

MYTH BUSTING: DESIGN-BUILD MYTHS AND FACTS



Recent [market research](#) forecasts that design-build will continue to experience growth over the next three years — accounting for nearly half of all construction spending by 2026 — even with recent industry challenges and market volatility.

Despite this impressive growth from what was once considered an alternative project delivery method, there are still many myths surrounding design-build, and it's important to dispel them by providing the facts. Below are some of the most common myths we often hear.

MYTH: Owners/Agencies Lose Control in a Design-Build Project

FACT: When done right, Owners/agencies in a design-build project are engaged from the start to the completion of the project. There is also a single point of responsibility on a design-build team, making it easier for the Owner/agency to coordinate details, convey concerns and make adjustments. The collaborative nature of design-build allows the Owner/agency to be involved in all aspects of the project. In fact, the Owner/agency is expected to be fully engaged in order to make timely decisions. Active participation increases the likelihood the project will meet the expectations of the Owner/agency and various stakeholders.

MYTH: There Is a Loss of Design Control and Flexibility in Design-Build

FACT: Owners/agencies in design-build projects are working with the entire team to arrive at the optimal design. For example, in a Best Value Design-Build procurement approach, Owners/agencies provide performance requirements that the design-builder must achieve and then, during post-award, work with the design-builder to complete the design. The Owner/agency and the design-builder collaborate throughout the entire design and construction process, maintaining trust and robust communication. This allows for alignment between the Owner/agency and the design-builder on a design that will meet the project goals.

A key feature of design-build, confidential meetings with the shortlisted design-builders — also known as one-on-one or proprietary meetings — are essential to successful design development. The design can be guided from the earliest stages to ensure compliance with the RFP and laying the groundwork for successful projects.

MYTH: Design-Build Has a Negative Impact on Competition

FACT: Design-build, when done right, uses a competitive process focused on qualifications, past performance and technical approaches, with price being less of a factor than in traditional design/bid/build. This creates competition based on the most important factors affecting a project's success since it increases the likelihood of awarding the project to an exceptional design-builder that produces high-quality work. Additionally, if the Owner/agency is following DBIA's Best Practices and is establishing itself as an "Owner of Choice," there should be robust competition from the design-builder community.

MYTH: Design-Build Is Not a Good Delivery Method for Designers

FACT: When the design-build team follows Design-Build Best Practices, designers play a prominent and ongoing role throughout the project, and their significant level of effort should be acknowledged. This will provide the designers with the opportunity to excel and deliver exceptional, innovative projects. Additionally, with this delivery method, we are designing to **build**, not designing to **bid**. The designers are working directly with a specific builder throughout the iterative design and construction process, not designing for a yet-to-be-identified builder.

MYTH: Design-Build Is Not a Good Delivery Method for the Builder

FACT: Design-build that follows DBIA's Best Practices allows for the builder to work with and provide input on the design directly with the designers. It also encourages early collaboration with key trade partners, which allows for consideration of alternative materials and production methods, as well as opportunities for new, innovative technology. The builder is no longer confined to construct solely "as per the plans and specifications" but is expected to develop solutions to achieve the most efficient means and methods to construct the project.

MYTH: Design-Build Excludes Smaller/Local Firms from Design-Build Projects

FACT: Local companies with sufficient resources have a competitive advantage over larger or out-of-state companies that have to pay a premium to get the labor force in place to execute a project. Design-build can also be used on projects of all sizes, which encourages small firms to compete.

Further, [survey research](#) shows that 64% of Owners and 52% of specialty trade contractors indicated design-build encourages greater participation from Underutilized Business Enterprise (UBE) organizations.

Additional Information:

DBIA offers a variety of resources to ensure Design-Build Done Right®. Visit our [Online Bookstore](#) to download our latest Universal Best Practices along with other Primers, Deeper Dives, Contracts and Position Statements. Also check out the [Learning Center](#) for education workshops, webinars, company-based training and conference recordings.