



Design-Build Project/Team Awards Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and Submission Guidelines



Submission Deadline:

Monday, June 1, 2026, at 6pm ET

(There will be no submission extension deadline.)

If you are planning to, or considering, submitting a project for DBIA's 2026 Design-Build Project/Teams Awards, we encourage you to review this document carefully. The FAQs not only answer common questions about the process, but also provide guidance on resources and documentation you will need to reference in completing your submission, suggested reading, important people to engage in completing your submission, and an overview of the questions that will be asked when you enter the online portal.

Our streamlined application process makes it **easier than ever to submit your project!** Optional questions have been added for those seeking consideration for various specialty awards, ensuring that you can focus on what matters most to your submission. This update is designed to save you time while still providing opportunities to showcase your project's unique strengths.

For questions regarding the application process, please contact awards@dbia.org.

Start Submission

FAQs

What is the purpose of the Design-Build Project/Team Awards Program?

The Design-Build Project/Team Awards Program honors the best of the best in design-build project delivery. With design-build accounting for nearly half of all construction spending, this collaborative project delivery method, when performed in accordance with best practices, is uniquely positioned to transform the way we deliver capital projects. Year after year, we gather to honor projects and teams that push the envelope and challenge the status quo, all for the sake of improving our industry and raising the bar as it relates to cost and schedule performance, quality, innovation, Owner satisfaction and triple-bottom line success.

How do I submit a project for consideration?

DBIA only accepts electronic submissions made through our official awards portal found at <https://projects.dbia.org>. Hard copy submissions will not be accepted.

Submission Cost:

DBIA Industry Partner Member: \$525

Non-Member: \$825

SECTION 1: What projects qualify?

You will be required to verify the following qualifying information at the beginning of your submission:

- The project was completed under a single point of responsibility design-build contract. (One entity, the Design-Builder, entered a single contract with the Owner to provide both design and construction services.)
- The project was completed and Owner occupied after March 31, 2023.
- The project was completed with no litigation or claims.
- The project was completed with no fatalities.
- The project met or exceeded Owner expectations (this information should be validated in the Owner letter referenced in Section 4 of the application).
- The project was completed within or under budget (only projects with overruns due to Owner directed changes or unforeseen conditions will be considered).

Does my “substantially complete” project qualify?

Projects that are ready for occupancy and/or use (whether the Owner is ready to occupy/use or not) may qualify. Because the definition of “substantially complete” differs from state to state, contact awards@dbia.org to confirm eligibility.

To ensure a complete and accurate submission, who should I work with to provide input as I complete the submission?

The success of design-build is based on a collaborative, “one-team, one-goal” approach. As such, the Design-Build Project/Team Awards focus on the means and methods of engagement across the team to drive optimal outcomes. The submission requires information from procurement through post-award execution, meaning the following key players should be called upon as collaborators to provide input as you complete the application:

- Project Owner
 - Procurement/Contracting Officers
 - Third-Party Owner Advisors
 - Project Stakeholders/Users
- Design Professionals
 - Lead Architect
 - Lead Engineer
 - Specialty Consultant(s)
- Construction Professionals
 - Design-Builder
 - General Contractor (if different than bullet above)
 - Construction Manager
 - Specialty Trade Contractors
- Other Key Roles/Players
 - Design Integration Manager
 - Virtual Design & Construction (VDC) Project Leader
 - Submission Quality Reviewer (preferably someone DBIA certified)

What resources/information are required to complete the submission?

- [Design-Build Done Right® Universal Best Practices](#)
- A list of Assoc. DBIA, DBIA or FDBIA certified professionals on the team, including their role (refer to the online [Designated Design-Build Professionals® Certification Directory](#))
- A list of other awards/recognitions this project has won (if applicable)

What other DBIA resources will be useful to have on hand?

- [Virtual Design & Construction Primer](#)
- [The VDC Project Leader’s Role & Responsibilities](#)
- [Progressive Design-Build Deeper Dive](#)
- [Water/Wastewater Sector Best Practices*](#)
- [Transportation/Aviation Sector Best Practices*](#)
- [Design Excellence Position Statement](#)
- [Prescriptive Design and the Use of Bridging Documents Position Statement](#)

*applicable only to projects submitted in those categories

What other supplemental information will I need to upload as separate documents? (See [page 3](#) for specific requirements.)

- Organizational Chart
- Owner Letter
- Photos and Visuals
- (Optional) Letter from an Underutilized Business Enterprise (UBE)
- (Optional) Video – mp4 format not to exceed 3 mins.

What terms/definitions should I know?

