

THE HANDBOOK OF

# Architectural Design Competitions



THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE  
OF ARCHITECTS

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## Preface

Design excellence is often the result of a well-planned and clearly executed design competition. Since founding the organization more than 150 years ago, members of the American Institute of Architects have taken a keen interest in architectural competitions. As early as 1870, with the “Schedule of Terms,” the AIA has issued guidance that defines fair conduct and a judicious process for selecting designs and architects through the competition process.

The AIA’s previous edition of the Handbook of Architectural Design Competitions was published in 1988. While not wholly outdated, that document needed to be revised in view of the proliferation of the new varieties of competition types and because competitions have become more visible and common. As architectural practice has grown to be more global and as the collaborative nature of the profession’s work has become more linear, the competition model demands a more sophisticated methodology.

This current edition draws upon the previous document and other literature as it explains how the metrics and process can be organized and how design competition has evolved. One only has to look at continental Europe’s history and booming construction in Asia, or our global U.S. practices, to see how the need for design competitions has grown proportionally.

Now that the competition process is more segmented, with varying models and “structural systems,” it is time to again offer guidance on organizing and executing competitions. This publication identifies the components of a well-run design competition and offers best practices for achieving success and top-quality architecture.

## Growing complexity

This updated handbook has been developed by architects and others for those interested in learning more about competitions and their proper procedures. The first section discusses the competition process and the appropriateness of particular competition processes for particular projects. The next section discusses the key stakeholders in the process of competitions. The third section discusses the different types of competitions. The final three sections discuss the actual competition process and recommended activities within that process.

The first hurdle is to determine if the competition process is the appropriate way to solicit design submittals. Understanding needs, aspirations, and vision, whether as a sponsor or designer, is critical in deciding whether to move forward with a competition process. This revised handbook is organized and designed to assist in facilitating those decisions.

This process, however, once begun, is not so much different than in the past. The competition sponsor must run competitions carefully and judiciously. The Institute, as in the past, recommends that sponsors inform themselves thoroughly about the detailed procedures, methods, and techniques needed to run a successful competition.

Competitions have become more complex. It is often necessary for the sponsor or benefactor of the competition to rely heavily on other parties, such as an advisory board and certainly a professional adviser, probably the most significant addition to the competition process since the guidelines were last published. The adviser guides the sponsor through the entire competition process, with the team constructed as a three- or possibly four-legged stool: the sponsor, the adviser, the jury, and often staff acting as the legs. If an advisory board is utilized, it is also directly available to the sponsor for advice.

The well-run design competition requires:

- A conscientious sponsor
- A competent professional adviser
- A thorough and carefully written program
- Complete graphic and other illustrative materials
- Fair and precise rules governing the competition
- Clear submission requirements
- A realistic schedule
- A qualified jury
- Appropriate prizes and/or stipends
- Arrangements for publicizing the winning design

The Institute's distribution of these guidelines is advisory and informational. However, these new guidelines are created with a dual purpose. The experienced or novice sponsor may view the variations of competition practices described in this document as a checklist from which to choose. The guidelines also serve the novice, and perhaps the more experienced architect or designer, to better acquaint themselves with differing processes within the competition world. However, after this checklist or analysis is completed, it is the sponsor who must decide the appropriateness of any particular competition structure for the given building or project type.

The Handbook of Architectural Design Competitions

# Design Guidelines



# 1 Appropriate Conditions for a Competition

It is important to determine first if the design competition method is the appropriate process for procuring design services. Understanding the needs and aspirations of the project is critical in deciding whether to move forward with a competition. Sponsors, in particular, must be aware of the trade-off between design competitions and more traditional design procurement procedures.

## Advantages of the Competition Method

There are many advantages to the competition method for the sponsor. A properly run design competition is a good way to:

- Generate a wide range of new ideas in the approach to a design
- Enhance the credibility of the sponsor
- Uncover new talent who might not ordinarily be approached in the traditional process
- Attract the attention of the press and the general public to the needs being addressed
- Broaden public discourse about design, as well as about the specific project
- Increase exposure for the sponsor

At the same time, there are also advantages for the architect. A well-organized design competition, with selection based on ideas rather than past portfolio, presents the opportunity to:



- Procure new work of high caliber
- Gain exposure
- Increase experience for younger architects
- Acquire expertise in a new market or building type

## Disadvantages of the Competition Method

Architects bring creativity to design regardless of the method of selection. However, some projects favor particular approaches for selecting a designer or design team. The more traditional procurement approach, including a request for qualifications, a request for proposals, possible references checks, and interviews, may favor expertise or long-term involvement (which are critical components in some cases) over more diverse ideas. Specifically, the design competition method presents some disadvantages:

- Limited interaction with the users of the building or other stakeholders in the success of the project
- Lack of multiple-step iterations that help the client team understand the process
- Minimal opportunity to get public participation in the design process in a meaningful way
- Little exposure to the trade-offs and alternatives considered in reaching a solution
- Minimal realistic budget control
- Winning competitors who prove to not have the necessary skill or staff to complete the project
- Difficulty in addressing very complex program requirements in a limited time frame

Many new forms of design competitions have evolved to address some of these issues, such as interim design reviews, two-stage competitions, and independent cost estimating. However, some architectural projects will still be better served by a more involved design process, which includes greater participation and evaluation of alternatives in a consensus-building setting. Other projects will profit from fresh and often dramatic new ideas that may be generated by a competition. Informed sponsors must decide if the competition method fits their need.

## Appropriate Conditions

Projects most appropriate for a competition are those that are best served by opening the design challenge to a wide range of talent that will submit a broad array of design concepts for evaluation by recognized experts.

Once the sponsor is satisfied that the competition method meets the needs as a selection process, the sponsor must ascertain that the project itself and the organization of the competition are established under appropriate conditions. Design competitions can be used for a wide range of design opportunities, such as residential housing, office buildings, libraries, museums, art galleries, courthouses, schools, and public spaces. In each case, the sponsor must consider if the project:

- Requires a wide degree of design exploration
- Is on an important or unusual site
- Features a type of structure that deserves a fresh examination by the design community
- Might greatly influence subsequent design work for the project type or its location
- Will generate additional public interest with positive benefits.

## Inappropriate Conditions

Projects that do not guarantee fair and equitable treatment for all competitors violate a central principle of design competitions. Even if the competition method is selected, and the specific project conditions are appropriate, there are other conditions that might interfere with a good competition.

From the sponsor's perspective, inappropriate conditions would interfere with the ability of the competition to provide a worthy winner. From the architect's point of view, an improperly run design competition can waste time and money and harm his or her reputation.

Both the sponsor and the architect must consider that projects may be inappropriate for competitions when any of the following conditions exist:

- Short schedules: There must be adequate time to plan, organize, manage, and judge a competition
- Project without adequate funding: Although the expense of holding a competition is a modest one relative to total project costs, initial funding is essential
- Project for which an adequate development budget is not available: A project where the sponsor hopes that a design chosen in competition will either help raise funds or generate sufficient interest to make eventual construction possible is time-consuming and seldom successful
- Project for which the sponsor does not offer sufficient prizes
- The sponsor is unwilling to establish a qualified jury
- The sponsor has not appointed a professional adviser
- Project without a sound and adequately developed program

A design competition should not be held to search for programmatic needs but rather to discover different ways of addressing such needs.

## Design Competition Variables

Just as every program and site is unique, there are many variables to design competitions. Eight specific variables are identified in this section. They describe a continuum of criteria which should be considered carefully in determining the kind of competition that is appropriate for a specific project.

The third section of this handbook describes nine specific different competition types that have become more common over the years. Each of those nine types can be described to some extent by the variables listed here. After determining that both the design competition method and the conditions are right, the sponsor still needs to design the correct kind of competition.

Similarly, designers need to decide if it is the correct kind for them to enter.

Size of project	Small–simple	Large–complex
Qualifications	Anyone–student	Architect
Selectivity	Open call	Invite
Compensation	No compensation	Honorarium–fee
Jury composition	Stakeholders	Expert–celebrity
Stages in competition	Single	2- or 3-stage
Adviser engaged	No	Yes
Product expected	Concept	Comprehensive

### Size of project

The size of the project affects the competition type. Small projects or simple programs lend themselves to competitions that can be open to many designers, including students and architects with less experience in the project genre. Smaller projects might be more open to out-of-the box solutions and may be held to shorter schedules. Smaller projects are sometimes held by the sponsors as ideas competitions, with prizes rather than the building commission as the reward.

Larger facilities or more complex programs are more often limited to invited participants, due to the expense of the process and the product and the need for longer time frames. Larger projects often require robust design teams that include engineers and constructors.

### Qualifications

When the sponsor of the project wants the widest exposure, or ideas that are the widest ranging explorations, the competition could be open to anyone, including students and other stakeholders. The disadvantage to a sponsor is the questionable constructability of the final solution, while an architect might question the financial logic of competing against such small odds. However, the novice might delight in the opportunity for exposure.

