grades.

Technical proposal: Team structure

It is important to understand who the lead consultant sees as critical to involve in the project from within their design practice and what experience they have as an individual. It is critical to understand who will be the Project Director (PD) and the Project Manager (PM). Beyond the PD and PM, it can be assumed that every project will have intermediate and junior staff members on the team. It is recommended that all team members are profiled.

Some practices offer a full range of the expertise required on a project. However, the brief may stipulate that it is desirable to bring a diverse team to the project, implying that SMEs (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) and other expertise outside the lead competitor should be included on the team.

Each of the collaborating practices should be required to provide information on the team members, their individual experience and what the practice as a whole offers in terms of relevant experience. The competition requirements can also call for professional registration of at least one team member. This will be important for architectural competitions where the project is to be built.

Adequate space should be allowed for CVs and/or biographies of team members. It is also recommended that an organizational chart is included describing the structure of reporting and responsibilities. This should also clarify who the main client contact(s) will be.

Technical proposal: Design approach

This is the most complex aspect of the submission as it is here that the call for a design proposal is outlined, and the brief described. Please refer to section 2.3 for more information on the competition brief.

Developing the design proposal requirements demands several decisions on the part of the client. The client must decide how much design detail is reasonably required from competitors. A delicate balance is to be struck between being prescriptive and allowing for interpretation. Projects that have a tight timeline to construction may prefer being prescriptive as the transition from competition submission to project documentation will be more efficient. However, it is generally recommended to allow for some flexibility as it is the responsibility of the design team to select the mode of representation that best

conveys their design proposal. This, in itself, can be revealing.

The competition may stipulate the following submission requirements:

- Types and quantity of images.
- Drawings at different scales and/or views.
- Presentation format of proposal (such as A4, A3, booklet, boards, etc.) and printed copies (if required).
- Statement describing the approach to the brief (with word or page limit).

CASE STUDY



LANDSCAPE
ARCHITECTURE

Liverpool Waterfront

The National Museum of Liverpool hosted a competition for their new waterfront transformation. They innovatively included the construction of a small pavilion as part of the stage 2 deliverables. This allowed teams to demonstrate their design approach, whilst producing interactive life-size installations for a public showcase on the site.

The table below outlines the typical requirements for all three disciplines. These are not exhaustive and are not all mandatory. Submission requirements should always be bespoke to your competition.

CLIENTS

The scale of the drawings always depends on the breadth of the project site.

DISCIPLINES	TYPICAL REQUIREMENTS	
 ARCHITECTURE	• Site plan including surrounding environment • Site plan showing building mass • Floor plans • Facade elevations • Building sections and elevations	• Interior and external perspectives • Video or animation of a specific length • High level landscape concept (if applicable) • Physical model
 LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	• Overall concept plan or drawing • Site plan • Cross sections • Diagrams, visualizations and sketches of character areas	• Visualizations demonstrating planting intent and character • Fly through video or animation of a specific length • Physical model (if applicable)
 URBAN DESIGN AND MASTERPLANNING	• Diagrams illustrating approach • Overall concept plan • Site plan • Plans of key areas • Massing drawings (such as axonometric drawings)	• Visualizations of key areas • Physical model • Fly through video or animation of a specific length

2.5 Guidelines, Rules and Conditions

In the context of design competitions, the guidelines, rules, and conditions govern the relationship between the client and the participating design teams. Public entities should also refer to the procurement system in Saudi Arabia for the relevant rules and conditions applicable to competitions.

These terms outline various aspects of the competition process, such as the submission requirements, assessment criteria, intellectual property rights, and other relevant details. In particular, the following should be addressed:

- **Business qualifications**
- **Non-disclosure agreements**
- **Honorarium and prize money**
- **Intellectual property rights**
- **Contract requirements**
- **Assessment criteria and scoring**
- **Site visits**
- **Questions of clarification**

Business qualifications

There will be a section devoted to general company information. It is advisable that the client work with their legal team to agree what stipulations should be made from the outset. The request for business information may include questions pertaining to the following issues:

- Grounds for discretionary exclusion, such as conflicts of interest or prior misrepresentation.
- Economic and financial standing.
- Required level of liability insurance and professional indemnity insurance.
- Data protection.
- Environmental health and safety practices.

Non-disclosure agreements

Non-disclosure agreements (NDA) may be used for projects that require more confidentiality. For example, if the project is not yet announced in the public domain.

An NDA is a legal agreement that should only be used when essential. It sets out confidentiality terms that are usually a pre-condition for competition participation. Competitors are typically required to sign the NDA before receiving full competition information. As such, they are more applicable to invited and/or two-stage competitions.

It is important to note that NDAs may discourage some competitors due to the increased paperwork and the reduced information available on the competition.

CLIENTS

The guidelines, rules and conditions should be agreed at the start of the competition and communicated clearly with competitors in the competition publication (see Section 3.1). They should not be changed once the competition has started.

Honorarium and prize money

Providing an honorarium to all competitors invited to submit a design proposal is considered good practice. Honorariums are often used in invited competitions, while open competitions may award cash prizes. Both serve as a statement of appreciation, recognizing the work, including ideation, time, and energy, that teams invest in a competition submission.

