



Advice for organising Architectural Competitions

The Competition Procedure

There are several kinds of competitions, but as they all follow basically the same procedure, this will be described before discussing more fully those matters that are the key to success, and answering a number of questions that are commonly raised by intending promoters.

Consultation with the BIDP Assessors

As soon as a client has decided that she wishes to promote a competition, or even if she is only considering whether to do so or not, she should consult the BIDP, who will explain the system more fully, and give advice on any point of difficulty. The first step is the appointment of a jury of assessors. These should in the main be architects of acknowledged standing, but the jury may also include one or more lay persons nominated by the promoter who can contribute valuable non-architectural skills to the complex process of preparing the brief and selecting the winning design. For a small project, a single architect assessor may be sufficient. All assessors must be either nominated by the President of the BIDP or approved by her. The architect assessors' fees are based on a scale laid down in the BIDP Competition Regulations.

The assessors act in the first place as the professional consultants to the promoters, and secondly as the judges in the competition. They will advise initially on the suitability of an architectural competition. Assessors have often advised promoters to look for another site, if for any reason a building on the proposed site would not be successful. They will advise on the type of competition to be held, its estimated cost and the time it will take and when this has been decided, they will investigate the promoters' requirement in much the same way as if they were the architects commissioned to do the job. They will consider costs and all other factors affecting the project, in consultation with the promoters, and will then draw up a clear architectural programme, which forms the basis for the printed competition conditions. They answer any questions put by competitors, judge the designs, select the winners, disqualify any designs which do not conform to the conditions, and report in writing to the promoters.

Publication of Conditions

The competition conditions must be approved by the BIDP as complying with the BIDP Competition Regulations. They are then printed, published, advertised and issued to competitors. It is normal for architects who apply for copies of the conditions to pay a small deposit. Time is allowed for competitors to ask questions, and for the assessors' answers to be circulated to all competitors. A closing date is set for the receipt of designs. Where the conditions include a cost limit, agreed with the promoter, competitors who exceed the cost limit, or break any other mandatory condition, are disqualified.

Judging the Designs

The promoters arrange for the designs to be judged as soon as possible after the closing

date, preferably within a few days. The designs are hung in a suitable hall or room. All designs are submitted anonymously and numbered. The names of the competitors are in sealed envelopes which are not opened until the assessors' award has been made.

The Award

The assessors award the premiums (or cash prizes) offered: usually at least three premiums are awarded. The first premium is an advance in the fees payable to the winning architect. The award is communicated to the promoters and to the BIDP in a written report by the assessors. The premiums are paid within two months of the award. The architect who is declared the winner of the competition by the assessors is appointed by the promoter to be the architect for the works.

Publication of the Result

The award is published as soon as possible after it has been reported to the client by the assessors, in a press release issued by the promoters in consultation with the assessors and the BIDP. The press release should be accompanied by photographs of the prize-winning drawings, and perspective views of the winning design. The BIDP Competition Regulations require the public exhibition of all designs for a minimum of six days. The exhibition is extremely valuable both to the competitors and to the promoters.

The Different Kinds of Competition

It is best to consider these under three headings: first, competitions for actual building projects; second, design competitions (for ideas, where no real building project is involved); third, international competitions, sponsored not by the BIDP, but by the International Union of Architects.

Competitions for Actual Building Projects

Competitions for building projects may be conducted in a single stage, or in two stages, and they may be open to all registered architects or limited to selected architects. The normal competition for a major project today is the open, two-stage competition, which has been increasingly popular and successful, both with competitors and promoters. Where a competition is conducted in a single stage competitors have to submit fairly complete small scale drawings, together with a report explaining their scheme. If the building is large and complex, as for example a hospital or a civic centre, the amount of work required from each competitor is very great indeed. Yet it is perfectly possible to select those schemes which show promise of a first-class solution from very much simpler drawings. In a two-stage competition the competitors are required, in the first stage, only to show simple line drawings on a small scale to indicate their intentions. The assessors then choose a small number of competitors, whose drawings show that they have solved the basic planning problems and have promise of a good design, to work out their designs in considerable detail in the second stage. All those who are selected for the second stage receive an honorarium, not a large one, but sufficient to enable them to spend sufficient time on the detailed development of designs. There are advantages in the two-stage system both for the architects and for the promoters. The unsuccessful candidates are saved an enormous amount of wasted time and effort. This in turn encourages a good entry. Those who are successful at the first stage are in a better position to do good work, because they are paid, and because they have the additional spur of knowing that they may be halfway to success. A two-stage competition