More commonly in competitions for specific buildings, the qualifications require that the entrant be an architect, with the implication that the final award will be the commission for the project. The sponsor has the assurance of a highest level of competency, and the architect can look forward to better odds and a greater ultimate reward.

### Selectivity

There is a wide range of selectivity that can be applied. A general open call to architects, announced in the professional press, government solicitations, or other approaches, is the most common, and could elicit hundreds of entries with a wide range of quality. If the sponsor is primarily interested in exposure or press, or wants ideas alone, this is quite popular, but the competition brief must be up-front about the goals, if the architect is to determine whether the effort is worth it.

At the other end of the spectrum is the limited competition, with invited participants only. Many institutions now sponsor these limited events with the same list of celebrity designers over and over, with the belief that these names will attract attention and donations. In some cases it is effective, while in others it limits the flow of new ideas. In other instances, the complexity of the project naturally limits competition to those firms with ample resources for the work or expertise in the building type.

### Compensation

The sponsor needs to decide what compensation, if any, will be offered to entrants and winners to achieve the desired participation. Potential entrants, for their part, should decide for themselves whether the possible rewards justify expending their efforts. Many competitions have been unpaid, with only the promise of a job in the distant future, which has been enough for some architects. In other instances the purse is sweetened with prize money, providing first, second, and third place prizes for example, as deemed appropriate by the sponsor.

As the expectation for more elaborate final products increases (including models, renderings, digital simulations, etc.), or as the projects grow more complex (requiring engineering and cost estimates), the need to consider carefully the appropriate compensation becomes particularly critical. There has been a trend toward an honorarium for the four to six firms asked to move forward in developing their submissions. This is a major expense for a sponsor, but it must be stated that most honoraria only tend to cover one-third to one-half of the expense that the architect might incur, so the decision cannot be taken lightly on a large elaborate project.

### Jury composition

The composition of the jury affects the outcome for the sponsor and the strategy of the architect. Some clients or institutions form the jury from their own stakeholders, with board members, staff, local community leaders, or local politicians on the selection committee. In this case they are favoring specific understanding of the particular project and its community in picking a winner. Other groups bring in outside experts or designers of some renown to give greater visibility to the competition and to pick the winner based on larger trends and ideas in the greater design community.

### Stages in competition

The classic competition is done in a single stage. The call for entries goes out, a program brief is provided to those who inquire, and the final design concepts are submitted on the date required. For the sponsor the logistics are simple, and for the architect the rules are clear. However, some of the shortcomings noted in the other variables are not addressed.

New hybrids have evolved in staging competitions. To address the advantages of open versus limited competition, some two-stage procedures include an open first stage, similar to a request for qualifications (RFQ), which requires some background and relevant experience rather than any design work. From this open stage a limited group is selected, but a much wider group of architects is provided an opportunity without incurring an inordinate expense. Frequently the first stage is not funded, but the select finalists are provided a stipend.

Another form of two-stage competition tries to address the lack of participation by staff or stakeholders in the design process. In this approach, with an invited smaller group of competitors, there is a preliminary design presentation of concepts to elicit early feedback. Then, better armed with feedback, the teams complete their submissions.

### Adviser engaged

Those who run competitions are well-intentioned, but the whole endeavor is fraught with pitfalls. While there are many competitions with no advisers, it is recommended that all competitions have a professional adviser and an advisory board. In smaller or student competitions that adviser might be a volunteer faculty member or a local architect, but it is important that the adviser take the position seriously. In larger competitions, sponsors should engage a professional adviser, backed by an appointed advisory board, as an essential part of a successful enterprise. Architects should recognize the risk of entering a competition without an adviser.

### Product expected

Finally, it cannot be stressed enough how important it is to be both clear and realistic about the expectations for the final product. Concept plans, sketches, and study models are appropriate products for small projects, ideas competitions, and broadly open events.

When the sponsor requires a comprehensive final product, the requirements must also be very clear. If submission elements such as engineering reports, cost estimates, elaborate models, and video fly-throughs are all expected, it should be stated at the outset. A comprehensive product is usually only realistic if the competition is limited, the time frame is longer, and the stipend is calculated to attract the desired participation. (See Appendix B for enumeration of possible submission elements.)

## 2 Key Stakeholders

This handbook recognizes the importance of each stakeholder in the competition, including:

- People and institutions considering sponsoring a competition
- Consultants acting as advisers
- Sponsor's staff who are managing the process
- Jurors invited to help with the competition

For stakeholders in the architectural profession, we envision this guide as a service to the AIA membership, including:

- Architect members considering entering a completion
- Architect members invited to advise or jury
- Chapters and other components managing a competition

### Competition Sponsor

The role of the sponsor is crucial to the success of a design competition. No competition can take place until the sponsor provides the project, the organization, and the financial resources to make it possible. The sponsor's decisions will, to a large extent, determine the success or failure of the competition process. A design competition must be governed by an impartial and carefully developed set of procedures.

When a sponsor holds an architectural design competition, it obligates itself to running the competition in accordance with the procedures set forth in the competition program. Prize money, fees, and honoraria must all be awarded based on competition rules. The sponsor is also responsible for the accuracy of the statements it makes about the competition project. In return, the sponsor should expect all other participants—professional adviser, jurors, and competitors—to honor the rules and perform to the best of their abilities.



## Professional Adviser

A capable and conscientious professional adviser is essential to a successful competition. As a consultant to the sponsor, the adviser is the individual who is most directly responsible for planning, organizing, and running a design competition. The adviser's responsibilities fall into four key areas:

- **Program:** Develop rules and working documents explaining what the content and conduct of the competition will entail, including announcements, rules, instructions, program information, and reports
- **Organization and structure:** Plan, organize, and manage a competition to attract a wide array of outstanding solutions for the sponsor's stated design problem
- **Review:** Assist in selecting a highly qualified jury capable of exercising sound judgment
- **General oversight:** Conduct the competition so that all competitors receive fair and equitable treatment

These major duties require that the professional adviser serve as an impartial liaison among sponsor, jury, and competitors. To ensure fairness, the adviser must be an independent architect or entity who is capable of objectively approaching a competition. The adviser must have no other interest in the project, either as a designer, an investor, or an employee of the sponsor.

### Characteristics of a professional adviser

To ensure the proper running of a design competition, a sponsor must enlist the services of a competent professional adviser, delegate the necessary authority, and provide whatever managerial support is needed to plan and organize a successful competition. Because the quality of a competition can be traced directly to the capability of the adviser, the sponsor should select an independent architect experienced in professional practice who demonstrates the following:

- Respect of peers and the profession
- Previous experience as an adviser, juror, or competitor, or comparable knowledge
- Understanding of the objectives of the competition tradition

- Technical knowledge of the competition process
- Belief in the value of the specific competition project
- Sensitivity to the sponsor's goals, attitudes, and circumstances, and the ability to respond to them constructively
- Ability to translate the sponsor's intentions into architectural competition procedures
- Experience with group or committee clients and consensus building
- Availability
- Ability to write succinctly and clearly
- Managerial competence concerning operational logistics
- Personal integrity and fairness

### Selecting a professional adviser

A sponsor can draw up a list of potential adviser candidates by asking for suggestions from the local architectural community or from other architects with whom a relationship exists. Or, an announcement soliciting inquiries can be made in the professional press. For a design competition to be successful, the sponsor and adviser must establish a close rapport based on mutual respect and open communication. Therefore, after a list of candidates is prepared, the sponsor may want to conduct interviews to assess the degree of personal, aesthetic, and organizational compatibility developed with each candidate before making a selection.

### Compensation

Professional advisers will expect to be compensated for their services. The amount of compensation will vary in accordance with the amount of work a competition requires. Both adviser and sponsor should realize, however, that planning and directing even a small competition require a considerable amount of time, and the demand on an adviser's services will be extensive, encompassing a competition from beginning to end. Whether the adviser receives a fixed fee, a monthly retainer, or hourly compensation is for sponsor and adviser to negotiate. Frequently, an adviser will receive hourly compensation on a time and materials basis, and a daily fee for work-related overnight travel. An agreement concerning the reimbursement of expenses must also be reached.

Compensation for the professional adviser is usually one of the most important investments a sponsor makes. Good professional advice may mean the difference between a well-run competition and an embarrassing, even harmful experience.

### Accepting the position

In accepting the position of adviser, an architect assumes the task of conducting a design competition under conditions that are fair to sponsor and competitors. This is no small responsibility. It requires that the adviser allocate a sufficient amount of time to the necessary tasks. Even relatively small competitions may entail an extensive assignment. Therefore, an architect should only accept the position of adviser with the understanding that it requires a significant professional commitment.