When selecting the procurement approach used, the following definitions apply:

- **Best-Value:** A two-step process that first identifies the most highly qualified design-builders, then seeks design and cost proposals. The Owner selects the design-builder offering the best value proposal (a combination of design, project approach and contract price).
- **Progressive Design-Build – Qualifications-Based Selection:** Design-builder is selected primarily on the basis of qualifications. After selection, Owner and design-builder collaborate to progressively advance the design and cost model toward a mutually agreeable design concept and contract price.
- **Sole Source (or Negotiated):** Direct selection of the design-builder.
- **Low Bid:** Design-builder selection based on lowest cost/price only.

Other important terms/definitions include:

- **Owner Advisor:** A design and/or construction consultant or consulting firm that is employed or engaged by an Owner to assist in various services. This role may also be referred to as Owner Representative, Owner’s Consultant, Owner’s Engineer, Owner Agent, Criteria Professional/Consultant, A/E 1, and sometimes Construction Manager (CM) dependent upon the myriad of services provided, market sector and geographic location.

- **Single Point of Responsibility Contract:** One entity, the design-builder, enters a single contract with the Owner to provide both design and construction services.
- **Underutilized Business Enterprise (UBE):** Includes any of the following businesses: small, disadvantaged, minority, women- or veteran-owned businesses.
- **Virtual Design & Construction (VDC):** The process of developing and leveraging reliable multidisciplinary building information models and other innovative design and construction technologies to support the digital delivery of information across the Design-Construct-Operate continuum.

Are there specific requirements for the Owner Letter?

Letters must be on the Owner's letterhead, signed, and address at a minimum: (a) examples of how the project met or exceeded the Owner's goals related to project outcomes; (b) confirmation that the project met cost/schedule goals or an explanation of any cost or schedule growth; and (c) specific areas of team performance or project outcomes in which the Owner was especially pleased.

Why is the letter from a UBE optional?

DBIA is dedicated to fostering the growth and engagement of Underutilized Business Enterprises (UBEs) within the design-build industry. Engaging UBEs meaningfully not only helps address workforce challenges, but also strengthens local communities and boosts regional economies. While most public Owners have requirements for UBE inclusion, DBIA understands that not all projects have such requirements. However, absent requirements, design-build teams also have an opportunity to engage this important community. Although optional, it is strongly recommended a UBE letter be included as it will serve to enhance your submission. A UBE letter is **required** if submitting for the Trailblazer in Inclusive Growth Award (see [page 7](#)).

Are there specific requirements for the Photos, Visuals and Video?

You will have the opportunity to upload 12 photos.

- Photos should be diverse and represent various angles/perspectives, the team in action during the design and construction process and showcase the end-user/community use of the project.
- Special attention should be given to selecting at least 3 photos that demonstrate the project's outstanding design aspects.
- Additional visuals, if applicable, include a site plan or renderings and drawings such as floor plans and elevations.

- Transportation projects may include additional photos in lieu of elevation drawings.

A video in mp4 format (up to 3 minutes) is a great way to further demonstrate unique aspects of team engagement, project design, outcomes and Owner satisfaction. Videos should not include marketing for a particular firm but should focus on the project. Time-lapse videos of construction are not recommended for purposes of award judging. DBIA reserves the right to edit out firm logos or firm-specific marketing content, and/or to edit the video to a more suitable length or for content appropriateness.

How will my submission, photos and video be used?

The submission, including photos and videos, will be used by the jury to judge all projects. In addition, a general overview of all projects, including one photo, will be included in DBIA's design-build project database found at dbia.org/projects-database/.

Photos and select videos will also be used as part of the annual awards program/dinner when acknowledging winners. DBIA reserves the right to use submitted photos for educational purposes in communicating the value of Design-Build Done Right®.

Are all projects judged together or are they judged in categories?

All submitters will be required to select a "market sector" category for their project from the list below. Submitters should select the category they feel best fits their project with the understanding that DBIA reserves the right to move, adjust or combine project categories as deemed appropriate. Projects may only be entered once per awards cycle, and only in one category.

- Aviation
- Civic/Assembly
- Commercial Buildings
- Educational Facilities
- Federal, State, County, Municipal
- Healthcare
- Industrial, Process and/or Research Facilities
- Office Buildings
- Rehabilitation, Renovation and/or Restoration
- Transportation (other than Aviation)
- Water/Wastewater

Projects are first judged within their categories but may also be judged against projects from other categories for special recognitions (see [page 4](#)).

What levels and types of awards are given?

