SAT-Bo8: Landscape Architects Hiring
Landscape Architects: Consultant Selection

An improved economy has expanded opportunities for landscape architects, with new, more complex project types imposing change on the profession. Hear from landscape architects who hire other landscape architects about how critical trends are affecting consultant selection as they get to the heart of what clients are really looking for.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

— Gain inside knowledge on how public and private clients select consultants.

— Understand how changing missions, environmental conditions and regulations are affecting the criteria for consultant selection.

— Discover ways to stand out among a crowded field of qualified consultants.

— Learn how firms establish and maintain long-term relationships with clients.
Mark Focht, FASLA, as First Deputy Commissioner for Philadelphia Parks & Recreation (PPR), is responsible for operations, maintenance, planning, capital, urban forestry, ecosystem management and security for a 10,100 acre system comprised of 197 passive parks and 55 recreation centers. Mr. Focht holds Bachelor and Masters degrees in landscape architecture from Penn State and the University of Massachusetts and is a PA licensed landscape architect. Mr. Focht was inducted as a Fellow in the American Society of Landscape Architects in October 2008, served as the Society’s Vice-President for Communications in 2010/11, President in 2014 and is currently Immediate Past-President.

Christian Gabriel, ASLA, is the first National Design Director for Landscape Architecture at the US General Service Administration’s Office of Chief Architect in Washington DC. At the Agency he works to set design standards in the realm of public space, landscape, site security and sustainability. In that role he reviews and approves design proposals, serves on team selection panels, assists on special projects, and advocates for innovation. Prior to joining the GSA he practiced as a senior design associate in the offices of Ken Smith and Thomas Balsley developing numerous noteworthy projects. Christian has served on national design juries and as a studio critic at Harvard, UPENN, Columbia, and City College of New York.

Mark H. Hough, FASLA, is involved in all aspects of planning, design, historic preservation and natural resource management on the dynamic, Olmsted Brothers’ designed campus at Duke University. He is also a prolific writer, having contributed numerous articles to Landscape Architecture Magazine, as well as features for diverse publications, including Places, Chronicle of Higher Education, and regular postings for the popular urban design website, Planetizen. He was awarded the Bradford Williams Medal for writing excellence in 2010. Mark is a Fellow of ASLA and lectures extensively on issues important to him, such as cultural landscapes, campus design, and landscape stewardship.

Eric Kramer, ASLA, is a principal of Reed Hilderbrand in Cambridge, MA. He leads projects associated with the renewal and enrichment of campuses, cities, and institutions. Eric is committed to communicating design knowledge, rooted equally in rigorous scientific field research and the engagement of people and communities. His works include Boston’s Central Wharf Plaza and the newly completed Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts, as well as projects at Harvard, Duke, and Hamilton College. He edited Visible | Invisible, the firm’s award-winning monograph. Eric is an adjunct professor in the Rhode Island School of Design’s landscape architecture program.
1. **Consultant Perspective** (Kramer)
   a. Trends from ASLA practice survey
   b. Identifying Potential Clients
   c. Establishing Relationships
   d. Targeted Marketing Approaches

2. **The Client Perspective**
   Public: City Government (Focht)
   Public: Federal Government (Gabriel)
   Private: Institutional (Hough)
   a. Types of Projects
   b. Examples of Recent Projects
   c. Process for Consultant Selection
   d. Changes in the Field

**DISCUSSION**

1. **Quals**
   a. How can a firm break through to a new practice area? (How can a firm which has NOT done a certain kind of project before succeed in the Qualification round?)
   b. Are you looking for specific qualifications and/or expertise beyond what might be considered “traditional” landscape architecture?

2. **The RFP**
   a. Are you flexible? What do you think when a firm pushes the envelope on what is required in the RFP?
   b. How much do you want the RFP to be about process (how the consultant will run the project) and how much do you want it to be about content (what the consultant already believes about the project)?

3. **The Interview**
   a. Does the make-up of the interview team matter?
   b. Do you go into the interview with a preconceived notion of who should prevail? And how can a consultant change that in the interview?
   c. Our experience lately is that clients expect us to come to the interview with a design proposal in hand. We hate doing that. Where do you stand on this?

4. **The Intangibles**
   a. How much does networking matter? Does making a personal connection help?
   b. Are there opportunities available outside of those that are advertised and have a formal RFQ/ RFP process? How can consultants find out about these?
   c. How do you decide whether to hire a national, non-local firm versus one that is local or regional?

5. **The Critical Difference**
   a. If you could name one thing that most often tips the scale for the successful consultant, what would it be?
CHRISTIAN GABRIEL, GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

US Coast Guard Headquarters, Andropogon (top and bottom right); Land Port of Entry, Warroad Minnesota, Coen+Partners (lower left)
MARK FOCHT, PHILADELPHIA PARKS AND RECREATION

Fairmount Park & Schuylkill River (top); Hawthorne Park, LRSLA Studio (lower left); Franklin Paine’s Skate Park, Synterra, Ltd. (lower right)
MARK HOUGH, DUKE UNIVERSITY

West Campus Plaza, Hargreaves Associates (top), Arts Campus Master Plan, ReedHilderbrand (middle left), Duke Pond, Nelson Byrd Woltz (middle right), Medical Center Oval, OLIN (bottom left), Alumni and Visitors Center, Stephen Stimson Associates (bottom right)