### Planning the process

Every competition requires a number of critical decisions, particularly in the planning stages. A good adviser must be aware of all the facts and convey them with accuracy and assurance. The adviser should establish a detailed schedule for the competition to follow, with the responsibilities of both the sponsor and the professional adviser clearly delivered. During the course of a design competition, the professional adviser should be involved in the following tasks:

- Determining the feasibility of holding a competition
- Examining the sponsor's preliminary program, site, and budget to assure that they are sound
- Suggesting an appropriate competition format
- Planning the overall procedures
- Scheduling the order of events
- Preparing a budget for the competition
- Writing the procedural rules
- Preparing and testing the project program

- Writing the submission requirements
- Helping select the jury
- Securing from the jurors an endorsement of the competition program
- Recommending appropriate specialist consultants, if needed
- Planning for logistics and handling
- Writing a competition announcement

Given the great number of tasks the adviser is expected to perform, a single individual of authority within the sponsor's organization should be designated as the adviser's principal point of contact. Such an individual can be of vital assistance to both the sponsor and the professional adviser throughout a competition. In some cases, for larger competitions, the sponsor may need to provide the adviser with staff support from within the organization. Additional duties of the adviser, which might benefit from staff support, include:

- Screening registrants for eligibility
- Distributing programs
- Answering questions from competitors
- Checking designs for compliance with program requirements
- Displaying the entries for jurors
- Submitting a report to the jury
- Assisting the jury
- Reporting to the sponsor along with the jury
- Installing a public exhibition of submitted designs
- Assisting in public relations

- Assuring that proper payments are made
- Assembling an archive of the competition
- Returning or disposing of the entries
- Remaining available for post-competition tasks

### **Sufficient funding and authority to hold a competition**

One of the responsibilities of the adviser to the public and to the profession is to ensure that a sponsor has both the funds and, in the case of a public agency, the authority, to hold a design competition. The adviser should be satisfied as to the fiscal responsibility of the sponsor. Both advisers and sponsors should realize that their reputations can be enhanced or discredited by the way in which a competition is managed.

### **Ethical responsibilities**

Should the sponsor fail to honor the commitments it has made in holding a competition, it is likely that the professional adviser will be informed. If the situation remains unresolved, the adviser may be prevented from carrying out the responsibilities of the position, and the competition may be endangered.

If a condition of the professional adviser/sponsor agreement is that the sponsor is obligated to honor all contractual and program agreements, then the professional adviser may exercise the recourse of terminating the agreement and disaffiliating from the competition should the sponsor fail to fulfill such agreements. The agreement between adviser and sponsor may also require the sponsor to notify the competitors, jurors, and consultants to the competition that the professional adviser is no longer affiliated with the project. Such contractual arrangements should be considered by the sponsor early in the planning process as a tangible commitment to holding a properly conceived and managed design competition.

### Developing a competition program

The success of an architectural competition depends largely on the care with which its program is formulated and written. It is the professional adviser's responsibility to develop a program that is tailored to a specific design subject while considering the interests of both sponsor and competitors. (See Appendix A for detailed considerations.)

## Competition Jury

In an architectural competition, the function of the jury is to examine all design submissions with respect to the sponsor's program of requirements, review and evaluate the competitors' designs, and recommend which should be selected.

The use of a qualified jury adds expert judgment to the competition selection process. It also furnishes the sponsor with a level of architectural advice that is not available in commissioned work. If the sponsor feels strongly that an architectural problem requires a design exploration by many professionals, then the selection of the best solution should be made by experts in the appropriate field. Architects are willing to enter competitions to the extent that they can be confident in the ability of juries to judge their work fairly and fully. The quality of the jurors thus helps determine the quantity and quality of submitted designs.

### Commitment to the competition process

The task of judging numerous architectural designs is extremely demanding. A great amount of work and responsibility is compressed into the two to three days in which jurors customarily meet. Architects and others who agree to become jurors must have a commitment to the competition process and an interest in the subject that calls forth a particular competitive effort. Architects who serve on a competition jury should have no vested interest in the sponsor's project or in any of the competing firms. Only as independent professionals can their objectivity be assured.

### Obligations of the jury

Jurors should regard the competition program as a contractual document binding equally on them as it is on competitors and the sponsor. For the jurors as well as the competitors, the competition program and the professional adviser's answers to competitors' questions define the design problem that the competition is expected to answer.

Thus, it is a jury's obligation to abide by the program in judging all submitted work. It is essential that before agreeing to serve, prospective jurors devote an appropriate amount of time to a careful examination of the draft version of a competition program, paying special attention to the objectives of the program, composition of the jury, dates established for judging, and the tasks and authority assigned to the jury.

A prospective juror should sign a letter of acceptance only after being satisfied regarding all aspects of a competition program as well as the sponsor's commitment to carrying them out. It is also at this point that his or her name may be publicly announced as a member of the jury. When a competition program imposes independent criteria, such as a mandatory budget or an energy-use limitation, jurors should consider even more carefully the invitation to serve and satisfy themselves that the sponsor is able to obtain reliable information concerning the special conditions. In addition to checking for compliance with the project program, professional consultants may also be able to make a valuable contribution to the evaluation of entries.

By accepting the position, jurors agree to abide by the rules of a competition. In effect, they pledge they will:

- Have no contact with any of the competitors
- Devote themselves fully to the task of evaluating entries on the days established for judging
- Respect and maintain the anonymity of the submissions, when anonymity is a part of the requirements
- Abide by the requirements of the competition program in evaluating the competitors' entries
- Refrain from interjecting considerations in addition to or contrary to those specifically described in the program
- Make every effort to arrive at a consensus regarding the selection of a winner
- Submit a report explaining their decision(s)

Most jurors expect to be compensated for their time. At a minimum, their travel, lodging, meals, and expenses should be paid by the sponsor.

## Methods of jury selection

Various methods of jury selection have been used in architectural competitions:

- Sponsor selection
- Delegation of selection process to the professional adviser
- Delegation to a committee for recommendations or outright selection
- Selection by a recognized professional body of architects after consultation with the sponsor or professional organization
- A combination approach in which the sponsor or professional adviser names a juror, an architectural society names another, the invited competitors may vote for one, and the sponsor and the professional society together might name two more

Methods of jury selection vary based on the type of architectural competitions. For international competitions that receive the approval of the International Union of Architects (UIA), the UIA appoints one of the jurors, and the rest are appointed by the sponsor or adviser. The UIA guidelines specify that there be an odd number of jurors, that the number not exceed seven, that they represent different nationalities, and that the number of jurors from the host country must always be a minority. The AIA suggests that a design competition jury be appointed by the sponsor in consultation with a professional adviser. The AIA does not normally select competition jurors. However the jury is selected, the goal is to assemble a small group of highly-qualified people capable of exercising sound judgment.



### Composition of the jury

Design competition juries should be small enough so members can readily exchange views, individually and collectively, formally and informally. A minimum of three jurors permits an opportunity for different points of view to be examined, while a maximum of seven preserves informality. More than that number diminishes the jurors' opportunities to communicate with one another. Competition juries may be composed of architects, architectural historians, scholars, other design professionals, and consultants from relevant fields.

Experience indicates that a majority of jury members in an architectural competition should be architectural professionals with substantial knowledge and skill. This practice helps to ensure that informed judgments are made regarding the merits of the competitors' proposals. Architects are in the best position of any discipline to understand the drawings and visualize the finished product indicated in the graphic material submitted by other architects. In addition, experienced architect-jurors can quickly determine if a particular design is technically and economically buildable.

Where the skills of such design disciplines as city planning, urban design, landscape architecture, structural engineering, or interior design are required, individuals from these disciplines should be on the jury.

Non-design consultants may also serve. Competitions with specialized purposes such as the use of certain building materials or the exploration of particular themes such as energy conservation should have specialized juries. Similarly, different types of buildings such as hospitals, schools, churches, libraries, theaters, and museums require people familiar with the particular requirements of such structures. Librarians, theater directors, curators, school principals, and hospital administrators may all make excellent jurors. Their participation helps to ensure that specific needs or issues will be considered. Jury members who are representatives of the competition sponsor may help ensure that all building needs are properly met.

In competitions where a public agency is the sponsor, one or more jurors may be chosen to represent the department's or public's interest in a project. Neighborhood residents, building industry representatives, eventual users of the new building or structure, social scientists, patrons of the arts, and public officials may serve this function. Design professionals frequently find that such jurors have a more detailed knowledge of local conditions and culture than many architects can expect to possess.

## The jury chair

Competition sponsors may either appoint a jury chair or leave the selection to the jurors. In either case, the primary function of the chair is to ensure that the jury's deliberations proceed fairly and orderly. After a winner is selected, the chair also supervises the writing of the jury report.

In some situations, sponsors may decide to appoint a nonvoting chair to a competition jury. Freed from the task of determining and arguing the merits of personal preferences, an appointed, nonvoting chair may be in a better position to manage the jury's group process so that all points of view concerning the merits of different submission are heard. Such a nonvoting chair may be selected from the staff of the sponsoring organization. Whatever type of chair is employed, members of the jury should understand and agree to its use.