Generally, practices invited to participate will do so, if they are busy with other projects they may decline to participate if the honorarium is deemed to be too small. There is no fixed formula to calculate an honorarium or prize money, but the amount will depend on several factors:

- Overall project budget.
- Submission expectations, especially with regard to the level of detail and production of materials required.
- Duration of time allotted towards ideation and production of materials (note: design teams will always work to the maximum allocated time).

Intellectual property rights

In the context of a competition, intellectual property rights (IP) govern who has the right to control the use of drawings, designs and documents produced by the competitors for the competition. While the client may desire to own these rights, it is best-practice and more attractive for competitors that, as the original creators, they retain these rights and guarantee a license for the client's use.

In either case, the arrangement will depend on many factors including client needs, the project and the context. IP should be agreed and communicated clearly at the start of the competition.

Contract requirements

It is best practice for a draft of the project contract to be included in the competition call for proposals. This enables competitors to review and clarify contract requirements. Once a winner is selected, the client can proceed directly to appointing the consultant team using the final contract agreed upon with the winning competitors.

If a draft contract cannot be provided, at a minimum, the competition publication should indicate what the terms of engagement will be post-competition.

COMPETITORS

ADC recommends that members only participate in competitions that are transparent and impartial. Competitors should always assess the guidelines, rules, and conditions of a competition before entering.

Assessment criteria and scoring

The competition publication should clearly state what the submission criteria are and how the assessment will be made and recorded. It is usual to set benchmarks that are used against each required element of the competition. These are often articulated as: “poor”, “satisfactory”, “good”, and “excellent”. These may also be correlated with numerical scores. This is particularly useful if the value of responses varies between the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the competition.

It is quite usual, for example, for the Commercial proposal (the fee proposal) to be worth 20-40% of the assessment against the technical score (methodology and approach to the project, the design proposition) worth 60-80%. It is recommended that the technical aspects are never worth less than 60% of the full score as design should take precedence. Public entities should refer to the Saudi Arabia procurement system to ensure they align with the prescribed criteria scoring and assessments.

Site visits

Applicants can be given the opportunity to visit the site and/or attend an open briefing session, online or in person. A site visit privileges practices that are relatively local to the site. Many teams, even if led by an international design consultant, will benefit from having a locally-based team member. The diversity of the team composition, including a balance of local and international expertise, may influence the quality of the proposal and ultimately, the jury decision.

Questions of clarification

All competitions must provide an opportunity for competitors to raise questions on the brief. This will be allotted a fixed amount of time and conclude at least a few weeks before the submission deadline. A document providing responses to all questions must be circulated to all applicants.

COMPETITORS

Local competitors may be at an advantage if a site visit or in-person briefing is held. Consider how you may collaborate with a local practice or local team member to ensure your design team is represented.

2.6 Competition Jury

The selection of the right jury members is critical to the success of any competition. The jury profiles and composition will directly impact competitor participation and can even attract competitors.

The following should be considered:

- **Jury approach**
- **Jury selection**
- **Jury terms**
- **Chair selection**
- **Technical advisors review**

Jury approach

Some clients will choose members from within their organization, favoring a specific understanding of the project or local community. Others will prefer external experts or renowned designers to consider broader trends and ideas when selecting the winner. A combination of both approaches can also add value.

Jury selection

The majority of the jury members should have expertise in one or more aspects of the relevant discipline, with professional experience and qualifications equivalent or higher than the standards required for the competition.

For example, if the competition is for the design of a new library, jury members should include qualified architects with extensive experience in designing this building type. Other jury members may have expertise in building sustainability, or may be user stakeholders, such as a head librarian or building manager, or the ultimate operator of the space.

CASE STUDY



LANDSCAPE
ARCHITECTURE

Birmingham Centenary Square

This design competition and project sought to revive a prominent public square in Birmingham. The selected jury panel contained the appropriate expertise and diversity including, senior urban design and landscaping expertise, Architects, members of the client body and local council, and two stakeholder representatives.

Depending on the project and its aspirations, it may be useful to have both local and national/international jury members to balance knowledge of the local requirements with experience and innovation from further afield.

It is recommended that the jury is comprised of an odd number of people to ensure there cannot be a tie in scores if and when the scoring is down to two candidates. A minimum of three and a maximum of seven members is recommended, depending on whether the selected chairperson is afforded a vote.

Alternate jury members can be appointed to minimize the impact of absences due to unforeseen circumstances, such as illness. Alternate jurors must attend all jury meetings, but do not have voting rights unless officially appointed to replace an absent jury member.

Jury terms

All jury members should be named in the competition publication. The jury members must commit to participating in the full selection process to ensure consistency. The number of engagements that this will require will depend on the competition type, for example, if it is one-stage, two-stage or if “competitive dialogue” is used. Jury members must declare that they do not have any conflicts of interest. The following are points indicating best practice:

- Communicate clearly from the outset whether the jury has the authority to directly select the winner or if their role is purely advisory to the client.
- Jury members cannot take part in any part of the competition, directly or indirectly.

