

A Practical Rubric to Support Municipal Construction Decision Making



Designed to reduce complexity, create clarity, and guide information alignment.

	Construction Manager at Risk <i>(Preferred for municipal projects)</i>	Construction Manager as Agent	Design-Bid-Build
Contracts	2 <i>Owner-CM, Owner-Architect</i>	2 <i>Owner-CM, Owner-Architect</i>	2 <i>Owner-Architect, Owner-Contractor</i>
Cost Certainty	High <i>guaranteed maximum price (GMP)</i>	Moderate <i>no GMP; municipality carries risk</i>	Low <i>cost only known after bids</i>
Risk Transfer	High <i>CM holds trade contracts and takes on performance & cost risk</i>	Low <i>Owner retains most risk; CM advises only</i>	Low <i>Owner bears change order risk</i>
Owner Workload	Low-Medium <i>CM drives schedule, procurement, constructability</i>	High <i>Owner manages more decisions and coordination</i>	High <i>Owner manages disputes, design gaps, and change orders</i>
Speed to Market	Medium-Fast	Medium	Slowest
Collaboration with Design Team	High <i>early & continuous</i>	Medium <i>advisory collaboration</i>	Low <i>siloes / sequential</i>
Protection Against Overdesign & Scope Creep	Strong <i>CM validates cost/scope continuously</i>	Limited <i>CM advises; Owner must enforce</i>	Weak <i>issues discovered at bid stage</i>
Budget Alignment	High <i>cost modeling from Day 1</i>	Moderate <i>depends on Owner discipline</i>	Low <i>design often exceeds budget</i>
Best For	Complex municipal projects with tight budgets and public visibility	Municipalities with strong internal staff & want full control	Small/simple projects with predictable requirements
Interpretation	Typically aligns best with municipal projects needing high cost confidence, lower owner workload, and clear risk transfer	Fits only when the municipality has high internal staffing & tolerance for risk	Is rarely advisable for complex municipal projects with community visibility

FLIP TO SEE WHICH STRUCTURE IS BEST FOR YOUR PROJECT →

INSTRUCTIONS:

For each decision factor, select the statement that best describes your priority.
At the end, tally which delivery method you chose most often to see which is best aligned with your needs.

	CM-AT-RISK	CM-AGENT	DESIGN-BID-BUILD
Early cost certainty is critical.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, we need costs locked in early and predictable.	<input type="checkbox"/> We want guidance but can accept some cost uncertainty.	<input type="checkbox"/> We're okay waiting until bids are in to see final cost.
We want risk transferred away from the municipality.	<input type="checkbox"/> We want the contractor to take on most cost and performance risk.	<input type="checkbox"/> We need advice, but we can handle most risk ourselves.	<input type="checkbox"/> We're comfortable keeping risk internally, even with potential change orders.
We have limited internal bandwidth.	<input type="checkbox"/> We want the contractor to manage most of the schedule and procurement.	<input type="checkbox"/> We can dedicate some time; contractor advises us.	<input type="checkbox"/> We're ready to manage design and construction issues ourselves.
We want one entity accountable for budget, schedule, and coordination.	<input type="checkbox"/> We want a single point of accountability for cost and schedule.	<input type="checkbox"/> Coordination help is useful, but accountability remains ours.	<input type="checkbox"/> We understand design and construction are separate; no single accountable party.
We can't afford cost overruns, redesign, or bid-day surprises.	<input type="checkbox"/> We want continuous cost control to minimize surprises.	<input type="checkbox"/> We can monitor cost with guidance but will enforce changes ourselves.	<input type="checkbox"/> We accept risk of over-budget bids or late redesigns.
We want early collaboration before the design is complete.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, we want the contractor involved from early design stages.	<input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration is useful but not fully integrated.	<input type="checkbox"/> We'll involve contractor only after design is finished.
We want to educate our stakeholders and avoid common municipal pitfalls.	<input type="checkbox"/> We want proactive communication about cost, phasing, and risks.	<input type="checkbox"/> Guidance is helpful, but we lead stakeholder education.	<input type="checkbox"/> Stakeholder education will mostly happen later, as issues arise.
Our project has complexity (mechanical, site, phasing, public funding).	<input type="checkbox"/> We have a complex project and need integrated management.	<input type="checkbox"/> Complexity is manageable if we have strong internal staff.	<input type="checkbox"/> We're okay with sequential design-bid-build, even if complexity is challenging.
We have the internal expertise to manage lots of decisions & details.	<input type="checkbox"/> We want a method that does not require deep internal expertise.	<input type="checkbox"/> We have strong internal expertise and bandwidth to manage decisions.	<input type="checkbox"/> We can manage, but our role intensifies when issues arise late.
TOTAL			