## The evaluation process

A jury's selection of award winners is made by a progressive elimination of entries. At some points during the deliberations, elimination decisions may be made by voice vote, at others by written ballot. Each jury should determine its own voting procedures. More important than how votes are tallied, however, is the exchange of views that takes place during a jury's deliberations because the decisions a jury makes grow out of that dialogue.

In the early stages, a jury will find it useful to focus on the elimination of those schemes that are clearly not of sufficient quality to merit further consideration. After a complete review of all designs, agreement concerning the elimination of inferior submissions is fairly easily obtained. The closer the jury comes to determining potential winners, however, the more demanding the process becomes.

Before examining those entries that deserve serious consideration, a jury may want to reconsider the criteria it is applying. Some criteria for judging the quality of entries will be apparent in the competition program, but additional, mutually discerned criteria may be developed during the course of a jury's deliberations. On occasion, a jury's discussion of the value of different approaches may suggest the re-examination of a previously discarded scheme. As the jury reduces the number of entries to those requiring serious consideration, the members are advised to enter into a structured discussion of the merits or shortcomings of each remaining design.

After the field is reduced to three or four potential prize winners, a detailed examination of these remaining designs should be made, with strengths and weaknesses carefully compared and the workability of the intended structures confirmed. When all issues have been thoroughly discussed, the jury should select the first-prize winner and rank the remaining designs.

In the unlikely event a jury decides that none of the submissions meets the expectations of the sponsor, it may be empowered by the competition program to recommend that no first prize be awarded. If the competition rules do not stipulate how prize money will be assigned in such an event, the professional adviser and the jury may make a recommendation to the sponsor.

In two-stage competitions, a jury will convene on two separate occasions to evaluate submissions. At the end of the first stage, the jury's mandate is to choose those schemes that deserve further development. Its task is to select a group of finalists who will be commissioned by the sponsor to develop their original concepts.

## 3 Competition Types

The many variables in developing an architectural design competition have spawned many competition types. However, there are several specific methodologies that have become popular in recent years. They are examples for readers looking to see where they fit in the process.

### Competition Goals and Outcomes

- **Project:** This leads to the erection of a specific project on a defined site. The goal is to select the design solution that is judged to be the best and to select the architect who will be commissioned to develop the design and realize the project.
- **Idea:** These competitions are held for projects that are not intended to be built. They are useful as explorations of significant design issues but are limited insofar as they stop short of realization. Nevertheless, idea competitions can stimulate interest in untried possibilities. The subjects for idea competitions should be carefully chosen. Designers are likely to be wary of entering idea competitions that promote or advance a narrow interest, that fail to benefit either the public or the profession, or whose benefits are limited because the ideas cannot be applied or realized.
- **Product:** These competitions are generally sponsored by manufacturers interested in the promotion of particular types or brands of building materials. Designers may be reluctant to enter such competitions because they are frequently of more benefit to the manufacturers than the participants.
- **Prototype:** These competitions are generally sponsored by corporations interested in the prefabrication of various kinds of structures. Architects may be wary of entering prototype competitions unless the prize-winning designers are appropriately rewarded and their copyrighted or patented features adequately protected.

## Competition Entrants

- **Open:** These competitions are addressed to the entire national or international architectural community. They may be entered by any licensed architect. Usually, open competitions permit entries for architectural designers, students, or other design professionals, provided they associate themselves with an architect. The purpose of such an association is to assure a sponsor that the design concept being offered in a project competition has come from an experienced professional and can be realized should it be selected. Idea competitions and some project competitions are even more “open.” They permit students, unlicensed architectural designers, and professionals in various design fields to enter their submissions directly.

Open competitions are most appropriate when all architects have an equal opportunity to be selected on the basis of design merit and the project requires the widest exploration of potential solutions made possible by an open competition.

- **Limited:** These competitions restrict the submission of entries to a specific set of architects, such as those who reside within a specified area, are licensed to practice within a specified area, are licensed to practice within a particular state, or who satisfy other conditional requirements.

Budget restrictions, a desire to make use of local talent, an awareness of and sensitivity to local or regional styles and concerns, or a small-scale project that requires a site inspection may all suggest limiting a design competition to those architects living in a specified area or with specific qualifications or expertise.

- **Invited:** Invites a limited number of designers to enter.

## Competition Format

### One-and two-stage competitions

One-stage competitions select a winner and rank other prize-winning designs in a single sequence. The majority of design competitions are held in one stage. The requirements of a single-stage submission can be reduced or expanded in relation to the complexity of a project. For idea competitions and real projects of moderate size, a single design phase is usually sufficient as a test of the competitors’ designs.

Two-stage competitions offer competitors a chance to develop further their initial designs. Those architects who are invited to participate in a second stage typically receive compensation both as a reward for their work in the first stage and as a means of paying for costs incurred in developing their more detailed second-stage entries. Two-stage competitions are advantageous because they:

- Reduce the amount of work required in the original first-stage submission, thus attracting more entries
- Offer a venue for selecting promising concepts that can be further developed
- Provide the opportunity for comments from the sponsor and jury so that suggestions can be transmitted to the competitors before they refine their designs in the second stage
- Allow for more jury scrutiny of detailed development of stage-one ideas

Two-stage competitions are appropriate for complete building projects. They encourage architects to undertake a broad exploration of general design concepts in the first stage, while requiring detailed design elaboration in the second.

### **Developer/architect competitions**

This competition process would be similar to the one-or two-stage process but includes a developer to team with an architect. This approach enables developers to propose solutions to develop a particular site. This results in a residual land value that the developer is willing to pay to realize the project. This approach needs to be balanced with the overall public interest.

These competitions normally have a more flexible program as it is in the composition of the program that the developer can achieve a competitive advantage in determining the site value. The composition of the jury and the criteria by which the winning design will be selected are important factors in this process.

### **Design/build competitions**

This competition process would be similar to the one- or two-stage process, but includes a contractor to team with an architect. This approach enables the sponsor to review solutions that combine the elements of design and project cost. This process enters the realm of best value where a balance is sought among project design, project cost, and projected return on investment.

The composition of the jury and the criteria by which the winning design will be selected is an important factor in this process.

### **RFQ competition**

The request for qualifications competition is a qualifications-based process, whereby the client/sponsor solicits (either open or invited) qualifications from architects for the project at hand.

No design is solicited. The selection is purely based on the qualifications presented by the architect. Conventionally, the client would develop a short list of qualified architects and conduct interviews before choosing the designer.

### **Interviews with design concepts**

This competition is a qualifications-based process, whereby the client/sponsor solicits qualifications from architects for the project at hand.

This is followed by a second stage during which short-listed architects are requested to prepare design concepts. These concepts are presented to the client and/or jury via interviews, with the selection based on those discussions.

### **Other types of competitions**

The following are additional types of competitions:

- International Union of Architects (UIA), for which the organization has its own guidelines
- Hypothetical
- Student: Any delivery outlined above, but limited to architecture students

## 4 Running a Competition

This section describes the steps typically required to run a successful competition.

These are as follows:

- Establishing organization and structure
- Developing a competition program
- Estimating expenses and determining authority

### Establishing Organization and Structure

Once the sponsor has decided to hold a competition and determined its type, the sponsor should establish an organizational structure, along with assigned tasks, realistic schedules, and defined milestones.

Envisioning the outcome of the competition as it is organized is a good way to establish a clear road map to achieve the competition's goals.

A competition can involve a wide range of individuals and organizations with overlapping tasks and responsibilities. It is important to establish a clear organizational structure that identifies who is in charge, who has responsibility for which tasks, and who is in charge of establishing and maintaining the reporting structure among the all the collaborating parties.

Most often, the professional adviser serves as the overall competition task leader to whom all involved entities report. The sponsor supports and supplements the work of the adviser, especially in providing financial and logistical support. The competition jury is organized under a jury leader who in turn organizes the judging criteria and process, as well as develops the evaluation structure.



There is a wide range of tasks and activities associated with organizing and running a competition. As each competition will have specific contexts and requirements, they cannot all be anticipated in these guidelines. However, the planning and implementing of a competition can be divided into three main task categories: pre-competition, competition, and post-competition.

