



6 QUESTIONS

TO ASK WHEN SELECTING
A NATIONAL CM/GC BUILDING PARTNER

CORE STATES

GROUP

INTRO

Planning to roll-out a regional or national building program? The right construction partner can make or break your project. Consider these six critical vetting questions to help drive successful project results.





1

WHAT IS YOUR APPROACH TO STAFFING?

As an owner, a clear staffing strategy from your CM/GC helps avoid issues that could slow growth or hinder the quality of services and projects. A knowledgeable CM/GC knows that this means going beyond simply identifying the headcounts of employees, independent contractors, consultants, or other outside experts, but should also consider the logistics, skills, and resources needed as well. A CM/GC's staffing plan allows you to gain insight into their understanding of the project and what they consider to be a successful outcome.

Understanding your CM/GC's staffing approach will establish key project elements early to help mitigate challenges later. Keep in mind that the approach that produces favorable results for one proprietor may pose problems for another. By thoroughly combing through the staffing plan and identifying potential gaps, such as understaffing or overstaffing, will help reduce costs, maximize productivity, and meet project goals.

WHO WILL BE MY POINT OF CONTACT?

A critical element that is often acknowledged too late in project development is establishing a point of contact. Determining if your project will have one central point of contact, or many contact points spread across regions and disciplines, will help ease confusion and bolster communication as your program scales in size.

2

WHAT ARE THE FIRST 3 STEPS YOU'LL TAKE TO START THIS PROGRAM OFF ON THE RIGHT FOOT?

The importance of starting strong on a program should come as no surprise. What does tend to surprise is that many proprietors have different views and opinions of how to start strong. Searching for the right partner for your project should include an understanding of how this potential partner would complete the program.

Have your CM/GC walk you through their first-day plan. Do they have a system set in place for multi-location buildouts? Do they have a proper development program? Have they fully thought through how they are planning to handle each step in the program? How will they address issues or challenges? Take this time before program kick-off to establish priorities and milestones, set expectations, and begin to build the trust needed to make the hard decisions down the line.



And remember, it's best to be open and direct with communication. Setting a collaborative tone early on between all parties encourages clear communication, transparency, and helps start your project on the right foot.



3

HOW DO YOU SOLICIT AND VET YOUR CONTRACTORS? HOW DO YOU CONSIDER LOCAL AND MINORITY

When hiring subcontractors, a portion of the vetting process can be simplified by understanding and knowing the reach of your CM/GCs. Many CM/GCs have strong local relationships that have the experience and expertise you're looking for.



Does the partner you're considering have contacts already established? If so, examine the history of their relationship. How many projects have they worked on together? Have they completed projects similar to yours? Before working with these subcontractors on a project, does your CM/GC fully evaluate their past and current performance, or merely consider a familiar and friendly relationship as a satisfactory vetting process?

A good CM/GC will ensure their subcontractors are producing quality work in a timely and efficient manner. However, consider how your CM/GC will respond to a sub that is underperforming. What steps do they have in place to tackle this challenge? Are they comfortable with potentially making the call to replace an underperforming sub?

Many firms today qualify as a specialty designation. Does the CM/GC you're considering have a history of working with minority subcontractors? With many projects requiring a WBE, MBE, or DBE participation goal, an established network of specialty designation subcontractors indicates that your CM/GC has already built the trusted relationship needed for successful project results.



4 HOW MANY PROJECTS ARE YOU AND YOUR FIRM ACCUSTOMED TO MANAGING AT ONCE?

Just as you've always heard that your eyes are bigger than your stomach, sometimes a workload can be bigger than what someone can reasonably manage. It's important to identify your limits as a brand and understand exactly how many projects you can take on at once. Accepting new projects without necessary capacity will only lead to headaches for everyone down the line.

Your CM/GC needs to know what skills from past projects can reasonably translate into new projects, without risking biting off more than they can chew. This includes having a clear understanding of their work volume, their pace, and how they're managing the quantity of their projects. Be wary of a CM/GC who eagerly takes on a large project with a plan to hire as they go. A lack of foresight and failing to plan strategically leads to a shortage of workers and supplies, missed deadlines, and unhappy owners.

If your CM/GC is comfortable handling the workload appropriate for your project, be sure to establish a workload plan. This includes establishing lines of communication, team meetings, and time and project management software. And while you'll never be able to plan for everything, having a contingency plan and set expectations will help alleviate any future issues.

In GC/CM control

Outside GC/CM control



5

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH MY DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND TIMELINE? WHAT IS WITHIN OUR CONTROL AND WHAT IS OUTSIDE OUR CONTROL?

There will always be some degree of risk involved in construction. Each construction project is unique and brings its own set of challenges and opportunities.

Fortunately, some things are within your control, and part of it includes hiring a CM/GC that fully understands what is in their control. Make sure your partner has read your development plan and fully understands exactly what you're trying to achieve and the timeline involved. Effective risk reduction starts with open, upfront conversation with your CM/GC to identify and mend any gaps in the project plan.

A common gap within many project plans is the lengthy permit process. With any planning process, there is always the risk that planning permits will not be received or that this process will take much longer than expected. Municipal approvals and permits, such as commercial licenses, are also subject to this risk.

Of course, there are ways to expedite this permit process, but with that comes the risk of budget or cost overruns. Development projects face a variety of factors that can impact your budget, ranging from conditions unknown to the contractor to client requests outside the original scope of work. A project can experience cost overruns due to change orders, delays, fluctuation in materials and labor costs, and design issues.

A good CM/GC will recognize these and other potential risks at the beginning of development and have a safety plan in place should things start to go awry.

6

HOW DO YOU MANAGE QUALITY CONTROL ACROSS MULTI-SITE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS?

It is important to understand that in the consumer's mind, there are certain levels of expectation regarding cleanliness, finishes in material, signage, wayfinding, and more within a project. A good CM/GC understands that these elements are key to your brand and overall development program and will deliver to consumer expectations.

Discuss items like store operations during construction – if the store is remaining open to customers, an experienced CM/GC who works in those environments is key. Understanding how to sequence work to minimize operational disruption, while maximizing employee and customer safety, is a key component to successful execution of the projects.

Additionally, a CM/GC with an understanding of the project closeout requirements, inspection criteria, and the client's expectation of finished product allows for a running punchlist of work to maintain a continuous improvement throughout the project. Quality control during the construction process is more cost-effective and beneficial for all parties rather than making corrections during project closeout or during the warranty phase.



ABOUT

Finding a good CM/GC can be a challenge. Finding a great CM/GC who becomes a partner and an extension of your team is like striking gold. A successful CM/GC is open, honest, and isn't afraid to make the tough decisions

to uphold the integrity of the project. If an owner does their research and knows the right questions to ask, they'll find a CM/GC that works with them in tandem to start strong, build strong, and finish strong on every project.



ABOUT CORE STATES GROUP

Core States Group is a full-service, nationally ranked architecture, engineering, and construction firm. Recently, our construction team was proudly represented as a Top Contractor by Building Design + Construction.

We are licensed to build across all of North America and partner with our clients for the lifecycle of their programs, providing an end-to-end service to work together on all aspects of their programs. These integrated practices deliver seamless continuity, drive speed to market, and facilitate a remarkable customer experience with less headache and more accountability.

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