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Association Update: Design-build: training for the future

by Bake Baker, Design-Build Institute of America – Upper Midwest Guest Commentary

Interest and experience in design-build project delivery is expanding rapidly in the public and institutional sectors. This is good news for public entities overseeing projects as well as the taxpayer, but it is putting pressure to adapt quickly on the builder, design community, and the folks responsible for procuring those services. With much of the current construction funding coming from the public sector, particularly federal stimulus money, the need to develop new skills has never been more urgent.

Many public agencies involved in building have long been saddled with cumbersome procurement regulations specified in federal, state and county rules. Design-bid-build delivery requirements have contributed to frustration with a slow design and engineering process and poor cost control feedback during the design phase, in addition to uncertain bidding results, unknown construction and quality performance of low bidders, and the risk of sizable and embarrassing change orders during construction. Much in the industry is changing.

Federal agencies like the GSA, Army Corps of Engineers, and the Navy have been delivering major projects via design-build for more than a decade and are continuing to push the envelope for innovative delivery models. Currently, GSA delivers about 40 percent of its projects as design-build. Enabling legislation in most states is changing procurement for state agencies and municipalities – think Mn/DOT and the 35W bridge replacement (which recently won a national “best project” DBIA award).

It is estimated that a traditional design-bid-build approach would have doubled the replacement time for the bridge and significantly increased project costs. This change at a municipal level is now allowing agencies to test alternative project-delivery approaches with pilot projects.

State university systems are also expanding team delivery and design-build opportunities. The University of Minnesota and MNSCU are both moving away from the strict design-bid-build approach. Similar procurement changes are taking place at private colleges and health care institutions as they try to streamline their project-design process and cost-control-management strategies. We are all moving rapidly toward greater team collaboration, expeditious project decision making, improved cost management, and tighter schedules.

So what can we all do to stay ahead of this rapidly evolving future? Training is essential. DBIA offers three “core courses” that are the cornerstone of its educational program and course requirements for DBIA’s Professional Designation Program.



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On March 18, 2010, DBIA – Upper Midwest Region will hold a daylong course titled “Design-Build Contract and Risk Management.” Focused on effective contracting language, insurance, bonding, surety products and successful strategies for design-build project delivery, this course will be very relevant to public and private sector owners, as well as builders and designers. Visit www.dbia-um.org for more information about this course and other training opportunities.

It will be a terrific opportunity for all of us to train for our future.

Bake Baker, A.I.A., LEED AP, is 2009 vice president of Design-Build Institute of America – Upper Midwest Chapter. He is executive vice president at McGough Companies.

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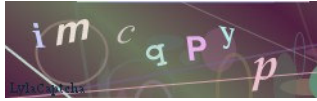
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