The number of awards given varies annually based on the number of entries. All submissions will automatically be considered for the following awards:

- **Merit Awards (by Market Sector)** – Multiple awards may be given in each market sector category. These projects are judged against Design-Build Done Right® standards.
- **Excellence Awards (by Market Sector)** – At the discretion of the jury, there may be an “Excellence” winner among the merit award winners for each market sector. In determining this winner, merit winners are judged against each other to determine if one excels in both implementation and outcomes, earning them the highest award for that category.
- **“Best in” Awards** – These awards recognize exceptional performance in these key areas that are critical to Design-Build Done Right®:
 - **Process** – includes effective use and practical application of best practices to drive success.
 - **Leadership/Teaming** – focuses on how the team leadership and team formation set the stage for project success, how trust was established and how they worked together to ensure overall project excellence.
 - **Design Excellence** – how thoughtful and innovative decision-making throughout project procurement, development and execution, within the limitations imposed by budget, scope and schedule, helped achieve design excellence (award for both architectural and engineering excellence).
- **Small Project Recognition** (if the project qualifies as a small project based on size thresholds) – All projects, regardless of market sector, which are \$10 million or less (buildings/vertical), or \$30 million or less (horizontal) will be considered for special recognition, in addition to the categories above. Please note that the price thresholds may be modified at the discretion of the jury based on the type and number of submissions received.
- **I.N.S.P.I.R.E.D. Owner (Innovative Newcomer Showcasing Preparedness, Insight, Readiness and Enduring Diligence)** – Recognizes a newcomer to design-build that truly embraced the importance of the mental shift and culture needed to be successful, and took the time to prepare before jumping in, resulting in an exceptional first-time experience and project.
- **Enlightened Owner** – Recognizes an Owner that has taken the time to educate themselves in Design-Build Done Right®, and that has a demonstrated track record of success across multiple projects, building on their design-build education and experience to elevate the process each time.
- **Chair’s Award** – This award is hand-selected by the DBIA National Board Chair. While not given every year, this award focuses on triple-bottom line success that spans beyond cost and schedule performance to the projects impact on the community and others served by the project.
- **Project of the Year** – The Project of the Year embraces all aspects of Design-Build Done Right® and goes far beyond the basic requirements of DBIA awards submissions. The sole winner of this award has demonstrated innovative solutions to project challenges, developed a unique and high-quality design, effectively utilized emerging technology and exceeded expectations for project outcomes. *DBIA may reach out to candidates being considered for Project of the Year for additional information to help with the final decision making.*
- The jury reserves the right to award special recognition to projects that excelled in response to disaster and/or emergency.

Submissions completing the optional sections will also be considered for the following specialty awards:

- **Best in Virtual Design & Construction (VDC)** – celebrates the effective integration of people, process and technology to drive efficiencies and outcomes. *[Requires completion of the Application of VDC section.]*
- **Trailblazer in Inclusive Growth** – Honors projects and teams that have successfully engaged Underutilized Business Enterprises (UBEs) early in the process, maximizing their contribution and promoting the growth of the design-build industry. It focuses on projects where UBE integration was strategic and impactful, demonstrating a commitment to equity, collaboration and superior project outcomes. *[Requires completion of the Trailblazer in Inclusive Growth section.]*

How do I get started?

All submissions must be completed online. Hard copy submissions will not be accepted. Visit <https://projects.dbia.org> to begin the process. **No extensions will be granted after the June 1st deadline.**

SECTION 2: What questions will I need to be prepared to answer on the application?

— General Overview

- Project Name (as it would appear if selected as a winner)
- Project City
- Project State/Territory

- o Has this project been submitted for award consideration in prior years? (If yes, indicate year)
- o Is the Owner's first design-build project?
- o Submission Category (Market Sector)
- o Was this project in response to a crisis or emergency repair?
- o What procurement approach was used?
- o What Contract Format was used?
- o Identify the source of the contract language
- o Initial Contract Price
- o Initial Budget Ceiling
- o GMP (if applicable)
- o Final Cost
- o Contracted Start Date
- o Actual Start Date
- o Contracted Completion Date
- o Actual Completion Date

— **Project Needs and Owner Objectives** – What needs are addressed by the project and what were the Owner's goals and desired outcomes. (300 words)

— **Process/Innovations** – What additional processes or innovations were utilized and how did the design-build approach enable their seamless integration (i.e., prefabrication, modularization, industrialized construction, Lean principles, advanced building materials, etc.)? (200 words)

— **Answer the following questions related to this project's safety program:**

- o Total hours worked on the project
- o Duration of construction in months
- o Number of cases with days away from work
- o Number of cases with job transfer or restriction
- o Please note/explain any other recordable cases

— **Enhanced Safety** – Describe the preventative design features integrated into the project to enhance safety, considering both construction operations and the end-user's operations and maintenance perspective.