- Jury members must not communicate individually with any participants whilst the competition is on-going, unless they are participating in a pre-defined competitive dialogue process.
- All jury expenses should be covered by the client. It is at the discretion of the client whether jury members receive remuneration for their work.
- The jury must be well-briefed to ensure that they are clear on the vision and objectives of the project.
- Familiarize jury with the design proposal brief and submission requirements.

CLIENTS

The selected jury and appointed chair must remain the same throughout the process regardless of the number of competitions stages.

Chair selection

A chairperson should be selected by either the client or elected by the jury in the initial jury session. Their role is to represent the jury, moderate the jury sessions and ensure the rules and regulations are respected during the judging process. The chair should be someone with skills in timekeeping and ensuring that all jury members have equal opportunity to voice their thoughts. They will also be tasked with announcing the jury's final decision.

Technical advisors review

If projects are of a high level of complexity, it may be necessary to have a group of independent technical advisors. Depending on the project the technical advisors may be cost consultants, engineers, sustainability experts, etc. Their role is to ensure proposals are viable and deliverable: their findings should be made available to the competition jury before the winner is selected.

Other non-voting advisors may be included, such as other specialist consultants who may have already been appointed.

HOW-TO

Select a jury



Juries should be both project-specific and discipline specific. The steps below summarize the general jury selection process.

Step 1: Define your jury approach

- ☐ Do you favor a deep understanding of the project and local context, or external experts to consider broader trends and ideas?

Step 2: Select your jury

- ☐ Depending on your defined approach, shortlist jury members that are site and discipline specific. You may consider:
 - Senior regional or local authority members.
 - Senior designers' discipline and

typology-specific experience.

- Relevant representatives from site-specific stakeholder groups.
- Academic experts from national, regional or local universities.
- Field-specific experts (for example, curators or artists for a gallery competition).
- Senior members of national professional bodies.
- Ecologist or nature expert (if applicable).

Step 3: Brief the jury and chair selection

- ☐ Meet with the jury and ensure jury members have clearly understood the project, the jury terms and elect the chair (if applicable).

3 Competition Initiation



3.1 Competition Initiation

In order to attract the desired quality of competitors it is important to promote and disseminate information about the competition in the right places at the right time.

The type and timing of a competition will also impact the quality and number of competitors, even when participants are being invited. For instance, the competition may be taking place in alignment with other high-profile activities and there is a benefit to announcing it in conjunction with those. An example might be that an exposition is occurring, and within that design competitions for pavilions are being held. In this case, the expo and competitions might be fortuitously linked in any press and public relations.

On the other hand, a design competition should not be launched at the same time as other design competitions as this will dilute the competitor pool as many may not have the resources to enter multiple competitions simultaneously.

It is advisable to promote the competition widely especially if the first stage is open to the whole profession as this can also mean that younger designers, who are employed in medium or larger practices, become aware of the competition and may potentially participate, even when their practice is not planning to be involved.

The following key steps should be considered:

- **Competition launch**
- **Competition publication**
- **Registration of interest**
- **Questions of clarification period**
- **Briefing session**
- **Site visit**
- **Competitor record keeping and documentation**
- **Preparation for the jury examination**

CLIENTS

The competition launch approach will vary depending on the number of competition stages, and impacts competition publication access, briefings and potential site visits.

Competition launch

Open competitions should be announced and advertised in media such as:

- Design trade journals.
- Social media targeted to the design disciplines.
- The website of the client entity and the competition promoter/manager.
- Any national and international official online platforms or portals where design competitions are traditionally uploaded and announced.
- Newsletters and industry channels.

The competition launch should clearly state participant eligibility and provide a brief overview of the project vision (if that has been established), lead design discipline, the competition client and/or sponsor and the deadlines for registration of interest and submissions.

Ideally the jury would also be announced at this time as naming those eminent individuals can act as an enticement, increasing the credibility of the competition. As well, the awards and prizes should be stipulated. Generally, the award is being commissioned to be the design team for the project. In some instances, there may also be awards of recognition and/or planned exhibitions of all entries that will provide even the shortlisted or losing teams with some exposure.

In the case of an invited competition all the invitees should be notified at the same time. This should occur via direct contact (in person or by telephone) followed by an official email/letter of invitation. Non-disclosure agreements (NDA) may need to be signed prior to releasing any documents (such as the competition publication) to the invited competitors.

Competition publication

This document, prepared by the competition manager with input from the client, includes the competition brief, rules and timeline of the competition, jury and award information. The length and detail vary depending on the scale, type and number of stages. The dissemination of the publication also depends on the confidentiality of the project.

COMPETITORS

Competitors should regularly check relevant media sources to keep themselves updated on new competition opportunities.

CLIENTS

Clients can refer to publicly available documents from successful competitions on the websites of established Competition Managers. These documents, while not fully representative of all competition information, provide useful precedents for tone and formatting.

Registration of interest

Access to the competition publication should ideally be managed through an online portal to ensure equal access for all participants. In open or single stage competitions, once registered, competitors should receive the full competition publication.

In a two-stage competition, participants may be required to register their interest in competing, confirm that they do not have any conflicts of interest, and sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) before gaining access to the competition publication. This can be done either through email or via a portal. The brief included at stage 1 is usually high-level, and the full design brief is issued only to short-listed competitors at stage 2.