### Pre-competition organizational tasks

The sponsor and professional adviser, unless otherwise noted, most often takes the lead to:

- Establish the competition guidelines and entry rules (see Appendix B for details on submission requirements)
- Write the competition program (see “Developing a Competition Program” below)
- Develop the competition budget (see “Estimating Expenses and Determining Authority” below)
- Establish registration procedures, exhibit handling, and competition compliance protocols, which may also include obtaining fine arts insurance to protect entries
- Identify and secure competition administration support spaces (offices, storage, phones, computers, printers, etc.) for staff and materials involved in the competition
- Develop and coordinate the competition jury and establish the judging procedures and guidelines (jury leader along with professional adviser, facilitated by sponsor)
- Establish the competition schedule and identify key milestones, including activities for the sponsor and adviser, that lead up to and follow the competition
- Develop an awards structure, which can range from trophies to monetary prizes to commissions and other professional opportunities, depending on the budget
- Collect, organize, and reproduce a useful project database including maps, photographs, drawings, reports, etc.
- Identify support organizations and businesses such as reproduction houses, catering, photography, exhibit handling, packing, and postage

- Develop a marketing and publicity strategy for exposure of competition and results; identify individuals/entities responsible for public relations as well as venues for press releases and marketing relations
- Announce the competition via appropriate and effective media venues
- Establish the manner in which communications to prospective competition participants will be handled (via Web site, e-mail, U.S. mail, etc.)

### **Competition organizational tasks**

In this phase, some of the responsibilities extend to the members of the jury and the jury chair. The professional adviser and sponsor are still the lead for these tasks, working along with the jury representative, where noted. In the competition phase they:

- Receive and respond timely to questions from prospective competition participants
- Process and review competition entries, either physical exhibits or electronic submissions, for compliance, entry product labeling and handling; organize materials for jury review, etc.
- Initiate jury panel and judging process, including arranging meeting(s) in a physical space or organizing jury reviews electronically (professional adviser and jury leader)
- Make arrangements for a blind jury process (professional adviser and jury leader)
- Record jury deliberations and communicate comments and responses, as required, to facilitate analysis and selection of competition winners (jury and professional adviser)
- Select winner(s) and determine awards (jury and professional adviser)
- Carry out due diligence to ensure competition rules and guidelines are followed (professional adviser)
- Engage publicity for winners, jury, and sponsor

### Post-competition organizational tasks

The final phase of the design competition offers opportunities for celebration, organization, and collaboration. Again, the professional adviser and the sponsor work together as the lead, sometimes aided by other team members where noted, to:

- Arrange awards ceremony, displays, traveling exhibits, and/or publicity to announce results
- Arrange for return of all entries and follow-up communications with all competition participants
- Follow up to establish the legal aspects of ownership and copyright details (see “Estimating Expenses and Determining Authority” below)
- Enter into potential agreements or legal arrangements for continuing professional services (sponsor and legal consultant)

## Developing a Competition Program

The competition program is especially written for two of the key participants in the competition process, the potential competitors and the competition jury. At the most fundamental level, it establishes and articulates the goals and the entry requirements for the competition. It serves as a structure for the entrant to analyze and organize his or her thoughts and responses; provides an outline for the development of designs, exhibits, and presentations; and establishes a datum with which to test the strength of the entry to meet the goals of the competition. For the jury, the program provides the criteria against which to evaluate the entrant's successful understanding of the proposed problem, the responsiveness of the entry to meet the established competition requirements, and the completeness and creativity of the solution.

The competition program must request information about the entry that will give the jury a complete understanding of the objectives and vision of the responder. In this way, the jury will be able to evaluate the entry on its own merits as well as in comparison to others. Additionally, the program can explore new trends and design directions by the manner in which the competition goals are formulated.

Issues and information to include and/or address in a competition program may include (but are not limited to):

- A project description, including history, goals, and competition's physical, social, and/or economic context
- Site maps, photos of existing and surrounding conditions, related reports and research, news articles, and/or previous work on this site or project
- Competition and technical information including contact information, project information, technical specialists available, etc.
- Exhibit and/or presentation requirements including drawings, written descriptions, and the use of other media

In the end, the more completely and thoroughly the competition program is developed, the greater and more comprehensive the design response will be. (See Appendix A for more detailed considerations.)

### Testing the program

The formulation of the competition program is ultimately the responsibility of the sponsor, with the professional adviser taking the lead of a competition committee made up of jurors, specialists, and other potential concerned parties. Critical analysis, vetting, and acceptance of the program by all interested parties assure a successful outcome for the competition. Indeed, review and approval of the program is a prerequisite for becoming a competition juror. Testing the program may require the use of specialists and/or consultants especially if the competition subject involves scientific or technological issues.

### Technical specialists or requirements

The program may engage competitors in an exploration of fields that require respondents to engage technical experts and specialists as part of their team. It is imperative for the program to be technically sound and to base the program criteria on good science and/or current research. The professional adviser must engage the proper specialist to assist in the formulation and testing of the program so that the entries have a chance for success.

## Estimating Expenses and Determining Authority

Establishing that the sponsor has sufficient funds and the legal authority to hold a competition is critical to the process of initiating, organizing, and running a competition. A properly conceived and managed competition is based on a commitment by the sponsor and all assisting parties to fiscal transparency and ethical treatment of competitors.

### Estimating the costs of a competition

Working with a professional adviser, the sponsor can define all the expenses involved in initiating and running a competition to establish a competition budget. It is important to define the audience that may participate or submit entries to the competition. A broader audience makes for a greater range of entries and, in turn, affects the judging effort. The number of entries will have a direct effect on the budget. Additionally, the international reach of a competition will influence the quality of the competition, also increasing potential expenses.

The cost, time, and effort involved for the sponsor in holding a design competition depend on the complexity of the architectural problem and the extent of participation that the sponsor wishes to encourage. A limited competition for a small project might be run in a few months with a modest amount of funding, while an open, two-stage competition that attracts hundreds of entries for a complex subject, such as a major public building, may take a year and require a significant investment.

The costs incurred in holding a competition may include:

- Fees and expenses of the professional adviser including administrative facilities or offices, desks, phones, computers, etc.
- Travel and/or honoraria expenses for jurors, rental space, and other jury meeting expenses
- Honoraria or stipends for the finalists
- Prize money awarded to winning designers and possibly other finalists

- Managerial and administrative expenses of the sponsor, including staff time, advertising, printing, mailing, photography, handling, insurance, storage, meeting space rental, and exhibit of entries
- Marketing, publicity, and press outreach

There is considerable variation in cost distribution. Limited competitions may have a higher percentage of funds devoted to prize money, while most open competitions will incur higher administrative expenses. The specific level of each cash prize, stipend, or honorarium should be set by the sponsor after conferring with the professional adviser.

### **Determining authority**

Along with setting up the appropriate legal framework for the competition, the sponsor must commit to protecting the intellectual property rights of the competition's participants. Copyright protection of all products originating from the competition is fundamental to establishing the legitimacy of the sponsor and the competition enterprise in totality.

### **Copyright and intellectual property**

Copyright law vests the right to publish or reproduce architectural works and visual arts work in the author of the work, that is, the competitor making the submission. In order for the sponsor to make use of the submissions, the competition rules must require each competitor to permit use of the design and materials submitted to the extent the sponsor intends to use them. Legal counsel should be relied on to draft these terms as part of each competitor's agreement that should accompany the submissions.

In addition to making use of the winning design for project development, the sponsor may wish to publish or display other submissions as well. For that reason, the sponsor should consider obtaining at least limited reproduction rights of all submissions. Requiring ownership of the copyright in all submissions is likely unnecessary, however, and can be expected to meet with resistance from potential competitors. Competitors will want to be able to reuse their work for other purposes.

### Ownership of entry materials and ideas

Copyright law does not apply to ownership of the submitted material itself (either hard copy or electronic files). The competition rules should state: (a) that the sponsor owns all the submitted materials, (b) which of the submitted materials the sponsor intends to retain, and (c) the method for competitors to reclaim submitted materials the sponsor does not intend to retain after the competition.

Copyright law does not apply to ideas contained within the submission. In order to avoid misunderstanding, the competition rules may state that the sponsor has the right to use any ideas contained in any winning or non-winning submission.

### Publicity and attribution

The sponsor will want to publicize the names of any competition winners and perhaps other competitors as well. The agreement each competitor enters into should give the sponsor this right, along with the right to use other background information about the competitor.

Because architecture is a profession in which design capability is prized, the giving of credit in connection with work on a project or in a competition is an important issue. The AIA encourages sponsors and others to recognize and respect the contributions of competitors by identifying competitors in any publication or display of their submissions. The AIA has published Guidelines for the Attribution of Credit and other resources related to professional credit on the Institute's Web site ([www.aia.org/about/ethicsandbylaws/index.htm](http://www.aia.org/about/ethicsandbylaws/index.htm)).

## 5 Entering a Competition

Design competitions are a search for the best. The architect who is awarded first prize in a design competition for a project not only may win a commission for a project but public and professional recognition as well. While the principal purpose of a design competition is to find the optimal solution to a particular building opportunity, the competition system helps both the profession and society discern ideas and talent.