— **Effective Use of Technology** – Describe how technology was utilized in achieving the Owner's objectives across the project's lifecycle and, if applicable, the role of the VDC Project Leader in integrating innovative digital tools and processes to accomplish these outcomes.

— **Project Awards and Certifications** – If applicable list any Industry Awards and/or project certifications for which this project has already been recognized.

- o Award/Certification Name
- o Award/Certification Issue Date
- o Issuing Organization

— **Project Photos and Visuals** – See [page 3](#) for specific requirements.

SECTION 3: Key Players

- Provide contact information for key players, including the client/Owner, Owner Advisor (if applicable), design-builder, architects, engineers, key specialty contractors, specialty consultants and/or subcontractors, including identification of those that qualify as UBEs.
- Include an Organizational Chart that clearly depicts the team structure, concisely showing the following:
 - o The design-build team structure, including the VDC Project Leader
 - o Contractual relationships
 - o Names/titles of key team members
 - o Identification of those holding the DBIA, Assoc. DBIA or FDBIA (currently or during project execution) and the specific role of these credential holders (view online [Designated Design-Build Professionals® Certification Directory](#))

SECTION 4: Outcome and Results

- **Impact of Design-Build on Project Success** – How did the design-build approach enhance the project outcomes, and what specific factors make this project deserving of recognition as a national design-build project award winner? (250 words)
- **Innovative Team Collaboration** – What unique aspects of the team's collaboration contributed to the project's success, and how did this elevate industry standards? (250 words)
- **Community Impact and Triple Bottom Line Benefits** – Summarize the project's impact on the community, highlighting its inspirational and influential aspects, along with specific examples of its social, environmental, and economic contributions. (250 words)
- **Owner Letter to address:** (1) why design-build was chosen and describe; (2) how the project and/or process met or exceeded the Owner's goals; confirmation that cost, schedule and quality goals were met or exceeded, including an explanation of any Owner directed changes or unforeseen conditions.

SECTION 5: Leadership and Teaming

- How was the team leadership structured, including the Owner. What was the collective leadership strategy used and how did this contribute to successful collaboration?
- Describe the project's teaming approach and how it was put into practice to engage and interact as one team throughout the design and construction process. Include the following, as applicable (350 words):

- o The teaming philosophy, guiding principles or cultural framework established at the outset, and the core message it conveyed to the team
- o How the Owner and design-builder reinforced this approach through leadership, behaviors, communication and decision-making
- o Specific structures, activities or techniques used to promote collaboration and shared ownership (e.g., co-location, governance models, workshops, incentives)
- o What was distinctive about this teaming experience compared to traditional delivery approaches
- o How the teaming approach directly contributed to project outcomes, performance or overall success

SECTION 6: Procurement

- Describe the Owner's acquisition strategy and team selection process including but not limited to the use of stipends, role of performance vs. prescriptive requirements, and how price was weighted in selection). (200 words)
- Answer ONE of the questions below:
 - o **Answer this question IF Best-Value (Two-Step) Procurement Approach was used:**
Give specific examples of how the Owner ensured evaluation and selection processes that were fair, open and transparent; and that appropriately valued past performance, technical concepts and price in the selection process. (200 words)
 - o **Answer the questions below IF the Progressive Design-Build (PDB) Procurement Approach was Used:**
 1. Are there aspects of PDB that made it particularly useful and changed project outcomes? (200 words)
 2. At what point was the GMP and final scope established? (200 words)
 3. What steps did the Owner take to prepare to engage successfully in PDB (i.e., training, advisory services, etc.)? (200 words)
- Describe the design-build team formation process, including when and how key players were engaged, key characteristics of the team dynamics and strategies used to ensure a seamless pursuit. (200 words)
- Select two or more DBIA best practices from **Section I: Procuring Design-Build Services (Design-Build Done Right® Universal Best Practices)** and explain how these practices were

implemented (using the implementing techniques as your guide) on the project, highlighting their impact on overall success. (500 words)

SECTION 7: Contracting

- How was risk identified and allocated to ensure a fair, equitable and balanced approach? (300 words)
- Outline the quality assurance/quality control (QA/QC) process employed during the design and construction phases, detailing how it was organized, led and implemented. Include specific examples of how the QA/QC process effectively mitigated identified project risks. (300 words).
- Describe what incentives were employed to help facilitate the alignment of the performance of the design-build teams with the Owner's project goals. (200 words)
- Using **Section II: Contracting for Design-Build Services** as your guide (**Design-Build Done Right® Universal Best Practices**) explain how both the Owner/Design-Builder Agreement and the Design-Builder/Team Member Subcontracts addressed the unique aspects of the design-build process. (300 words)