Questions of clarification period

The competition conditions should specify precisely how and when questions of clarification from competitors are to be raised and answered. Questions should be submitted through the online portal. The responses to the questions should be published for all competitors to view, ensuring parity across participants. It should not be revealed who asked what question.

The clarification period should be between 2 and 4 weeks depending on the complexity of the project and competition requirements. Answers to the questions may be provided incrementally, for example, once a week. Alternatively, they may be provided in the week following the question submission deadline. This is preferable as many of the questions may be the same and this entails only having to respond to them once.

Questions may relate to:

- The competition terms of engagement.
- The project brief.
- Background information on the site.
- Information reasonably required to prepare a compliant entry.

CLIENTS

At times, the competition manager might conduct a market engagement survey to gauge potential competitors' interest using generalized competition information. Those interested sign an NDA to access the full competition materials.

Briefing session

A briefing session may be held either before or after practices register to participate. The timing of the session will determine the level of detail provided. If it is held prior to registration the briefing is essentially an extension of the competition launch. It allows the client entity to present the ambitions of the project and explain in person, or online the expectations of the competition.

In a two-stage competition with competitive dialogue, a clear and fixed timeline and milestones should be provided, to help competitors plan effectively.

If the first stage of the competition is open, and the briefing session is held in person, it will likely only be attended by local practices. Where possible having a hybrid setup, or recording the meeting, could make the briefing session more widely accessible.

Site visit

A site visit allows the client and competitors to meet in person and, even in the context of having all the competitors face-to-face, it will allow all parties to get a better sense of personalities and compatibilities. A site visit is only to be held at the second stage of a competition when teams have been shortlisted, or for an invited competition.

Even in this situation, it may be difficult for all teams to attend a site visit, unless remuneration for travel is included in an honorarium. This reinforces the need for the project brief to include comprehensive information about the site and its context. In some instances, visiting the site may not be possible, if there are sensitivities associated with the existing site users or governmental restrictions.

CLIENTS

To maintain fairness and transparency, the client and competition manager should ensure that all competitors have equal access to the site and briefing and clarification opportunities.

COMPETITORS

Question periods, briefing sessions and site visits are critical moments of interaction with the client and the site. Competitors should take advantage of these opportunities to better understand the client objectives and project brief.

Competitor record keeping and documentation

A system should be put in place to ensure that all competition submissions are appropriately recorded. Record keeping should include the name of the practice lead, the team lead, their address and professional accreditation if required, team composition, and whether any issues of note have emerged at the submission stage, such as if the submission was on time or if there were any extenuating circumstances.

It is expected that submissions will be electronic which should expedite record keeping. However, in the event that the submissions include hard copies or models, these should be photographed and filed with the digital information provided by each team.

Preparation for the jury examination

The jury do not need to be concerned with the baseline compliance of the competition submissions. They should only be given the compliant submissions for deliberation and assessment.

It is important that the jury are rigorously briefed on the assessment criteria and scoring system.

Some competitions will require a dedicated Technical Review Panel. This panel should convene ahead of the general jury so that they can agree concerns and potentially formulate recommendations to the main jury.

The technical proposal representing each competition submission should be shared with the jury ahead of the formal jury deliberations and selection process. Where relevant, cost consultants may be mobilized to prepare a report evaluating if the submitted proposals are aligned with the project budget.

How-to:

Launch the competition



From announcing the competition to recording entries, each step plays a crucial role in ensuring a fair and successful design challenge for all competitors.

Step 1: Announce the competition

- ☐ For open competitions, use various channels (such as design trade journals, social media, and your website) to announce the competition.
- ☐ Provide essential information, including the client, project overview, lead discipline, participant eligibility, jury, key dates and awards or prizes.
- ☐ For invited competitions, notify all invitees at once, via a call or in-person and follow up with an official email/letter.

Step 2: Respond to clarifications

- ☐ Clearly specify how and when participants can submit clarifications.
- ☐ Publish the responses for all competitors, at the end of the clarification period.

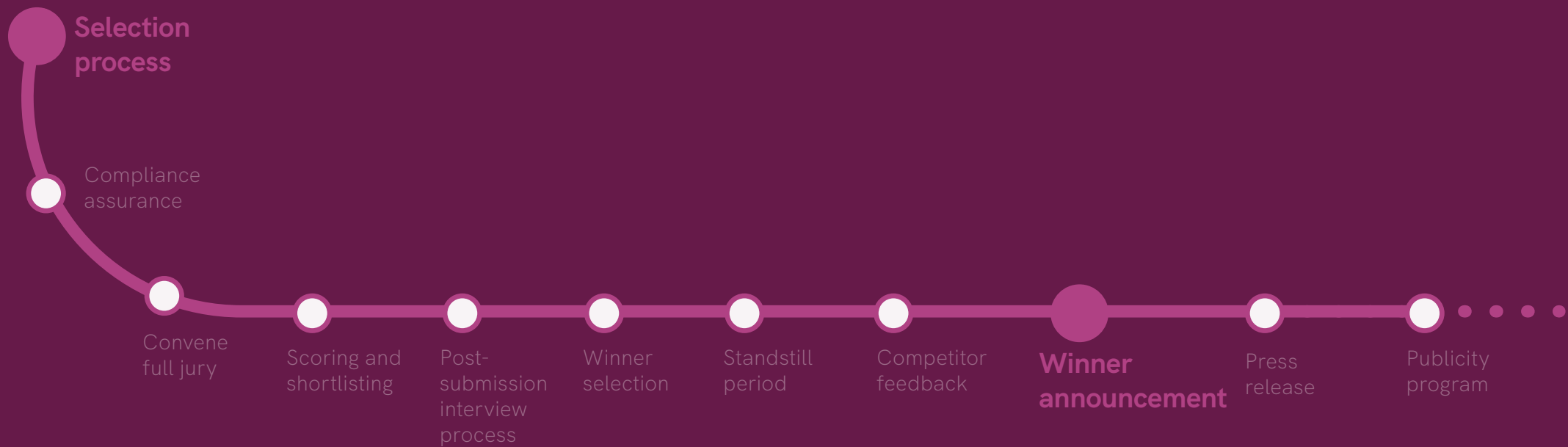
Step 3: Hold a briefing session or site visit

