

NEW ORLEANS
JUNE 2018



From Answers to Action

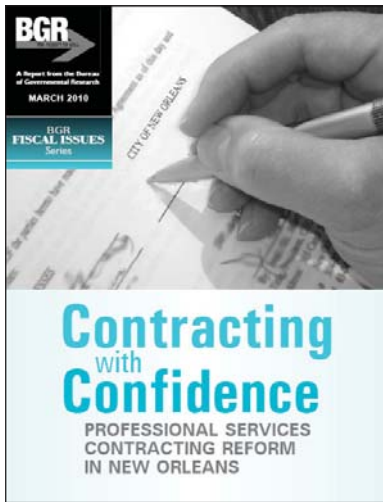
Post-Election Policy Making: Professional Services Contracting

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BACKGROUND

In 2010, BGR presented a new model for professional services contracting.* Mayors had long exercised significant discretion in choosing contractors in New Orleans, and BGR's research of best practices found little evidence to support this arrangement. Instead, best practices revealed that the City should award contracts to the firms that perform best on evaluation committees' objective and transparent scoring of proposals.



BGR's model called for creating a centralized procurement office and set forth the basic elements of a competitive, rational and transparent contracting process. Among other things, it called for selecting contractors by committees with relevant subject matter expertise. The committees would be required to conduct their evaluations in public using detailed criteria, weighting and grading. BGR's proposal called for severely limiting the mayor's role, requiring the mayor to execute a contract with the successful respondent or terminate the procurement. In the latter case, the mayor would be required to provide a written explanation.

In 2010, Mayor Landrieu signed an executive order creating a procurement process that incorporated all of the key elements of BGR's model. He created a centralized procurement office and hired a professional procurement officer to head it.

In 2014, New Orleans voters amended the City's home rule charter to protect some, but not all, of the key components of the 2010 professional services contracting reform.** The amendment codified requirements for contractor selection by committees of City employees with relevant subject matter expertise. The amendment also required committee meetings and records to be public, and it prohibited the mayor from being a member of any selection committee.

However, the amendment did not codify three other key components of the 2010 reform: 1) the centralized procurement office, 2) the numerical system of grading proposals based on detailed, weighted criteria, and 3) the requirement that the mayor execute a contract with the selected respondent or terminate the procurement. As a result of these omissions, a future mayor might seek greater control of the selection process.

* BGR, *Contracting with Confidence: Professional Services Contracting Reform in New Orleans*, March 2010, available at <http://www.bgr.org/reports/Contracting-Reform-in-New-Orleans/>.

** BGR, *On the Ballot: November 2, 2014*, pp. 1-3, available at <http://www.bgr.org/>.

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES CONTRACTING

BGR asked the mayoral candidates whether they would retain the executive order that governs the professional services contracting process, and whether they would consider any revisions to the process. BGR did not pose the questions to the City Council candidates because the council does not have authority under the City's Home Rule Charter to regulate the professional services contracting process established by the mayor.

Q: **As mayor, would you retain the executive order that currently governs the professional services contracting process? Why or why not?**

Mayor LaToya Cantrell

Definitely. The executive order was crucial to providing additional transparency to the procurement process and it paved the way for improved Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) participation. I would keep the executive order, although I would be willing to consider future improvements.

Q: **Are you contemplating any revisions to the existing professional services contracting process? If so, please explain what they would consist of and why you think they are necessary.**

Mayor LaToya Cantrell

I want to review our DBE and local hire requirements to make sure that they are working as envisioned when they were put in place. This is necessary because many of our citizens feel left out of government processes, and many of our businesses feel that they are unfairly ignored when it comes to government contracts. We have to make sure we are truly leveling the playing field for DBE's and local contractors.