SECTION 8: Executing Design-Build

- What was the team's approach to designing/constructing to meet schedule, budget and quality goals as established by the Owner, including a description of how the Owner design reviews were incorporated. (300 words)
- Select two DBIA best practices from **Section III: Executing Design-Build Projects (Design-Build Done Right® Universal Best Practices)** and explain how these practices were implemented on the project (using the implementing techniques as your guide), highlighting their impact on overall success. (300 words)

SECTION 9: Design Excellence

- Describe how the team met the Owners goals in terms of design excellence, starting with the goals communicated in the RFP. (200 words)
- DBIA defines design excellence through five lenses (see DBIA's **Position Statement**). Please indicate which of the lenses applied to this project and provide additional details using the relevant considerations listed in each lens. (300 words)
 - o **Lens #1 (Integration & Collaborative Process):** How did the use of design-build serve to create a collaborative environment that helped balance the overarching project goals?
 - o **Lens #2 (Healthy Living):** How was the end-user experience and well-being considered and addressed?

- o **Lens #3 (Community Impact & Delight):** What steps were taken to ensure the project connected with the community in which it is located?
- o **Lens #4 (Sustainability & Resiliency):** What steps were taken to reduce the impact on the environment?
- o **Lens #5 (Responsibility of Design):** How was lifecycle cost and maintenance addressed while also ensuring appropriate cost and schedule performance?

END OF QUESTIONS FOR PROJECT/TEAM AWARD SUBMISSIONS

OPTIONAL: Submitters who wish to be considered for these additional specialty awards (see [page 4](#) for details) may complete the following sections.

Trailblazer in Inclusive Growth

- **Owner's Contract Requirements Related to Underutilized Business Enterprises (UBEs) –** Describe the specific contract terms set by the Owner regarding the use of UBEs, including any requirements for the participation of small, disadvantaged, minority, women- or veteran-owned businesses. (100 words)
- **Additional Goals and Results –** Explain any additional goals the project team set beyond the Owner's requirements to maximize UBE engagement. Include details on how the team worked with UBEs, the steps taken to exceed expectations and the measurable outcomes achieved. (200 words)
- **Improved Outcomes Through UBE Integration –** Discuss how the integration of UBEs into the project team enhanced overall project outcomes. Focus on how their involvement contributed to increased efficiency, innovation or problem-solving during the project lifecycle.
- **UBE Testimonial –** Upload a signed letter from a UBE (on their official letterhead) detailing how their meaningful engagement in the project contributed to successful outcomes.

Application of VDC

- Define how the whole team approach inherent in design-build allowed for the use of [VDC](#) processes, BIM enabled technologies, and other innovative design and construction technologies to flourish, creating a platform where all the Owner's goals were embraced and achieved. (500 words)

- Describe how the [VDC Project Leader](#) served as a key member of the design-build team to integrate people, process and technology to achieve project goals while driving design excellence, increased quality and productivity, and improved lifecycle costs.
- Were key planning documents such as a BIM Execution Plan and Level of Development (LOD) Matrix developed at the outset the project by the VDC Project Leader?
 - o If yes, describe the VDC Project Leader's role in fostering a collaborative environment to develop these important documents and how they provided a roadmap for success throughout the project.
- Which BIM Use Cases were implemented on the project (check all that apply):
 - o Analyze Design
 - o Asset Management
 - o Contracted Design Documents
 - o Cost Estimating (5D)
 - o Design/Constructability Review
 - o Digital Fabrication
 - o Establish Digital Project Requirements
 - o Field Layout
 - o Model Authoring
 - o Performance Analysis
 - o Reality Capture
 - o Record Modeling/Documentation
 - o Scheduling, Sequencing & Phase Planning (4D)
 - o Space Management
 - o Trade Coordination/Clash Detection
- Identify, through clear and specific examples, how the BIM Uses implemented above delivered measurable improvements in budget, schedule and quality. Quantify results such as, but not limited to, cost savings, schedule acceleration, reductions in rework or RFIs, and other calculated or estimated ROI or performance metrics. (300 words)

Include photos (up to 8 high quality, high resolution, see [page 3](#)), videos and visuals that capture how the team leveraged technology and implemented BIM Uses to achieve the Owner's project objectives.
- Describe what model-based deliverables were provided to the Owner and how they will be utilized throughout the lifecycle of the built asset. (200 words)