- ☐ Present the ambitions of the project (online or in person).
- ☐ Plan a site visit (for two stage competitions only).

Step 4: Record entries

- ☐ Ensure all entries received are recorded and filed correctly.

4 Selection Process



4.1 Selection Process

The selection process determines the competition outcome. The following steps should be taken:

- **Compliance assurance**
- **Convene full jury**
- **Scoring and shortlisting**
- **Post-submission interview process**
- **Winner selection**
- **Standstill period**
- **Competitor feedback**

Compliance assurance

In the first instance each submission must be checked for compliance. This entails reviewing business qualifications, fee issues and compliance with any contract arrangements to participate in the competition and/or contract that will be agreed with the winner, as well as checking that the required information has been provided. Only compliant submissions are presented to the jury.

In two-stage competitions, all of these requirements would be submitted in the first stage, to ensure all shortlisted competitors' submissions are compliant prior to commencing stage 2. Equally, the competitors' submissions at the end of stage 2 must be checked for compliance prior to the final judging.

Convene full jury

The jury should convene in a location with ample space to pin up printed and display digital versions of the competition submissions. Clearly marked digital folders will help the process. If there are only a few computers or monitors available, relying solely on digital versions might restrict the ability to simultaneously view multiple submissions or images from a single submission. Jury members are likely to have their own laptops or tablets, with access to all of the shortlisted/invited schemes. The jury deliberations are confidential. The jury may need to convene for a matter of hours or, depending on the number of submissions being assessed, the deliberations may extend across several days.

The jury should have familiarized themselves with the submissions prior to convening. However, it is still useful for someone from the promoter/competition management team to provide a summary of each submission and highlight whether there are any concerns from an assessment perspective.

CLIENTS

Jury deliberations should be recorded so they may subsequently be shared with the competitors and press.

Scoring and shortlisting

The competition manager should reiterate the assessment criteria and scoring system to ensure that the jury is clear on the decision-making process. They should also establish how the decision-making will occur, such as a majority vote and, if so, by what ratio. All jury scores have equal weight. A member of the competition management team should ensure a record is kept of the deliberations.

As important as how votes are tallied, is the exchange of views that takes place during a jury's deliberations because the decisions a jury makes grow out of that dialogue. Ultimately, this dialogue will inform the feedback the competitors receive. The technical panel, if relevant to the competition, will make its presentation to the jury, detailing their assessment of the submissions' technical performance and highlighting any concerns they might have with respect to the submissions. This may result in the elimination of some of the submissions.

An efficient method of selection is through the progressive elimination of entries. The jury will agree on the elimination of those schemes that are clearly not of sufficient quality to merit further consideration. The closer the jury comes to determining potential winners, however, the more demanding the process becomes. In an open competition the process can be quite lengthy as there are likely to be numerous submissions that need to be reviewed. However, a competition with a limited number of participants can also make decision-making challenging as the invitees are likely to be of very high quality. It is imperative that the scoring system is adhered to as the mechanism for decision-making, to avoid bias and ensure fairness.

In two-stage competitions, a jury may convene on two separate occasions to evaluate submissions. At the end of the first stage, the jury's mandate is to choose those teams that will be invited to develop a design proposal.

Alternatively, the client and competition manager may solely review the first submission as it will generally comprise team credentials rather than a design proposal. In all competition types, there should be a clear protocol in the event that the jury fails to reach a decision.

