WSDOT Consultant Prequalification FAQ: (2025 Update)

General Overview:

1. **What is the WSDOT Consultant Prequalification?**
   The Prequalification allows consulting firms to compete for and provide professional services on selected WSDOT projects. It streamlines procurement and improves access to opportunities.

2. **Why did WSDOT adopt a Prequalification system instead of continuing with On-Call agreements?**
   Prequalification supports fair competition and enhances flexibility for various project types, budgets, and timelines. By moving away from On-Call master agreements, WSDOT streamlines the advertisement, selection, and negotiation processes. Prequalification also establishes indirect costs and labor rates upfront.

3. **What's the plan for disciplines still under On-Call agreements?**
   We are phasing out the remaining On-Call categories and integrating them into the Prequalification Program. As On-Call agreements expire, their disciplines will be folded into the Prequalification announcement.

4. **Is this change legally required?**
   There is no legal mandate. However, WSDOT consulted with the Assistant Attorney General and made the change to better support project managers and promote inclusion, while ensuring compliance with applicable laws (RCW 39.80, 48 CFR, and the Brooks Act).

Process:

5. **How long does the process take?**
   Typically, 1–3 weeks, depending on how quickly the firm submits required documentation and how promptly our auditors review the Indirect Cost Rate (ICR) materials.

6. **How does a firm become prequalified?**
   Firms complete a self-certifying application, followed by a financial review. If approved, they receive a Master Pricing Agreement (MPA). See: Consultant prequalification | WSDOT

7. **How is the selection process handled?**
   We conduct a second-tier competition via email to prequalified consultants using the "Ready to Work" roster. Firms submit a response to a Request for Additional Information (RFAI). The process mirrors the previous On-Call system but has been streamlined. See: Consultant Prequalification | Flow Chart

8. **Are all prequalified firms invited to respond to Tier 2 solicitations?**

Yes. All firms on the roster for the relevant discipline may respond. There is no initial shortlisting, though interviews may follow.

9. **Does Prequalification ensure the most qualified firms are selected?**
   Yes. Prequalification ensures equitable access, especially for SBEs and MSVWBE firms. Final selection is based on a scored evaluation during the second-tier process.

Rates & Classifications:

10. **How should firms complete the Crosswalk form?**
    Match your classifications to WSDOT's as closely as possible. Provide the highest rate for each WSDOT labor classification listed, which becomes the maximum payable rate. See: WA State Office of Financial Management (OFM)

11. **How is rate confidentiality maintained under public disclosure laws?**
    All Public Disclosure Requests (PDRs) are reviewed individually by WSDOT's Risk Management Office, following RCW 42.56.

12. **Why are firms required to match WSDOT labor classifications even if they don't align perfectly?**
    This facilitates consistent contract administration and quick agreement execution. WSDOT classifications cover a wide range of services, such as Transportation Technician and Engineer roles.

13. **What if a consultant's classification doesn't align with WSDOT's?**
    Select the best match based on role descriptions, regardless of your firm's location. Project-specific expertise will be evaluated during Tier 2. Contact the Prequalification point of contact for help.

14. **How does WSDOT handle unique or specialty roles not covered in the Crosswalk?**
    We understand that not all roles fit neatly into standard categories. The Crosswalk is periodically updated to address specialty needs.

Direct Labor Rates (DLR) & Master Pricing Agreement (MPA)

15. **Why are only the highest paid salaries submitted for each classification?**
    The maximum rate ensures consistent ceiling rates for contract negotiations and aligns with the Master Pricing Agreement.

16. **Must all team members be prequalified for multi-disciplinary projects?**
    Yes. Both the prime and all subconsultants must be prequalified in their respective disciplines.

17. **How are UDBE firms made aware of this requirement?**
    While UDBE status is no longer a criterion, Prequalification is open year-round. WSDOT has consistently communicated the requirement through its website, public meetings, and outreach channels.

18. **Can subconsultants be added after an agreement is signed?**
    Yes, if they are on the Prequalification roster and formally added by the prime consultant.

19. **Why are DLRs negotiated and capped?**
    DLRs are reviewed as part of the MPA to streamline negotiations. WSDOT reimburses actual raw labor rates up to the DLR ceiling within a classification.

20. **Does WSDOT use benchmarks or third-party data to validate labor rates?**
    WSDOT may refer to sources like the Zweig Group salary survey but does not use collective averages to assess rate reasonableness. Each firm's rates are reviewed individually.

21. **Are rate increases predetermined in later years of the MPA?**
    We use the Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners (CPI-U) as a benchmark. This index was chosen in consultation with the ACEC Business Subcommittee. Alternative suggestions are welcome via ACEC.

22. **Will WSDOT arbitrarily cap future rate increases?**
    No. WSDOT follows consistent and fair rate negotiation practices and does not impose arbitrary limitations.

23. **Do MPA rate caps apply to projects over $2 million?**
    Yes. The MPA process applies to all projects but does not change how labor rates are negotiated for higher-value contracts.

24. **How often must MPAs be updated?**
    Annually, typically during the open advertisement period. See: Contract Services | WSDOT

25. **What happens if a firm doesn't update their MPA?**
    The firm's MPA will be terminated, and it will be removed from the current roster. It may reapply in future Prequalification cycles.