

Strategic Go-No-Go Decision Making:

The Ultimate Framework for
Winning Proposals



Say no to losing bids. Say yes to smarter decisions.

In AEC marketing, time isn't just money—it's opportunity.

But here's the thing: Most proposal teams struggle with meeting deadlines, limited resources, and mounting pressure to win more work. This leads to many teams saying "yes" to every RFP, even when the odds and the fit aren't in their favor.

This is where a [Go/No-Go process](#) comes in. It's about creating a clear, strategic way to evaluate each opportunity, so your team can focus on worthwhile proposals.

A well-defined Go/No-Go framework gives your team clarity, confidence, and the power to protect their time. And while over 63% of AEC marketers spend more than half of their time on proposals, only 25% feel they can meet 100% of their company's submission goals, according to [the State of Proposals in AEC Marketing report](#).

That's why it's crucial to build strategy into your Go/No-Go process, to focus on the right opportunities, not just every opportunity.

This guide breaks down a modern approach to Go/No-Go decision-making, built for the realities of today's AEC marketing teams. In this guide, you'll find practical tools, a simple framework, and tips to help your team align around smarter pursuit decisions.

Let's dive in.

Understanding the Go/No-Go Framework

Not every RFP is worth pursuing. That's the simple truth behind a strong Go/No-Go process.

According to OpenAsset's 2024 State of Proposals Report:

- **49% of AEC marketers** say that at least **half of their proposals** are marked as "Go"
- **26% of firms pursue 75–89% of all proposals**, suggesting limited selectivity
- **Only 3.6%** of respondents pursue 0–24% of the opportunities that come in
- **33% of proposals** are submitted despite not fitting the firm's ICP

In other words, most firms are still chasing too many proposals that aren't the right fit.

"If you have a Go/No-Go process, but you're still pushing proposals through based on gut instinct, you don't have a Go/No-Go. If almost every RFP your team receives ends up as a 'Go,' you don't have a Go/No-Go. Focus on your strongest pursuits and put your resources there. You'll see better results, and your win rates will skyrocket."

— **Rachelle Ray,**
Head of AEC Marketing Innovation,
OpenAsset

Instead of jumping into every opportunity in your inbox, the Go/No-Go framework helps you slow down, evaluate strategically, and decide where your team's time and energy will have the most impact.

When done well, this framework filters out low-probability pursuits and frees up your marketing and BD teams to focus on high-value work. As a result, you stop wasting time on proposals that don't align with your firm's goals—or worse, ones you were never likely to win in the first place.

How Go/No-Gos Help AEC Marketers:

- Avoids proposal burnout
- Protects team resources
- Increases win rate by focusing on better-fit projects
- Encourages alignment between marketing, BD, and technical teams

"Submitting every RFP that comes through the door can actually dilute your RFP team's resources and diminish your chances of winning. Instead, establish a Go/No-Go process—whether it's a discussion or formal document—and decide on the strategic likelihood of winning."

— Rachelle Ray,
Head of AEC Marketing Innovation, OpenAsset

Key Decision Factors from the 2024 State of Proposals Reports

What actually drives a smart Go/No-Go decision?

We interviewed over 500 AEC marketers to understand how they spend their time and where they might need more resources. According to our [State of Proposals in AEC Marketing report](#), AEC marketers identified seven core factors they weigh when determining whether to pursue an RFP.

The collective ranking of what determines a “Go” from survey respondents is as follows:

Top Tier: Strategic Pursuits:

- 1. Alignment with Expertise and Competencies:** Are we truly qualified to deliver this project, and is it in our wheelhouse?
- 2. Strategic Fit with Business Goals:** Does this opportunity support our long-term direction?
- 3. Client Relationship and Past Success:** Have we worked with this client before? Do we have an inside track?

Mid Tier: Resource Considerations:

- 4. Resource Availability and Capacity:** Do we have the time, staff, and tools to deliver this well?

Lower Tier: Risk & Market Factors:

- 5. Risk Assessment and Mitigation:** Are there red flags—legal, logistical, or reputational?
- 6. Competitive Landscape and Differentiation:** Can we stand out against the competition?
- 7. Understanding of the Client's Decision-Making Process:** Do we know how this client evaluates proposals—and can we tailor ours accordingly?

These factors form the foundation of a thoughtful Go/No-Go process. If you're missing too many of them, it's probably a pass.



Building Your Go/No-Go Decision Matrix

So, how do you decide what's a "go" or a "no-go" without wasting time on every new RFP?

The answer: a clear, repeatable matrix that removes guesswork and helps teams align quickly.

A strong matrix helps teams say "yes" with intention and "no" without guilt. This doesn't need to be overly complex. The best Go/No-Go tools are simple enough to use in real time and consistent enough to build team confidence.

"It's easy to "cheat" a Go/No-Go, and let your gut decide that an opportunity is worth chasing. A good Go/No-Go is robust enough to discourage this. It forces teams to face and discuss uncomfortable truths, like the fact that ambition and reality don't always align."

— **Rachelle Ray,**
Head of AEC Marketing Innovation, OpenAsset

Think of it as a scorecard that measures strategic fit, not just gut feeling.

Common Criteria in a Go/No-Go Matrix:

Criteria What to Ask

Client Fit Do we have a strong relationship?
Have we worked with them before?

Project Fit Is this in our wheelhouse or a stretch?
Does it align with our portfolio?

Win Probability Do we know the decision-makers?
Is this a wired RFP?