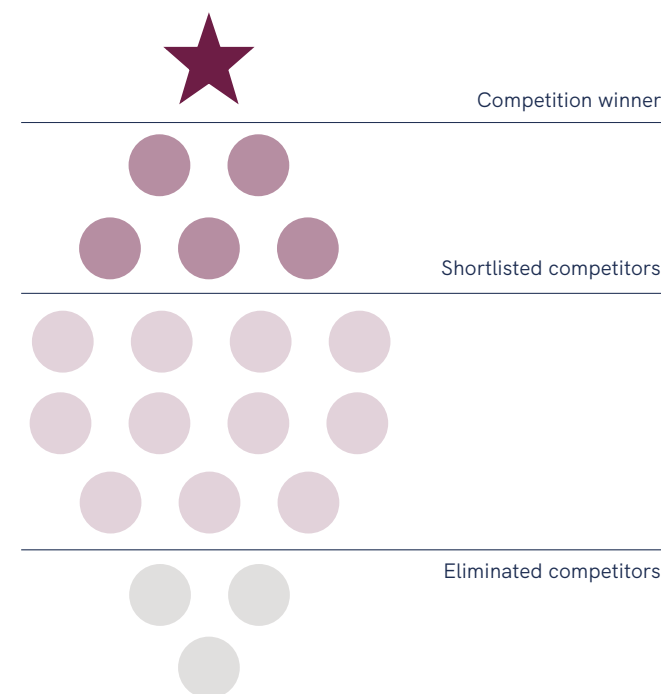


Diagram illustrating the shortlisting process

Post-submission interview process

An interview is not a mandatory part of the selection process as the selection decision can occur after deliberations, ranking, and scoring, resulting in a winner. However, most invited competitions will include an interview. Design teams are then required to present their design proposals (in-person or online) and answer any questions the jury or client may have. This process enables a richer understanding of the competition proposal and allows the jury or client to seek clarifications. Interviews also provide an opportunity for the client to gain a sense of the dynamics within a competitor team and how they themselves might relate to the team members.

The competitor teams must be given clear and strict interview parameters in relation to the interview agenda, time allocation for presenting, how many team members can be in attendance, and whether they should bring their own IT equipment or that will be provided. They should also be informed of the composition

of the interviewers so they can tailor their presentation accordingly. For the most part the interview presentation should be a direct reflection of the competition submission. In rare cases, the interviewees may be asked to respond to a further question or challenge. This should only be required if the scores between the shortlisted competitors are incredibly close and further distinguishing factors are required. If this is the case, competitors should receive clear and consistent instructions on the permissibility/expectation to bring additional materials, or to answer questions that diverge from the original competition publication.

The interview focuses on the design proposal and approach to managing the process. It generally should not focus on the competitors' fee proposal. It should also be made clear to competitors how the outcome figures into the overall scoring of teams.

HOW-TO

Conduct interviews



Interviews provide a further opportunity to build client-competitor chemistry, and can support decision making when competitor scores are tied.

Step 1: Prepare your questions

- ☐ Develop clear, relevant and open-ended questions.
- ☐ Focus on design inspiration, concept and process.

Step 2: Schedule the interviews

- ☐ Offer a range of time slots to the shortlisted competitors.
- ☐ Specify the interview format (online or in-person), agenda, duration, and attendees (including representatives from the client, jury, and competitor teams).

Step 3: Conduct the interviews

- ☐ Present the agreed agenda and introduce all attendees.
- ☐ Allow competitors to present their work.
- ☐ Ask the prepared questions, allowing for some flexibility and follow-up questions.

Step 4: Record and document the interview process

- ☐ Take notes of each participant presentation and responses to the interview questions.
- ☐ If you are recording the interview, ensure participant consent is given.

Winner selection

The jury assessment should lead to consensus on the winning team. The rationale behind the scoring should make direct reference to the assessment criteria and scoring. It is also important that the jury agree the ranking of the teams that did not win as that is important to include in feedback to the competitors. This feedback can refer both to the qualitative and quantitative responses, that is, from design proposal to fee proposal.

If the submissions were anonymous (more likely in a single stage competition) it is at this time that the anonymity may be lifted to reveal competitor teams.

Standstill period

After the competitor team is informed that they have won, there is often a period of time imposed referred to as the "standstill period". During this time, which should be a minimum of 2 weeks and a maximum of 4 weeks, the winning team is held in confidentiality and no public announcements are made. This allows for a period of negotiation with the winning team with respect to the contract and any other modifications to their proposal that the client is seeking. With respect to both, it is hoped that there is little that needs to be addressed, and the use of "deviations prior" can minimize the risk of long contract negotiations.

However, in the event that an agreement cannot be reached, the competitor team that scored second may be awarded the project contract. In any case, once the winning team is confirmed and the contract in place, the winner can be announced.

CLIENTS

Throughout the standstill period, the client should be mindful of their duty to promptly inform all competitors of any delays or changes to the competition program.

Competitor feedback

It is very important that all shortlisted competitors receive feedback on their submissions. At minimum this will include the scores they received under each assessment criteria. Ideally, however, discursive explanations should be provided. This may take the form of an agreed upon statement under each assessment category and/or quotes from jury members. Clients could also consider short face-to-face discussions to convey feedback. Competitors are eager to learn from the experience of entering a competition and ensuring adequate feedback will both encourage competitors to participate in future and will equip them to apply lessons to future opportunities.

“Competitions that award financial prizes to one or no entrants may be offering little incentive, but clearly many still respond to the challenge; a very real additional encouragement would simply be the certain expectation of jury feedback.”³

4.2 Winner Announcement

Once the winning team is confirmed a detailed jury report is publicly published. This statement should summarize the competition project vision and objectives, the names of the shortlisted competitors and the reasons for selection of the winning team. In the case of confidential projects, a public announcement is not needed.