Whether local, national, or international in scope, competition victories help to establish an architect's reputation. Alvar Aalto, Eero Saarinen, Arthur Erickson, Jørn Utzon, Norman Foster, Richard Rogers, Renzo Piano, and Zaha Hadid are among those architects whose careers were launched by competitions. American designers such as Kallmann, McKinnell & Wood; Mitchell/Giurgola; Venturi, Rauch, and Scott Brown; Geddes, Brecher, Qualls, Cunningham; Steven Holl; and Daniel Libeskind have all advanced themselves through their competition work.

When properly run, design competitions elevate the level of public expectation for design excellence. Such heightened awareness helps the profession offer its best, thus stimulating an improvement in architectural design generally. All architects who participate in competitions contribute to this purpose, regardless of whether or not they win.

Open competitions have traditionally attracted designers who see a chance to test and extend their talent. In winning a competition and the commission that may go along with it, an architect can demonstrate a superiority of design ability. Meanwhile, architects and firms that do not win can add their competition designs to a record of work to show prospective clients different aspects of their thinking and portfolio. Even an experienced firm may use a competition entry in this way to increase its reputation or extend its record of achievement.



Entering a competition can be a welcome stimulus for an architect or firm. It allows competitors an opportunity to exercise their imaginations by offering opportunities to grapple with significant design challenges. For architects who may feel constrained by the exigencies of everyday practice, competitions are an opportunity to work toward their own highest standards. Invited competitions are used to recruit the participation and challenge the skills of designers with extensive reputations. Many established architects and firms enter open as well as invited competitions because they find the challenge of competing with some of the best architects in the nation or world a stimulant to their own work.

Because the odds of winning are always slim, architects enter competitions with the hope that a specific design approach may prove ideal for a particular building opportunity. In the process, their convictions about design are tested, for competitions typically offer the kind of challenge few opportunities in professional practice afford.

### Considerations for Competition Entrants

The greatest cost to competitors is not so much a monetary one as it is an expenditure of time and energy. The commitment of both can be considerable.

The first cost to the competitor is the registration fee often required of those desiring to enter. The major purpose of such a fee is to separate the serious competitors from those who are merely curious.

Materials and printing costs will vary according to the requirements of a particular competition. Some competitions request only a modest number of drawings while invited competitions and the second stage of two-stage open competitions usually require an extensive number of detailed drawings plus the construction of a scale model. In such competitions the competing architects are usually compensated for their exacting and time-consuming work. Nevertheless, potential competitors should carefully read the competition program before deciding to enter. Estimates can then be made of the amount of time and cost that development of a competition submission will demand.

### Forming the competition team

Architects may form associations with other individuals for the purpose of entering a competition. In general, associations are formed in four ways:

- Architects with other architects or allied professionals with whom they like to work
- Architects with other architects who meet eligibility requirements of limited competitions
- Students or architectural designers with licensed architects to satisfy eligibility requirements
- Architects with other technical professionals whose special skills may complement the development of a submitted scheme

The division of labor is established by the individuals forming the association. It may involve a relatively close collaboration, or it may entail one designer or firm being responsible for the preliminary design with the associates being responsible for most subsequent work. Whatever the relationship, the individuals or firms involved should establish a clear and workable agreement at the start of their association.

### Establishing a production schedule

Once a decision has been made to enter a competition, the designer should begin to plan how long it will take to develop an entry. Starting with the submission deadline and working backward, the competitor should establish deadlines for completing the following tasks:

- **Final preparation and send-off:** Double wrapping to preserve anonymity if required by the competition guidelines; retention of receipts to prove submission date
- **Presentation:** Selecting the technique, media, composition, and graphics to ensure that the scheme speaks for itself, as the jurors rely primarily on the graphic language of the exhibits in assessing the relative value of different schemes

- **Formalization and development:** Developing the concept according to the required scale, type, and number of exhibits
- **Analysis:** Becoming familiar with the competition program; performing a site analysis; performing historical, technical or building type research; and submitting questions to the professional adviser

### Studying the program

The competition program demands careful study on the part of the competitors. All clauses, but particularly the mandatory requirements, must be read with great care. If the mandatory requirements are not met, the entry an architect submits may be eliminated from the competition by the professional adviser and never reach the jury. The competitor's submission should match what is requested to have a chance of winning.

### Evaluating the jury

Competitors should feel a sense of trust about the jury who will be evaluating their work. With a balanced and unbiased jury, all competitors can be confident their design solutions will be seriously considered.

### Questions for the professional adviser

It is a common practice of architectural competitions to establish a deadline for receiving questions concerning the program requirements. Although programs should be written with care, architects who study them thoroughly invariably find questions they need to have answered, if only to test whether or not a particular approach is permissible or contradictory to the stated requirements. All such questions should be submitted to the professional adviser.

Experience in the United Kingdom indicates that fewer than 10 percent of all registered competitors ask questions. Nevertheless, in a sample population of architects winning first, second, and third prizes, 50 percent acknowledged that they had submitted questions, writes Judith Strong in *Participating in Architectural Competitions: A Guide for Competitors, Promoters and Assessors* (London Architectural Press, 1976, 20). Obviously, this does not mean that asking the adviser a question will necessarily improve an architect's chance of winning. Rather, it seems to indicate that those who place in competitions have studied the competition program rigorously, as soon as possible after receiving it, and may even have considered alternative preliminary schemes, thus giving themselves more time to conceptualize, develop, and present their designs.

### More than one entry

On occasion, more than one of the prize-winning designs in a competition has been submitted by the same individual or team. This is especially true in idea competitions, which generally do not require the same kind of detailed submission as other types of competitions. Even in a competition for a built project, however, a design team may find that it has two interesting solutions. If the competitors' energy and manpower and the competitions rules permit, they may decide to submit both concepts. Generally, competitions specify that only one scheme may be permitted from each registrant. In such situations, it may be possible for different members of a design team to each register so that more than one plan may be submitted. It is always wise to clarify the rules about multiple submissions with the professional adviser.

### Copyrights and patents

The competition rules governing the ownership of submissions should be reviewed. In most competitions, the sponsor retains possession of all prize-winning submissions. If original presentation materials are being submitted, the competitor should have reproductions made to document the work for the competitor's records.

Unless the rules specifically state otherwise, the competitor retains the copyright in the architectural design and other materials submitted. The rules may, however, give the sponsor rights to copy or publish submissions, either on an exclusive or nonexclusive basis.

Competitors should affix a copyright notice to each drawing, photograph, and model submitted. Copyright notice consists of the word "Copyright" or the copyright symbol (©), the name of the competitor, and the date of submission. To preserve the right to bring an action for infringement of a copyright, the competitor should register the work as "visual arts work" with the Copyright Office ([www.copyright.gov/](http://www.copyright.gov/)). The registration should state that the competitor is the author of each type of content that may apply to the submission (e.g., two-dimensional artwork, technical drawing, architectural work, photography).

Competitors may also wish to patent special features on their entries. While copyrights protect architectural works, drawings, and other visual arts work, design patents protect new and unique ornamental designs, and utility patents protect new and unique architectural configurations or systems of organization within a design. Obtaining a patent may be especially relevant in idea competitions. Further information can be obtained from the United States Patent & Trademark Office (<http://uspto.gov/>). During the life of a patent, the competitor's right to prevent others from making, using, or selling the patented feature without permission is protected.

### **Submission and return of entries**

Virtually all open and limited competitions and some invited competitions preserve the anonymity of competitors. When anonymity is an issue, the competitors will usually be instructed to double wrap their entries and attach a sealed envelope containing identifying data on the back of one of the panels as the sole means of identification. To avoid potential disqualification, all of these instructions should be followed scrupulously.

If the entry is to be shipped rather than personally delivered, a receipt should be kept as a record. A receipt stating the date and hour of delivery may also be requested. Such receipts may be the only evidence a competitor possesses that an entry has been delivered on time.

After the results of a competition are announced, those entries that have not been awarded prizes are frequently destroyed. Therefore, competitors who seek to have their entries returned should make prior arrangements with the professional adviser.

## 6 Post-competition Activities

### Notifying the Submitters

The winning and runner-up designers should be notified as quickly as possible after the presentation of the jury report by either the professional adviser or the sponsor. Where time, budget, and logistics permit, the professional adviser should arrange for a meeting of the jury and the winning designer. The designer, in particular, may benefit from hearing the jury's views of specific aspects of the winning scheme. Of course, such meetings are not always possible. Organizations that have to go to a governing body or board of directors for final approval of the jury's decision may not be able to notify a winning architect until after the jury has departed.

During the period between the jury's selection and the public announcement of the competition results, the prize-winning architects should be asked to regard their notification as confidential information.

All competitors, including those whose designs fail to win any recognition, should receive a copy of the jury report. The report should be mailed immediately after the public announcement of the competition results.

In a two-stage competition, all competitors should be sent a list of the finalists who will continue to compete in the second stage. Those designers receiving honorable mentions should also be identified.

