

Professional Coordination of Consultants

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Summary

Coordination of design and construction phase services of the various consultants is imperative to having a successful and safe project. This Practice Tip has been prepared to clarify the definition of coordination contained in the standard forms of contracts between clients and OAA licensed members by listing tasks involved in consultant coordination within the various phases of the Architect or Licensed Technologist OAA's services.

Background

Consultant coordination is a basic part of the services provided by OAA licensed members (i.e. Architects and Licensed Technologists OAA), and is listed in OAA and Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC) client/architect agreements. Permit applications, for projects required to be designed by OAA Licensed professional and engineers, include a "Commitment to General Review" form to be signed by the owner and the consultants. In the owner's portion, there is a space to designate the "coordinator of the work of all consultants."

This Practice Tip has been recently updated in response to the recommendations of the [Report of the Elliott Lake Commission of Inquiry](#). The report recognizes that the role of professional coordination is performed by architects and is critical to any project and protection of the public interest.

The Canadian and Ontario standard contracts for architectural services—RAIC Document 6 and the OAA 600 series—each have the same wording in relation to coordination of consultants, stating: "The architect shall coordinate the services of the following consultants," followed by a list of the consultants engaged either by the architect or engaged by the client.

Consultant Coordination is defined in these two contracts as consisting of:

- managing the communications between *Consultants* and with the *Client*, and
- providing direction as necessary to give effect to any design decisions taken, and
- reviewing the product of the *Work* to assist in identifying conflicts and to monitor compliance with directions.

In order to be most effective, the coordinator of consultants should be one of the professional consultants (e.g. Architect, Licensed Technologist OAA, Professional Engineer) retained as a member of the design team. This ensures familiarity with the unique details and demands of any project. The role of the coordinator of consultants should be filled by a professional with current and progressive experience in providing consultant services in the design and contract administration of building projects of similar complexity to the current project. Members should be wary of any project where the role of coordinator of consultants is proposed to be filled by a non-professional, someone who is not an integral member of the design team, or someone lacking appropriate skills, knowledge, or experience.

Where an owner retains either an OAA licensed member or engineer as the coordinator of all consultants, it is that professional's responsibility to coordinate the various parts of the design in order that all the various parts of the project documentation including those items that come at a later date will fit with the original design and comply with building code requirements. In addition to being responsible for all coordination on the project in accordance with their professional obligations and limitations and with the contract with the client, this consultant will also be the point of contact for or must be included on all correspondence with:

- all authorities having jurisdiction (AHJs);
- the owner;
- all the other members of the project team; and
- the contractor

Architects and Licensed Technologists OAA have a professional responsibility to protect the public safety by virtue of the architectural licence granted to them by the OAA under the *Architects Act*. They are also required to carry professional liability insurance. Engineers have a similar responsibility with regard to public safety by virtue of the licence granted to them by the Professional Engineers Ontario (PEO) under the *Professional Engineers Act*.

Architects and Licensed Technologists OAA are educated and qualified to bring disparate parts together into a coherent whole. It is both a traditional and a typical role by virtue of their required training and ongoing experience. When a building official knows there is an OAA licensed professional who has undertaken this coordinating role, it diminishes the concern that something may be missing from the building permit submission that might jeopardize public safety. In larger projects, this responsibility for public safety is reinforced in the Ontario Building Code by the requirement for General Review to be undertaken by an OAA licensed professional or engineer or both during construction.

There are two parts to the coordination of the work of all consultants:

1. the coordination of the architectural design with the designs of the engineers and other consultants; and
2. the coordination of the management of the project for:
 - a) the management part of design coordination: choices and decisions affecting the design; and
 - b) overall management coordination: program, budget, schedule, communications, construction contract administration, general reviews required by the codes, etc.

Coordination begins at the inception of the project, during the first meetings with the client and/or consultants. It continues as long as the coordinator of consultants is involved with the project.

As the project's parameters are determined and the building program is developed during the pre-design services and an initial conceptual design, coordination is required. As the design develops, various disparate functional needs, and requirements (e.g. codes and life safety, requirements of structural, mechanical, electrical, and other disciplines, sustainability goals, client needs and aspirations, building program, project schedule, and budget parameters) are incorporated into a final design. All these factors must be coordinated while maintaining the design intent.