The following should be considered at this stage:

- **Press release**
- **Publicity program**

Press release

A press release should be issued that announces the competition winner and the runners-up. A press conference may be called to make a public announcement of a competition's results. The competition manager should attend any such conference, contribute to the writing of all press releases, and assist in the selection of illustrations to be distributed at the conference or mailed/e-mailed to other publications. It is usually a condition of the entry submission that competitors agree to allow their design proposal images to be used in publicity associated with the competition.

In the case of highly sensitive projects competitors may be asked to honor a confidentiality agreement and not release their designs for publication or identify the name of the successful or unsuccessful designers to any third parties before an official announcement is made. Clients are encouraged to limit their NDAs in a way that allows participants to publish their work after the official announcement.

The press release should delineate:

- Number of queries received.
- Number of designers who registered.
- Number of submissions received.
- Profile of competitors' places of residence (especially relevant for national and international events).
- Names of competitors and firms whose submission are to receive recognition.
- The jurors and their affiliations.
- Report of the jury, which presents the reasons for the selection of the winner.

The press release can be circulated to the following media outlets, depending on the type and profile of the competition project:

- Social media and the popular press.
- Trade journals.
- Professional built-environment institutions and organizations websites.
- Client website.
- Competition manager website.

COMPETITORS

Competitors should not assume that they can publish any competition work before the winner is announced. Competitors are advised to check the agreements made with the client and when in doubt, confirm directly with the competition manager.

Publicity program

Each of the aforementioned media will have its own calendar of content. It may be useful to align the announcement of the competition winner with other activities that are relevant to the competition project. For example, if a general article is appearing on a related topic, that could provide a good opportunity to announce the winner.

While, of course, the winning competition entry will be featured graphically in the press, decisions should be taken about whether the shortlisted submissions also appear. From the perspective of the competitors, this would be desirable even as runners-up. In terms of transparency and community engagement it is advisable to publish all entries if space permits. It also may be more desirable to profile all competition entries in some media more than in others, depending on the audience.

HOW-TO

Announce the winner



How you announce and publicize the winner and runners-up can help build public support for the future built-project. Advise and help from your internal marketing team may be useful at this stage.

Step 1: Notify the winner

- ☐ Inform and congratulate the winning team via phone/video call and follow up with an official email or letter.
- ☐ Allow for the standstill period to take place.

Step 2: Prepare the press release

- ☐ Identify where and when the information will be circulated (for example, trade journals, social media, etc.).

- ☐ Draft a clear and concise announcement, editing the content based on the intended platforms for release.
- ☐ Select and include images/visuals, jury quotes and competitor profiles.

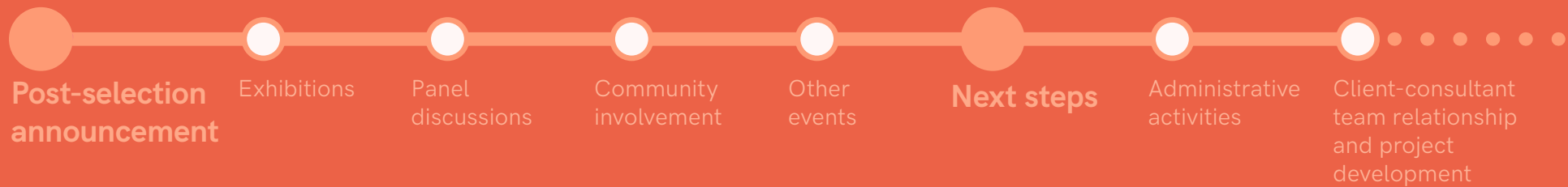
Step 3: Publish the announcement

- ☐ Share the prepared content on the selected channels.
- ☐ Tag relevant individuals, hash-tags or organizations to encourage engagement.

Step 4: Engage with responses

- ☐ Respond to comments, emails or other communications from the public or organizations interested in the project.

5 Post-Selection and Next Steps



5.1 Post-Selection Announcement

Further activities can be planned following the announcement of the winning team to maximize competition outcomes, such as:

- Exhibitions
- Panel discussions
- Community involvement
- Other events

Exhibitions

Holding an exhibition that displays the winning competition entry and the shortlisted entries is a good first step in the community engagement process that will ensue as part of the project's development. It is also welcome public relations for the competitors, the client, and the competition manager. Either the competition manager or the client may organize the exhibition.

The client may also wish to combine an exhibit of the competition outcome with that of other similar or geographically proximate projects they are involved in.

Thought should be given to the exhibition venue. If held in the offices of the client or in the premises of an institution associated with built-environment professionals, it may be perceived as less accessible than if held in a community space. A civic building such as a library or school may be more accessible. Consider whether the venue will host presentations and discussions of the project, and ensure that the necessary facilities are available if required.

The language used to present the competition proposals should be calibrated to the target audience. Highly technical language may alienate the public/local community. On the other hand, if the objective is to catalyze specific dialogue and innovation related to a particular building typology or science then this will influence the narrative. Once an exhibition is designed it can travel between venues. This may make sense if the project is of international importance and interest.

CASE STUDY



© The State Museum at Majdanek



ARCHITECTURE

New Museum in Sobibór

The State Museum at Majdanek and the Foundation for the "Polish-German Reconciliation" organized a design competition for a new memorial museum in Sobibór. The competition culminated in a public exhibition, hosted at a university, to showcase over 60 design submissions. The news and images from this event were then further publicized online.