### Notifying the Press

A press conference will frequently be called to make a public announcement of a competition's results. The professional adviser should attend any such conference, participate in 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. (The adviser should try to select illustrations such as black line drawings and high-contrast photos that will be readily reproducible, particularly on newsprint.) The adviser's involvement in these tasks will help to ensure the accuracy of all publicly disseminated information concerning:

- The date the competition was first publicly announced

- The number of queries received
- The number of designers who registered
- The number of submissions received
- A statistical profile of competitors' places of residence (especially relevant for national and international events)
- The names of competitors and firms whose submission are to receive recognition
- The names of the jurors and their affiliations
- A description of the jury's deliberative process
- The report of the jury, which presents the reasons for the selection of the winner

To preserve the integrity of the competition process, an announcement of stage-one results in a two-stage competition should not include either the preliminary report of the jury or illustrations of any competitor's work.

## Exhibitions and Symposia

When provision has been made in the competition program, the professional adviser may set up a public exhibition of the drawings and models entered by competitors. For certain competitions, a traveling exhibit may also be established with a suitable catalogue or other publication. The scope of the exhibition will depend on the sponsor's intentions, the amount of public interest or concern generated by the competition project, and the amount of space available. Exhibitions provide a fine opportunity to stimulate public consideration of architectural design.

They also help to stimulate the competitive spirit of participants. Knowing that their work will be displayed along with that of their peers can be a stimulus for competitors. For all these reasons, as full a presentation as possible of the submissions should be attempted.

The sponsor may also decide to hold a symposium on the competition or on the submitted designs to further disseminate information and foster constructive discussion. If a symposium is held, the professional adviser should play a significant role.

## Business Items

### Arranging for the payment of jurors, consultants, and winners

The professional adviser/sponsor agreement may require the adviser to act as an agent of the sponsor in approving expense reimbursements, prize money, and fees for agreed upon services. If obligated, the professional adviser should review all invoices submitted for approval prior to sending them to the sponsor, who will thereby be obligated to render payment.

### Returning the models and drawings

Shortly after the awards are announced (or post-competition exhibition is held), the professional adviser should arrange for the return of all of the design exhibits for which competitors have made prior arrangements. The competition program may announce that competitors who desire their entries returned should enclose a check inside the sealed envelope on the back of their entry to cover the sponsor's return shipping and handling expenses. (The amount of the check should be established by the professional adviser.) Another method is for competitors to retrieve their own submissions on a date specified in the program.

In a two-stage competition, submissions should not be returned until after the final judging, even if no post-competition exhibition is intended.

### Establishing an archival record

As the drawings and models are repacked and shipped back to their authors, the professional adviser should assemble the competition's official documents, photographs, slides, sound recordings, film, videotapes, letters, and public announcements in one place. Depending on the sponsor's interests and commitments, such archival material can form the basis for a future publication. Such a competition archive is of value to:

- Members of the design professions
- Scholars interested in the history of design competitions
- Sponsors and professional advisers of future competitions



The Handbook of Architectural Design Competitions

# Appendix



# Appendix A

## The Project Program

Each competitor's design must address the requirements of the project program or risk disqualification. Therefore, one of the tasks of the professional adviser in preparing the project program is to balance requirements with the competitor's freedom of design interpretation. Too few requirements may not adequately describe the sponsor's needs; too many may unduly restrict the search for an imaginative solution.

The project program should make maximum use of clear diagrams and drawings. Floor areas, for example, can be conveniently portrayed as charts, tables or graphic areas. The following is a summary of ingredients that may be used to generate a successful project program.

### History and background

The program should include a brief but relevant history of the project, the sponsoring organization, the immediate urban or natural environment, and the social context, if relevant. It may also include a statement of the sponsor's interests and intentions. On occasion, sponsors may have established operational methods they would like to have respected in a new architectural design. For example, an organization composed of semi-autonomous units may want competitors to give spatial expression to such an organizational framework in their designs. Additional programmatic considerations may require a statement about the architectural character sought in harmony with neighboring structures, the surrounding topography and vegetation, or the general character of a region.

### Objectives

The program should inspire the imagination of potential competitors by a clear presentation of the competition's objectives. What kind of character should the project display? What should it say to the community? What large organizational and architectural functions should it fulfill? What is expected of the structure during its lifetime? How will it serve the owner, users, and community? What kind of growth should be accommodated, if any? Are there any special design problems the structure should answer? What requirements are made in regard to energy use, circulation, public-private relationships, etc.? In short, what is the building for? How will it shape the lives of people who live or work in it?

### **Evaluation criteria**

The program should establish the criteria the sponsor expects the jury to follow in evaluating the competitors' entries. Evaluation criteria vary considerably from one competition to another. In a competition for a memorial, symbolic and aesthetic aspects may be paramount, while in a competition for a building devoted to natural science research, the functional use of space may be deemed to be of overriding importance. To make the sponsor's intentions clear, some programs list the specific questions the sponsor seeks to have answered.

Other programs will state the project's major goals or themes in more general terms to give the jury maximum freedom in its deliberations. Still other programs may attempt to assign points to specific issues or themes to articulate the relative weight the jury should give to various aspects of the submitted designs. Jurors may find it difficult to treat literally such percentage-weighted criteria. There may be too many intangibles inherent in assessing the quality of a design to warrant the strict use of such a rigid scoring system.

However they are presented, the evaluation criteria should be clear to both jurors and competitors. They indicate, more than any other program element, the design values and solutions the sponsor is seeking.

### **Orientation map**

A small scale area plan or aerial photograph (or both), with north arrow and scale, indicating the site, environs, the principal roads and all other pertinent geographic relationships must be supplied.

### **Circulation**

A traffic or circulation plan of the general site area should be given. It should graphically represent the flow of automobile, truck, public transit, and pedestrian traffic.

### **Climate**

A weather and climate diagram or summary must be supplied to provide information on latitude and longitude. Precipitation averages and extremes should be stated on a monthly basis. Seasonal temperature, humidity, and wind data should also be provided. Otherwise, the appropriate National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) documents should be identified.

### Photographs

It will usually be helpful to include photographs of the competition location, such as: aerial photos (vertical and oblique) of the site; ground level photos of the site, illustrating its main features, including key approach views; and photos looking from the site to adjacent, nearby or distant buildings, landmarks or vistas. All photos should be keyed to a location point map, which may be a copy of the general area plan or the site plan.

### Site plan

A detailed site plan at an appropriate scale must be supplied. It should show: a graphic scale and north arrow; project boundaries; topography; neighboring buildings (their uses, heights, entrances, materials, etc.); site easements, if any; trees and vegetation; sub-surface conditions (may be a separate report, if required); utilities (water, sewer, storm, gas, electric, telephone); prevailing seasonal wind directions.

### Site visit

The program may require that all competitors visit the site of a project. In invited competitions, the sponsor will make arrangements for a visit that are convenient to all, usually as part of a general orientation. In open and limited competitions, a sponsor must decide whether or not a site visit should be required of all competitors. Travel distance considerations will usually determine whether or not a mandatory requirement is advisable. If a site visit is mandatory, the sponsor should determine the means of verifying that a proper visit to the site has been made by each competitor. A sign-in book placed near the site is one possibility. In lieu of a mandatory site visit, more elaborate site information must be provided in the program. The latter method is one more frequently used.

### Space program

A detailed building or project program must include the area requirements for all operational components. It must also supply: areas listed by function and size; proximities or relationships between various departments; a description of how the building should operate, in terms of personnel and what they do; special functional considerations, such as security needs or special equipment; access requirements of workers, visitors, and service and emergency personnel; special interior climate considerations, such as climate control for documents storage, special equipment, etc.

## Special requirements

A clearly stated list of special requirements may also be provided. It may include: energy performance standards; construction phasing considerations; use of natural light and ventilation; proximities to window areas by employees; lighting standards for work areas.

## Budget limitations

Cost is nearly always one of the principal determinants of a project, including both initial capital costs and subsequent operations (or “life”) costs. In this respect, real competition projects are no different than any other building project.

A competition sponsor may only have a specific amount of money available for a project. Or, a limit for the entire cost of construction and operations may be established. The sponsor’s financial situation should be clearly communicated to the competitors and jury. Specifically, the cost of the project should be established as one of the following:

- **Budget target:** Competitors are asked not to exceed a stated overall cost in their designs
- **Budget estimate:** Competitors are asked to estimate the total cost of their designs, usually on the basis of area or volume cost assumptions
- **Mandatory budget requirements:** An absolute cost limit is established and a professional cost estimator is hired by the sponsor to check for compliance

Putting limitations on the building area or volume allowed in the project program is a less explicit but potentially effective way for a sponsor to control the cost of a project.

Design competitions for real projects should state their budgetary concerns. Idea competitions, product competitions, and student competitions may subordinate or disregard cost considerations to focus on design ideas.

### **Local codes**

The program should contain all pertinent information regarding the codes, ordinances, and regulations of the local jurisdiction where the project is located.