A list of Coordination tasks is included as Appendix A.

Suggested Procedure

1. Be familiar with the tasks involved in the role of coordination of consultants and the expectations of clients, consultants, building officials, and contractors.
2. Use standard contracts that have the role of the architect properly documented; list all consultants expected to be coordinated in the client/architect or client/Lic. Tech. OAA agreement (e.g. OAA 600 series).
3. Include adequate fees for coordination of the listed consultants, whether retained by the architect or directly by the client. The RAIC's *Guide to Determining Appropriate Fees for the Services of an Architect* notes a suggested percentage. If the client retains consultants directly and you have no knowledge of the fees, you would have to estimate the effort for your fee purposes.

4. Review and confirm the scope and limits of the role of “coordination of consultants” with your client and also with your consultants. Remind all consultants of their role in checking and coordinating their own work.
5. Where not engaged to be the “coordinator of the work of all consultants,” review and confirm the more limited scope of the role you will play with your client, with your staff (to avoid providing unpaid services) and also with your consultants. Also review and confirm your more limited role with the consultant who is responsible for the “coordination of consultants,” so they don’t expect you to perform services that you normally would provide.
6. If consultants you are expected to coordinate are later added to a project, document this as a change to the agreement with the client and obtain appropriate fees.
7. In the application for building permit, the “Commitment to General Review by Architect and Engineer” form should typically have the Architect or Licensed Technologist OAA named as “coordinator of the work of all consultants.” If you have not been engaged for this role on your project (e.g. if you are a sub consultant to an engineer who acts as the prime consultant and is performing the coordination of consultant’s role), make sure your name is not indicated.

If you have been engaged for the role of coordination of consultants with your name indicated as such and there is a change to your services relating to coordination during construction, you should advise the building department in writing.

8. On Design-Build projects, Construction Management projects, projects with an active client’s Project Manager, or if engaged for partial services, the role of coordinator of all consultants may not be as clearly defined as in traditional Design-Bid-Build work or understood the same way by all parties. Clarify the role contractually and in discussions with the parties.

References

Owner’s Commitment for General Review by Architect or Engineer, Obtain from local municipality.

[Report of the Elliott Lake Commission of Inquiry](#) by the Honourable Paul R. Belanger, Commissioner, October 15, 2014.

RAIC Canadian Handbook of Practice for Architects (CHOP) 2nd Edition, Volume 1, Chapter 1.2.3 Consultants and checklist “Coordinating Consultants”

CHOP 3rd Edition, Volume 1, Chapter 2.3 Consultants and Appendix C Checklist – Coordinating Consultants

The OAA does not provide legal, insurance, or accounting advice. Readers are advised to consult their own legal, accounting, or insurance representatives to obtain suitable professional advice in those regards.

Appendix A

Tasks Required for the Coordination of All Consultants:

This list is not exhaustive. Refer also to the Canadian Handbook of Practice for Architects (CHOP).

1. Overall - All Phases

- 1.1 Establish procedures for, and manage information flow among, all consultants and all other parties involved.
- 1.2 Provide direction as necessary to give effect to any design decisions taken.
- 1.3 Obtain and circulate client comments whenever they occur, approvals to move from phase to phase, and changes to budget to coordinate with estimates of construction cost estimates.
- 1.4 Review the program of requirements and design documents as they develop to assess, identify, and assist to modify and resolve incompatibilities among requirements of all consultants.
- 1.5 Assist to identify any imbalance or incompatibilities and to establish a congruent relationship among the client's building program, budget, and project schedule.

2. Pre-Design Phase

- 2.1 Review agreements of all consultants for compatibility including General Review during construction.
- 2.2 Assist client to obtain and circulate relevant information about existing conditions of the client's property, such as geotechnical, survey, topographical, and toxic and hazardous material.
- 2.3 Obtain, review, and circulate client-supplied data (program, budgets, schedule, etc.)
- 2.4 Obtain, review, and circulate requirements of all consultants, related to existing conditions, such as boreholes.
- 2.5 Obtain, review, and circulate requirements of authorities having jurisdiction including the requirements from each of the consultants.
- 2.6 Prepare project schedule for design documentation by all consultants and construction phase indicating milestones for decision-making.

