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2026



NATIONAL
STUDENT
COMPETITION

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COMPETITION SCHEDULE

CONFERENCE

Huntington Convention Center, Cleveland, Ohio, November 4-6, 2026

PHASE 1 – REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)

Team Registration Open Period	March 2-August 28, 2026
Team Registration Ends	August 28, 2026
Deadline for Letter of Intent Submittal	August 20, 2026
Request for Qualifications (RFQ) Issued	August 31, 2026
Mandatory Virtual Kickoff Meeting	September 1, 2026
Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) Due	September 21, 2026
Region Competition Winners Announced	September 29, 2026

PHASE 2 – REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

Request for Proposals (RFP) Issued	September 30, 2026
Mandatory Virtual Kickoff Meeting	October 1, 2026
Response to Request for Proposals Due	October 22, 2026
Three Shortlisted Teams Announced	October 30, 2026
Shortlisted Interview in Cleveland, OH	November 5, 2026
National Competition Winner Announced	November 6, 2026

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INTRODUCTION

The Design-Build Institute of America invites you to participate in the National Student Competition. The competition this year constitutes the submittal of your response to a Request for Qualifications (RFQ), followed up by submittal of a Proposal (if shortlisted as a DBIA Regional winner), and ending up with a client interview (if further shortlisted as one of the top three (3) teams for consideration). Your Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) response will be judged by an industry panel representing architects, engineers, contractors and Owners in your Competition Region. Each region will select 1st, 2nd and 3rd place teams, with the 1st-place teams being selected to receive a Request for Proposal (RFP) for Phase 2 of the competition.

The Phase 2 Proposal submittals will be evaluated by a national judging panel which will short-list three (3) teams to present their proposals to the national judging panel in an interview at the 2026 Design-Build Conference & Expo in Cleveland, Ohio, on November 5, 2026. In keeping with recent trends, this presentation will be in the form of an interactive interview where each shortlisted team will be given a problem to solve, followed by a presentation of their solution, and a Q&A period with the judges.

Finally, awards for the national 1st, 2nd and 3rd place teams, along with the award for best individual presenter, will then be presented at the conference the morning of November 6.

PRE-SOLICITATION CRITERIA

The project is a brownfield (the location of a previous gas station) site in a small-town rural area which has recently decided to pursue planning, design and construction of its first major medical facility. At a minimum, the city is wanting:

- A waiting / reception room
- A lab
- An emergency room to handle both trauma and medical needs
- An operating room(s)
- A recovery room(s)
- An intensive care unit (ICU)
- 20 patient rooms
- And everything else required for a stand-alone hospital

The city has never tackled a project of this size and complexity, especially given the environmental factors. The city received the land as a gift and has no idea of the extent of the clean-up/contamination. Labor and materials are somewhat scarce due to the remote location, and funds are tight (they so far have only been able to commit \$8.5 million, but are looking for more) so have decided to use Progressive Design-Build (PDB) as their delivery method to come up with the most economical and environmentally friendly solution to deliver this much-needed asset to their community.

PHASE 1 REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)

The RFQ requirements will include all or parts of the following components (and scoring criteria will be contained in the RFQ):

- a. Provide information to solidify your team's ability to be a design and construction partner with the city, specifically for this activity, including:
 - Design-Build Team specifics — integrated firm or design and construction firms forming a JV, teaming alliance, etc.
 - Design-Build Team's similar work experience in this type of project
 - Design-Build Team experience working together (if not an integrated firm)
 - Project Team key personnel qualifications and resumes
 - Available work capacity
 - Insurance and Bonding

b. Demonstrating your understanding of the Progressive Design-Build (PDB) delivery method, respond to:

- Design excellence
- Overall design and construction team approach
- Phase 1 and 2 PDB elements

The scoring criteria will be included with the RFQ.

The RFQ response requires teams to develop fictitious resumes and project examples that don't actually exist because, as in industry, the RFQ expects the team to provide the resumes and projects that provide the judges evaluating the RFQ a clear perspective that this team has both the people and project experience (type, cost, location, etc.) to be the best team for this project. Team resumes should be written in such a way to show the team has the experience to collaborate with the city on this project. Likewise, project examples should reflect the team's experience with the type, cost and size of the RFQ project description.

PHASE 2 REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

We will be utilizing the DBIA Document No. 410 "Standard Form of Request for Proposal" form. Because every project is unique, the intent of the form is not to dictate a single method of procuring a design-build team, so the competition version will be modified to match the risks and circumstances that are specific to this project. One of the most important ways Owners manage the risk of achieving success in a project is selecting a design-builder who is best suited to perform the work, and we have designed this procurement process to focus on finding the right team for the project, and the RFP will be modified as required to present the Project requirements. Since the city has never done a project of this type, much less a PDB project, there will be very limited specs and guidance, and instead the city will rely on your suggestions and expertise, especially how you will facilitate Phase 1 of the PDB execution.