Panel discussions

To raise awareness and engage in a public and/or professional dialogue, events such a panel discussion can be held. A panel discussion can include, in addition to representatives from the winning competition team, the client, members of the competition jury, designers with experience in realizing projects similar to that of the competition, academics or experts with a deep understanding of the type of activities the building/masterplan/landscape is meant to support and representatives of the ultimate user the project is designed for. An event such as this could follow on from a brief presentation of the winning scheme, preferably by the designers, enabling attendees to learn about the approach to the project from the designer's perspective.

Community involvement

While the competition process is not open to the public, it is often desirable to have the community comment on the winning scheme following the announcement of the winner. This can promote community buy-in for the project- approach and inform the community engagement that will occur as part of the actual project process post-competition.

“As [case studies] demonstrate, the circulation and reception of design ideas through exhibitions underlines the importance of the competition as a method of public engagement.”⁴

Other events

There are other events that may be held after the announcement of a competition winner. These include a publication that documents the competition proposals, such as a specialist media publication with a strong design focus.

Alternatively, the client entity may create an online exhibition featuring the competition call itself, through to the competition design proposals. To ensure this is effective it should be highly visual and, if possible, communicated to the potential project users and other stakeholders.

In connection with an exhibition, a presentation by the winning team might be held soon after the announcement of the results. A presentation might also occur independently, either as part of a program of events or on its own. Like the aforementioned considerations, the venue and format should be influenced by the targeted audience. The presentation may kick-off wider discussion and the allocated time should allow for the audience to pose questions and make comments.

COMPETITORS

Participation in post-competition events can offer competitors valuable networking opportunities, maximizing their exposure from the competition.

5.2 Next Steps

At the end of the competition, regardless of public-facing communications, the following steps should be taken:

- **Administrative activities**
- **Client-consultant team relationship and project development**

Administrative activities

The following administrative activities should take place:

- Letters of appreciation should be issued to all of the jury members, along with any honoraria and reimbursable expenses they are due, ideally within 30 days of the winner announcement.
- Fees and honoraria should be given to the competitors as previously agreed.

-
- If any physical materials were submitted, they should be returned unless agreed that these become the property of the client.
- Creation of a competition archive in which to store all relevant documents for legal and record-keeping purposes.
- The competition manager provides a report summarizing the competition, including recommendations for future

CLIENTS

It is important that these activities are given adequate time and attention, as they are imperative in ensuring the client and competition manager's reputation for hosting reliable and high-quality competitions.

competitions.

Client-consultant team relationship and project development

A design competition is as much about finding a team whose approach to the project challenge resonates with the client. It is the beginning of a much longer journey.

The winner is formally appointed by the client. This begins the process of developing and refining the competition proposal. As the process unfolds there will inevitably be constraints and opportunities that may emerge that were not evident previously and, therefore, not incorporated into the competition brief. There will be new issues that may come into play through stakeholder and community engagement, the regulatory and policy context, and the political setting. These will all be navigated by the client and consultant team working in close collaboration.

The project will eventually receive planning permission and become a construction project. The delivery of the project is thanks to the choreography of multiple actors: the client or project owner, disciplinary experts, municipal entities and the design team.

COMPETITORS

Unsuccessful competitors should consider how to maximize their competition proposal. They can include the design in their portfolio (provided any NDA requirements are fulfilled), capture lessons learned, and continue building on the relationships and network developed during the process.

6 Appendix

6.1 The Competition Publication Checklist

This checklist provides an overview of the suggested contents of the competition publication. The content should be based on the project feasibility (see Section 1.1) and the decisions taken by the client, with the support of the competition manager.

Competition introduction

- ☐ Client
- ☐ Vision and objectives/design challenge

Competition overview

- ☐ Project description including site, high-level context and use
- ☐ Project budget
- ☐ Program (timeline)

Competition entry rules and guidelines

- ☐ Program
 - » Competition launch
 - » Questions of clarification submission deadline
 - » Questions of clarification response
 - » Submission deadline and process
 - » Shortlist announced (if applicable)
 - » Stage 2 submission/interview
 - » Winner selection
 - » Project inception
- ☐ Honorarium
- ☐ Suggested team composition
- ☐ Submission requirements: technical and commercial
- ☐ Jury
- ☐ Evaluation criteria
- ☐ Terms and conditions

Competition brief or scope

- ☐ Project vision
 - » Strategic objectives and targets
 - » Social and economic development aspirations
 - » Sustainability aspirations
- ☐ Project background
 - » Site and project history
 - » Physical, social and economic context
 - » Community and stakeholder information
 - » Relevant reports and studies on site and/or project
- ☐ Technical requirements
 - » Programmatic, spatial and aesthetic requirements
 - » Building control and planning requirements
 - » Sustainability standards
- ☐ Project delivery information
 - » Project budget
 - » Project program
- ☐ Full project scope of work (optional and project dependent)
- ☐ Base data package
 - » Site plan and site boundaries*
 - » Utility, topographical and other surveys*
 - » Plan of existing buildings*
 - » 3D model where relevant
 - » Set of high-quality site photographs

*These items should be provided in CAD format where possible

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