NSPE Position Statement No. 07-1779
Project Delivery Methods in the Public Sector

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Position Statement: NSPE recognizes that more than one project delivery system may meet an owner’s project requirements. Factors such as safety, function, time from conception to completion, capital and life-cycle costs, environmental quality, and appearance may each play a role in the owner’s decision. Accordingly, NSPE acknowledges the role these factors play and NSPE neither advocates nor opposes a particular project delivery system. NSPE believes that regardless of the project delivery method selected, qualifications of the professional engineer must play a significant role in the selection process and a licensed professional engineer must remain in responsible charge of the engineering on the project.

Background: Federal, state, and local regulations offer a variety of ways the public sector may contract for a project. Design-bid-build is the traditional approach but there are many alternative project delivery methods available to the public sector including design-build, construction management as agent or at risk, and public-private partnerships.

Alternative project delivery methods may place two or more steps between the professional engineer and facility owner, eroding the direct relationship and accountability between the engineer and facility owner. This strains the ability of the parties to communicate and can have important consequences for a project while creating ethical dilemmas for the professional engineer. NSPE believes that in order to protect the relationship between the owner and the professional engineer, alternative delivery methods should employ the use of a professional engineer to assist the facility owner with the development of initial project scope as well as the selection of the most appropriate project delivery system to assist the owner throughout the project delivery process. This professional engineer may be retained through qualifications-based selection or be on staff.