### **References**

It may be helpful for a sponsor to include a list of readily available information resources (articles, books, manuals, etc.) on specialized subjects pertinent to the project program.

# Appendix B

## The Submission Requirements

The submission requirements serve to summarize for competitors and jury precisely what design information the competitors are to produce. Participation in a design competition requires that an architect spend a significant amount of time away from regular practice. Consequently, the professional adviser should exercise care in determining how much design information to require. The design exhibit instructions should be sufficient to explain the design without resulting in overly elaborate and unnecessary drawings. Keeping the number and detail required in the drawings to a minimum usually benefits the sponsor as well as the competitors, as it allows the architects who enter to concentrate on finding the best design solution to a problem rather than on its graphic presentation. In general, the submission requirements should:

- Be clear and concise
- Keep the number of exhibits to a reasonable minimum
- Stress design information in preference to rendering
- Restrict only what demands restriction, allowing competitors the freedom and opportunity to express their ideas but in a manner reasonably comparable to other competitors

Disregard of the submission requirements by competitors is a violation of the rules. Those entries that do not follow the instructions should be disqualified from the competition by the professional adviser. The instructions should stipulate how extra materials such as an unrequested model or additional drawings will be handled. The preferred procedure requires the professional adviser to withhold from the jury the extra materials in order to maintain comparability among designs. Because many potential submission materials are available in electronic format, the requirements should specify if this is acceptable and how such submissions will be handled.

## Drawings

The number, size, scale, and type of drawings from each competitor should be specified. This is a critical decision.

The professional adviser should plan this most carefully with the sponsor. By specifying simple types of drawings and avoiding unnecessarily elaborate detail, the adviser and sponsor can ensure that the competitor's efforts will be concentrated on searching for the best solution to a problem. The conventional types of drawings include:

- Site plan
- Floor plans
- Elevations
- Sections
- Isometrics
- Axonometrics
- Perspectives

Perspectives may be required from specified points of view, either from the exterior or to illustrate important interior spaces, such as an assembly or exhibit area. Perspectives should be optically correct.

## Models

Models should be kept very simple since they are costly to construct and ship. Generally, the requested model should be "mass" or "white only," showing only overall form, not detail, colors, or materials. If transparency is an essential of a proposed design, transparent materials should be allowed. The photograph of a small model may substitute for a perspective or isometrics, particularly in an open two-stage competition. If a model is required, its precise base dimensions should be specified (including depth or thickness of base). Topographical interval should also be specified. If deemed helpful, a model of the surrounding area into which all competitors' models can be inserted should be constructed. This allows all of the competitors' models to be examined against a common standard and, of course, saves competitors unnecessary work.



Models are seldom required as design exhibits in one-stage competitions or in the first stage of two-stage competitions. Models are frequently used in invited competitions and in the second stage of two-stage competitions.

### **Scale**

The scale of all drawings and of the model is very important because scale determines the degree of explicitness sought in the design studies of the competitors. Although it will vary with the project, the scale of submissions can usually be relatively small. In general, scale should be set by the professional adviser in a way that is consistent with the sponsor's objectives and the competitors' design search.

### **Explanatory drawings, diagrams, or text**

It may be helpful to require explanatory drawings, diagrams, or text as part of the submission. Specific drawings, such as wall sections, may also be required to indicate materials and construction. Limiting the number of auxiliary exhibits and keeping them small compels competitors to focus on essentials.

A special exhibit of a short text, explanatory diagrams and drawings, or a personal presentation of the design should be required when the competition focuses on a specific design element (such as passive solar design). If any feature of a competitor's design submission has been copyrighted or patented by another party, acknowledgement of the copyright or patent should be required of the competitor.

### **Gross area or volume tabulation**

Competitors may be required to furnish a gross area or volume tabulation on their drawings. This should be done according to a specified format to facilitate comparison.

### **Cost estimation**

Cost estimations may be required but cannot be expected to have a high degree of reliability except in more elaborate invited competitions or in the second stage of two-stage competitions. If a cost limitation is mandatory, the sponsor should hire a single consultant to perform cost estimates of all entries on a comparable basis.

### Methods of presentation

The use of color, toning screens, overlays, etc., on the drawings should be carefully described. The sponsor and professional adviser should decide which media are best suited to helping a jury reach its decision without putting an undue burden, either in terms of time or money, on the competitors. Forethought should also be given to how well the required graphics will reproduce when the designs of the winners and runners-up are published in the professional and general press.

Instructions regarding the number, mounting, size, and relationships of panels and other exhibit items must be precisely prescribed. Failure to comply may lead to disqualification.

### Anonymity

In competitions where anonymity is to be protected, competitors should be instructed to submit their designs in an appropriate and convenient manner. Double wrapping is the most secure method. When the exterior wrapping is removed, a plain wrapper with no markings whatsoever encloses the submission. Identification is usually achieved by the competitor affixing a sealed envelope to the rear of a specified drawing. Inside the envelope, the competitor should enclose name, address, and telephone number.

Those competitors who desire the return of their design exhibits may be instructed to place a check inside the sealed envelope to defray the sponsor's packaging and shipping expenses, as estimated by the professional adviser. An alternative is to permit the competitors to pick up their submissions on or by a specific date.

# Appendix C

## Time Planning

The sponsor and professional adviser should calculate the amount of time required for the following steps. Note that several tasks can proceed simultaneously.

1. Preliminary discussion and formulation
  - a. In-house discussion by sponsor
  - b. Fact finding
  - c. Interviewing and selecting a professional adviser
2. Competition planning
  - a. Program development
  - b. Competition documents preparation
  - c. Jury selection
3. Competition initiation
  - a. Announcement in professional press and other media
  - b. Receive inquiries and registrations
  - c. Log registration
  - d. Distribute program on a specified date
4. Competition operation
  - a. Time interval for competitors to prepare designs
  - b. Receive questions from competitors
  - c. Prepare and distribute answers

5. Receipt of entries
  - a. Receive and record all design entries
  - b. Unpack and arrange all entries for jurors' examination
  - c. Maintain security and anonymity, if required, of designs
  - d. Arrange for public display, if required
  - e. Photograph all designs for historical record
  
6. Jury operation
  - a. Jury examines designs
  - b. Selects winner
  
7. Announcement of winner
  - a. Press release and conference
  - b. Public exhibition
  
8. Follow through
  - a. Prepare competition publications
  - b. Pay all bills
  - c. Return or dispose of unpremiated designs

**Note:** When a two-stage competition is held, steps 4–6 are repeated.

# Appendix D

## Cost Estimating Guide

The expense for sponsors of holding a competition may be calculated by assigning cost to the following:

1. General sponsor overhead, including the time cost of organizational personnel involved in running the competition
2. The professional adviser
  - a. Fee (time rate, contract fee, etc.)
  - b. Expenses (office, travel, hotel, telephones, etc.)
  - c. Clerical assistance
3. Publicity and publications
  - a. Publicity costs
  - b. Publications, printing (Note A)
  - c. Mailing (can be contracted)
  - d. Printing and mailing questions and answers
4. Jurors and technical consultants
  - a. Fee or honorarium
  - b. Food, travel, and lodging, as needed
  - c. Communications allowance

- 5 Exhibit space for design submissions
  - a. Receive designs
  - b. Storage space
  - c. Exhibit space (Note B)
  - d. Handling expenses
  
6. Prizes and fees (as decided by the sponsor)
  - a. Prize schedule, including first, second, third, and honorable mention recipients (Note C)
  - b. Honoraria and stipends
  
7. Publication of results
  - a. Press kit
  - b. Public exhibit
  - c. Competition publication, such as book, catalogue, pamphlet, or other exhibit materials

**Note A:** Competitors often pay an entrance fee, which can be applied to some costs. It should typically be low—enough to discourage the idly curious, but not to pay for the competition.

**Note B:** “Sunshine” laws may require that publicly funded designs be placed on public exhibit. (This can typically be done via continuous slide projection of designs.)

**Note C:** Adjustments must be made for a two-stage competition.

# Appendix E

## Standard Forms of Agreement

The “Standard Form of Agreement Between Owner and Architect for Special Services” (AIA Document B727) is often employed as the basis for a sponsor/professional adviser agreement. Whatever form of agreement is used, the list of typical professional advising responsibilities enumerated above in the second section under “Planning the process” should be consulted in specifying the services to be provided the sponsor. The same form of agreement may be used in specifying the duties and compensation of jurors. Frequently, however, a detailed letter specifying a juror’s obligations and fee is substituted for a more formal agreement. “Obligations of the jury” described in the second section above should be consulted in specifying the services jurors will provide.

The contract awarded the winning architect in a project competition is often based on a standard form of Agreement Between Owner and Architect, such as AIA Document B101. Frequently, a copy of the owner/architect agreement is included in the competition program in order to clarify the contractual relationship the sponsor and winning architect will enter into at the conclusion of the competition.

## Resources and References

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