need take little longer than a one-stage competition for a building of equal complexity, and its adoption is strongly advised in most circumstances.

The one-stage competition is more suitable for a competition for a simple building, or for a competition where the number of competitors is limited in the first place.

Limited competitions, which may also be held in one stage or in two, are limited to selected architects who are invited to compete, or to architects practising in a particular locality where a promoter wishes to encourage local architecture. The limited competition is only suitable in special circumstances. The BIDP will advise on the selection of architects to compete. The objection to it is that the promoter incurs the cost and the delay of the architectural competition, but denies herself its principal advantage, which is the opportunity to draw on the talent of the entire architectural profession. Instead she confines herself to a minute number of competitors. It is an essential condition of a limited competition that an honorarium be paid to each of the invited competitors, even at the first stage, and that an additional honorarium be paid to every competitor selected for the second stage.

Design Competitions

In a design competition the aim is not to erect a building but to set an architectural or planning exercise to elucidate a problem, or to draw attention to the architectural and planning aspects of some matter of national importance, or to develop ideas for the use of particular materials or services. Design competitions are generally open not only to architects but also to architectural students, because the difficulties that would arise from entrusting a major building project to a student do not arise. The competition of ideas is normally a single-stage open competition, as there is generally no point in limiting the number of competitors or in spreading the work over two stages.

International Competitions

In 1965 the regulations for the international competitions in architecture and town planning were adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) and since that date have been administered by the International Union of Architects. The BIDP will accept UIA jurisdiction over international competitions, and BIDP members may therefore only enter for international competitions which have received its approval.

International competitions are those in which architects or town planners of more than one country are invited to take part and, as in the case of other competitions, may be held in one stage or two, may be open or limited, either by invitation to particular architects or by restriction to particular countries. An international jury has to be appointed and it is usual to publish conditions in more than one of the official languages (English, French and Russian). They may therefore be regarded as complementary to national competitions, providing a stimulus to architects of the promoting country, particularly between countries with similar cultural standards. Such competitions can be the means of finding the best solution in situations where important buildings or large-scale projects are envisaged.

The Keys to Success

The Early Choice of Assessors

The choice of assessors is fundamental to the success of any competition. If a good entry is to be attracted architects must, above all, have confidence that the competition will be judged by architects of the highest standing who will award the first prize to the best design. This does not mean that all the assessors must be well known to the lay public. The

essential thing is that their names must command confidence among architects and demonstrate that the promoter is seeking the best architectural solution, and is not afraid of new ideas. Nothing is more likely to lead to failure than the appointment of assessors who do not command this confidence. It is of almost equal importance to appoint the assessors, sufficiently early, so that they can advise the promoters on all questions affecting the competition. More time is lost through delays in appointing the assessors than from any other cause.

Strict Observance of the BIDP Regulations

Success is entirely dependent upon the strict observance of the BIDP competition regulations. Competitors only enter on the understanding that strict anonymity will be preserved, and that the rules will be strictly enforced. This is a major responsibility of the assessors, who must in particular disqualify any competitor who has exceeded the cost limits or disregarded any mandatory conditions. If the rules are not strictly enforced, the competition ceases to be fair. If, for example, a competitor exceeds the cost limit, she is able to include attractive elements in her design which more conscientious competitors have omitted, and the extravagance of the design, if adopted, would inevitably cause difficulty to the promoter.