Once the competition has begun, each team will be allowed to use whatever equipment and research material they feel is necessary to solve the problem, **except for the following:**

- The Faculty Advisor may act on a consulting basis but will not be allowed to overly contribute to the overall response to the RFP
- Using outside consultants is prohibited
- As in any paper, "plagiarism" and Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) will not be tolerated in the preparation of your proposal, so take care in utilizing any research material properly and citing accordingly (and the judges will be utilizing AI scrubbers during their review and evidence of use will constitute a "fail")
- The use of the Internet in completing any project information that is fabricated for this competition will not fall under the plagiarism rules for identifying your source of information since it is only being used in developing a basis of experience for the team and not as facts

The scoring criteria will be included with the RFQ.

GENERAL RULES

1. Failure to follow the rules as outlined in the RFQ and RFP may result in team disqualification.
2. Teams will be allowed to submit an unlimited amount of Requests for Information (RFIs) during both Phase 1 and Phase 2 kickoff meetings, but after that are limited to only five (5) RFIs per team, by email, during each Phase.
3. Although DBIA encourages DBIA Student Chapters to compete, they do not receive special consideration and schools without chapters are also invited.
4. Teams will consist of five students. It is not mandatory to have design students on the team; however, teams may have up to two design students on their team for five extra evaluation points per student, for a potential maximum of 10 extra points. Teams that do not have design students will not be penalized. "Design" is defined as civil, mechanical and/or electrical engineering, architecture or interior design. Students currently participating in a school sponsored internship are also considered eligible, and one member of the team can be enrolled in a master's graduate program.
5. Ph.D. students are **not allowed** to compete without first requesting and obtaining approval from the Competition Committee. Submit requests to the DBIA [Membership Department](#).

6. Design excellence, [as defined by DBIA](#), is an evaluation element for the competition.
7. Team registrations must be submitted online on or before the deadline. You can see all Student Competition deadlines on the [Competition Calendar](#).
8. The Team's faculty advisor must then email a Letter of Intent (LOI) to the DBIA [Membership Department](#) before the LOI deadline to confirm team participation.
9. After receipt of registration and the LOI, the RFQ will then be released to participating teams.
10. Teams (and the Faculty Advisor) must participate in a mandatory one-hour webinar to discuss both the RFQ and RFP ([See the competition calendar for details](#)).
11. Teams will submit their RFQ response by email to the [Membership Department](#) at DBIA National no later than 7:00PM Central Time on or before the due dates.
12. Submittals must be in the format specified in both the RFQ and RFP or are subject to disqualification.
13. Unlike industry where late submittals will not be evaluated, DBIA policy is that **late submittals will be accepted and evaluated for feedback only**, but will not be eligible to move on in the competition.
14. Rule violations will result in Team disqualification.
15. All RFQ teams will have the opportunity to debrief with the Region Jury Chair regarding RFQ responses, if requested.
16. All Phase 1 RFQ first-place teams are expected to attend DBIA's Design-Build Conference & Expo in November, and awards will be presented.
17. All three (3) Phase 2 RFP selectees are expected to attend the annual conference and participate in the interview process, awards and podcast interview session with DBIA National Staff.

Travel and Registration

REGIONAL WINNERS

The winner in each Phase One (RFQ) Regional competition will move on to Phase Two of the national competition and receive a Request for Proposal (RFP).

TRAVEL & REGISTRATION

Region 1st-place winners will also receive \$1,500 from their Region to assist with travel expenses (airfare, hotel, rental car, etc.) plus complimentary conference registrations for students and their faculty advisory to attend the DBIA Design-Build Conference and Expo. All Phase 1 (RFQ) champions are expected to represent their Region at the Annual Conference. The \$1,500 is ONLY to be used for travel and expenses to attend the DBIA conference.

HOTEL

All regional first-place teams should immediately secure their rooms as they do fill up fast. We suggest trying our room block around the venue first to compare with alternatives in the area. Cancellations must be made using the hotel's cancellation policy to avoid being charged a penalty. Teams are responsible for covering lodging and travel costs.

SHORT-LISTED TEAMS

The top three teams in Phase Two (RFP) will be short-listed to present their proposals in person to the national judging panel at the Design-Build Conference & Expo.

TRAVEL & REGISTRATION

In addition to the \$1,500 stipend from the Region, the three (3) short-listed teams will also receive \$3,000 from DBIA National to assist with travel expenses (airfare, hotel, rental car, etc.) plus complimentary conference registrations for students and their faculty advisory to attend the DBIA Design-Build Conference & Expo. Region and National stipends are ONLY to be used for travel and expenses to attend the DBIA conference.

HOTEL

Whether you are a Regional Winner or a short-listed top three, hotel suggestions are the same and you should have already made your reservations when notified you were a Regional Winner.

[Click to register online](#)