

THE METHOD IS THE DECISION

Choosing the right delivery method is one of the most consequential decisions a public governing body makes. It determines who is accountable, how fast the project moves, how much design control the owner keeps, and who carries the risk. **Understanding your options early, before procurement begins, is the difference between a project that delivers on its promise and one that creates problems you didn't anticipate.**

Following are some of the most common delivery methods used in public construction, how key stakeholders work together at each phase, and what your council or board should consider when making the call.



DESIGN/ BUILD

In Design-Build, the owner hires one team, called the design-builder, to handle both design and construction under a single contract.

Instead of the architect and contractor working separately for the owner, they work together as one integrated team.

This creates a single point of responsibility and usually streamlines communication and decision-making.



CONSTRUCTION MANAGER AT RISK

In CMAR, the owner hires:

- the architect/engineer directly, and
- a construction manager separately.

The construction manager provides early advice during design and later becomes the general contractor for construction.

This method often includes a Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP), which establishes a ceiling for project cost unless the scope changes.



PERFORMANCE- BASED CONTRACTING

Performance-based contracting ties payment to measurable results instead of simply completing construction activities.

The focus is on outcomes:

- guaranteed energy savings,
- reduced utility costs,
- system reliability,
- equipment uptime,
- or operational efficiency.

This method is especially common in energy and facility modernization projects.

METHOD AT-A-GLANCE COMPARISON

	DESIGN/BUILD	CMAR	PERFORMANCE-BASED
Speed to Delivery	Fast	Moderate	Moderate
Risk Transfer to Contractor	High	Moderate-High	High
GMP / Cost Certainty	Sometimes	Yes (GMP)	Outcome-Based
Common in Schools/ Public Buildings?	Yes	Yes	Yes Especially Energy
Best For	Speed & Accountability	Balance Of Control & Collaboration	Energy & Facility Upgrades

BEFORE YOU DECIDE

The delivery method decision shapes everything that follows. These questions are worth putting in front of your board or council before procurement begins.

What is the single most important thing this project has to get right?

Speed, cost certainty, design quality, long-term performance -- different methods are built around different priorities. If the board cannot agree on the top priority, the method selection will reflect that confusion.

How much do we want to be involved in design decisions?

Some methods keep the owner close to every design choice. Others hand that responsibility to a contractor team in exchange for speed and accountability. Neither is wrong, but the board should make that tradeoff consciously.

Are we prepared to manage this contract long after construction ends?

A performance-based agreement does not end at ribbon-cutting. If the organization does not have the capacity or appetite for ongoing oversight, that should shape the decision.

What happens if costs go up or the scope changes?

Each method handles changes differently. Who absorbs the risk, and how exposed is the public owner if something unexpected happens mid-project?

Do we have the internal expertise to evaluate what we are being sold?

Governing bodies often rely heavily on their advisors during method selection. Understanding enough to ask hard questions -- and recognize a good answer -- is worth more than any checklist.

The best delivery method is the one that aligns the project structure with the community's goals, risk tolerance, timeline, and long-term responsibilities.

PROVEN EXPERTISE

GRP | WEGMAN helps public owners navigate every stage of the project delivery process, from early planning and method selection through construction completion. Our team brings the experience to structure your project the right way from the start.



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