Attractive Prize Money

It is not always understood that, as the premium awarded to the winner is an advance of his fees, it is only the second and subsequent premiums that cost the promoters anything. The real reward of the first prize winner is to be appointed as the architect for the job. This is what the competitors are competing for. But good prize money is attractive, and it is such a small part of the total cost that it is foolish not to make it really attractive.

Some Questions Answered

How much does a competition cost?

The cost of a competition, over and above the costs that would be incurred in any event, may be about $\frac{3}{4}$ of one per cent of the cost of the building or proportionately less for large projects, but these are very rough estimates. This may be thought a small amount to pay for the opportunity to obtain the best from many competition schemes. The main elements in the cost are the premiums paid to competitors (other than the winner), the fees and expenses paid to assessors, the cost of printing, stationery, advertising additional clerical assistance, and the hire of halls for judging the competition and for the exhibition.

The assessors' fees are a minimum of P1,000.00 each, and in addition 0.2 per cent on the estimated cost of the scheme up to P10,000,000.00 to be divided among the jury. For schemes, costing more than P10,000,000.00 the additional assessors' fees shall be fixed in consultation with the assessors and the BIDP. Travelling and out-of-pocket expenses are paid (and necessarily vary) and the fees of a quantity surveyor if one is required. The premiums offered vary according to the size of the project, and should be fixed in consultation with the assessors and the BIDP.

How long does a competition take?

A competition takes a little more time than the design of a building by an architect in the normal way. Time is needed to allow for the printing of conditions and plans, announcement and advertising of the competition, the judging and the publication of results. The assessors' study of the problem and the preparation of designs by a competitor need take no longer

than would be taken by an architect commissioned to do the job.

What if the winner has little or no organisation?

A competition may be won by an architect with limited experience or with little or no organisation behind her. The BIDP competition regulations provide therefore, an important safeguard for the promoters. In the first place, the assessors, in making their award, may inform the promoters of any modifications that should be made to the winning design. Secondly, the winning architect may be required to satisfy the assessors that she has the resources to carry out the work efficiently. If they are not satisfied that she possess or can develop a suitable organisation, the assessors may advise the appointment of a more experienced architect to collaborate with the winner in carrying out the work, without obligation on the promoters to pay any additional fees.

What if the promoters do not like the winning design?

The promoters are required by the BIDP Competition Regulations to appoint the winning designer as the architect for the works, and pay her the appropriate fees on the BIDP scale. Promoters should appreciate that failure to appoint the winning architect would strike at the root of architects' confidence in the competition system, and would make them unwilling to compete. If, however, promoters have taken the necessary care to appoint first-class assessors including a lay assessor capable of playing a full part in the process of selecting the winning design, they should repose confidence in the award.

But, as has already been noted, not only may the assessors themselves suggest modifications to the winning design, but the winning architect is also required to make reasonable modifications to satisfy the requirements of the promoters. This does not mean that the promoters should attempt to influence the design architecturally, but rather that their interest in obtaining a thoroughly satisfactory building is reasonably well safeguarded.

What if the project is abandoned?

Events beyond the promoters' control such as the government's control of capital or of building works, may force the promoter to defer or to abandon the scheme. The promoters will, in any event, pay the winning architect the first premium within two months. If the appointed architect is not instructed to proceed within two years of the award, he is paid a fee for abandoned work. This is 1½ per cent of the estimated cost of the works (or one-fourth of the total fee in the case of repetitive housing), less the premium already paid. Should the project be revived all these fees merge into the total fee for the work when ultimately executed. It is in fact, extremely rare for a competition project to be totally abandoned.

Further Information

More detailed information can be found in the BIDP Regulations for the Promotion and Conduct of Architectural Competitions, obtainable from the BIDP which is ready at all times to give advice both on competitions and on the wider problem of the appointment of architects. For information or advice apply to the Secretary, Botswana Institute of Development Professions, Box 827, Gaborone, Botswana.

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