3. Schematic & Design Development Phases

- 3.1 Establish and review with all consultants' design criteria for all components to be integrated into the project.
- 3.2 Review alternative conceptual solutions, materials, and systems proposed by all consultants, and identify criteria and quality standards for selection.
- 3.3 Review schematic and design development documents to confirm that requirements of program, all consultants, and authorities having jurisdiction have been incorporated.
- 3.4 Integrate outline specifications and/or materials lists of all consultants for completeness of all elements.
- 3.5 Review consultant's drawings to confirm consistency of layouts.
- 3.6 Monitor, review, and update the program, budget, and schedule.
- 3.7 Monitor and review estimates of construction cost.

4. Construction Documents Phase

- 4.1 Determine format, sequence, numbering, revision system, and schedule for production of construction documents.
- 4.2 Review detailed documents prepared by all consultants to confirm previously agreed decisions and requirements of statutes, regulations, codes, and by-laws have been incorporated.
- 4.3 Integrate specifications of all consultants for completeness of all elements and coordination with proposed General and Supplementary Conditions.
- 4.4 Manage consultants checking of own documents plus the overall coordination—stress to all “have you done your own coordination?”
- 4.5 Coordinate exchanges of information, documentation, drawings, and specifications among all consultants and resolve conflicts and inconsistencies.
- 4.6 Review and update the estimate of construction cost to incorporate information from all consultants.

5. Bidding/Negotiation Phase

- 5.1 Review bidding information and forms for compatibility with documents prepared by all consultants and client’s requirements.
- 5.2 Establish procedures for organizing and handling bid documents, including arranging reproduction, distribution, retrieval, record keeping, receipt, and return of deposits.
- 5.3 Receive all questions related to bidding documents; expedite exchanges of information among consultants and coordinate necessary responses to questions.
- 5.4 Organize preparation and distribution of addenda, including review of supplementary documents for compatibility.
- 5.5 Establish procedure with all consultants for evaluation of bids.
- 5.6 Assist in award and preparation of construction contract.

6. Permits

- 6.1 Coordinate preparation, compilation, and submission of application for building permit and other authorities’ approvals.
- 6.2 Obtain owner’s and consultants’ signatures on application and commitment forms.
- 6.3 Act as the “coordinator of the work of all consultants” in the “Commitment to General Review by Architect and Engineer” form produced by Engineers, Architects and Building Officials liaison group (EABO).
- 6.4 Coordinate and expedite response to any questions or requests for additional information from authorities, such as the Building Code Data Matrix.

7. Construction Phase

- 7.1 Review procedures for all consultants to carry out General Review. Utilize recommended standard forms such as those produced by EABO.
- 7.2 Establish and/or advise regarding the basic line of communications for the project among all parties, including contractor, client, and all consultants.
- 7.3 Establish with the contractor procedures for the testing and inspection of specific materials and work by inspection and testing companies and for appropriate notification to the consultants prior to commencement of significant segments of the work.
- 7.4 Arrange for submission of General Review and other reports by all consultants to the contractor, building officials, and client, per commitment for general review forms.

- 7.5 Establish procedures with all consultants for communication, approval, notification and record-keeping related to contractor's submissions, shop drawings, and samples, and applications for payments, etc.
- 7.6 Receive requests for interpretation of the contract documents and expedite and coordinate issuing of supplementary details, instructions, and interpretations and findings with all consultants.
- 7.7 Establish procedure for documenting and implementing changes to contract, including review of contractor's submissions, advice to the client, and issuing of change orders and notifications of changes to building officials and other authorities.
- 7.8 Establish project close-out procedure with all consultants and authorities having jurisdiction. Coordinate review and reporting, correction of deficiencies, receipt, review and distribution of required submittals (i.e. warranties, as-built drawings, guarantees, bonds, operating manuals, etc.), and submission of "Final General Review Report" (EABO standard form) to building officials and other authorities.
- 7.9 Arrange for review by all consultants of defects reported, and for notification to contractor of items requiring attention prior to the end of the one-year contract warranty period.