Team Availability Do we have the staff and time to do this right?

Strategic Value Will this help us break into a new market, sector, or region?

Profitability Can we do this work profitably, or will it drain our resources?

Past Performance Have we pursued similar projects before?
What were the outcomes?

You can assign each a score (1–5), use yes/no answers, or color-code them to visualize fit. The key is consistency.

Tips to Make It Work:

- Use the same criteria for every opportunity
- Document the discussion instead of talking through it and moving on
- Involve both marketing and technical teams for a well-rounded view
- Revisit the matrix after won/lost pursuits to see what worked

Collaborative Decision-Making: Key SMEs and Tools

The best decisions come from cross-functional conversations. Bringing in people who know the client, the work, and the process leads to better decisions. That means fewer rushed proposals and better win rates.

But let's be honest: collaboration isn't always easy. Siloed information, conflicting priorities, and tight deadlines can stall progress. That's why having a defined process (and the right tools) is essential.

Who Should Be in the Room?

Here's a look at the key players to include in your Go/No-Go discussions:

- **Marketing/Proposal Manager:** Drives the process, brings in client and pursuit history, aligns with brand/positioning
- **Business Development Professional:** Knows the relationship status and intel about the client's needs
- **Project Manager or Technical Lead:** Provides insight into team availability, technical fit, and delivery risk
- **Executive Leadership:** Weighs strategic alignment, revenue goals, and long-term positioning



“The best Go/No-Go decisions aren't made in silos! They come from structured conversations between all stakeholders—marketing, technical teams, estimating, etc.”

— **Rachelle Ray,**
Head of AEC Marketing Innovation,
OpenAsset

These roles may overlap in smaller teams. What matters is that each perspective is represented, especially when time or resources are tight.

Tools Supporting AEC Teams

According to our [State of Proposals in AEC Marketing report](#), here's what leading firms are using to manage projects more effectively:

- **Collaboration Platforms:** 80% use tools like Microsoft Teams, Slack, and Zoom for coordinating input across teams.
- **Document Management Systems:** 60% use systems like SharePoint, Dropbox, or Box to store and access proposal content.
- **Proposal-Specific Software:** Around 26% use platforms designed for managing proposals.
- **Project Management Tools:** 17% use tools like Asana, Trello, or Jira.
- **Digital Asset Management (DAM):** Tools like OpenAsset allow marketing teams to centralize images, resumes, project data, and branded templates.



Implementing and Refining the Framework

A Go/No-Go matrix only works if people actually use it.

Rolling out a new decision-making process requires more than dropping a spreadsheet into a shared folder. It needs clear expectations, buy-in across teams, and regular check-ins to ensure the framework evolves alongside your firm's goals.

Treat your Go/No-Go framework like a living system that grows and adapts with your team.

1 Start Small, Then Scale:

- Pilot the process with a single sector, office, or pursuit type
- Set a cadence (e.g., weekly Go/No-Go meetings or async reviews)
- Document early wins to build trust in the process
- Make feedback easy by allowing teams to suggest tweaks to scoring or criteria

2 Keep It Consistent—Not Rigid:

- Standardize your approach, but allow for flexibility when needed
- Capture the rationale behind each decision (especially for “No-Go”) for future reference
- Reinforce that the goal isn't perfection, it's a better focus

3 Improve Over Time:

- Revisit your Go/No-Go results after big wins and losses
- Identify which criteria carry the most weight in real outcomes
- Refine the matrix quarterly or as your firm's strategy shifts

“A strategic team doesn’t chase every opportunity. They chase the right ones. Having a strong Go/No-Go helps us focus on what the right opportunities are.”

— Rachelle Ray, Head of AEC Marketing Innovation, OpenAsset

Your 6-Phase Go/No-Go Decision Checklist to Own the Process

Saying “no” to the wrong fit opens the door to saying “yes” when it really counts.

Use this Go/No-Go decision checklist as a conversation starter, not a rigid formula. Every firm's priorities are different. The goal is to slow down, think critically, and focus your energy where it counts.

1 Client & Relationship:

- ☐ Have we worked with this client before, or do we have a strong referral or introduction?
- ☐ Do we understand how decisions are made on their side?
- ☐ Is this client aligned with our values, reputation, or market goals?

2 Project Fit & Strategic Alignment:

- ☐ Does this project align with the type of work we want to pursue?
- ☐ Will it strengthen our portfolio in a key sector, location, or service area?
- ☐ Does this move us toward our long-term strategic goals—or pull us off course?

3 Financial Considerations:

- ☐ Is the potential project budget within a viable range for us?
- ☐ Can we deliver this project profitably, given our current workload?
- ☐ Are we factoring in both direct costs and proposal development effort?



4 Team Capacity & Availability:

- ☐ Do we have the right team available to deliver this work well?
- ☐ Will pursuing this proposal compromise our ability to deliver on existing commitments?
- ☐ Can we realistically meet the proposal deadline without overextending the team?

5 Win Probability:

- ☐ Do we have a strong differentiator or unique value proposition for this opportunity?
- ☐ Do we know who we're competing against? If so, how do we compare?
- ☐ Do we have any influence or insight into the decision-making process?

6 Team Capacity & Availability:

- ☐ Are we saying "yes" to this because it's the right fit, or because it's available?
- ☐ Have we documented the rationale behind this decision (Go or No-Go)?
- ☐ Would we feel confident explaining this decision to leadership?

Resources: Further Reading and Tools to Support Your Go/No-Go Decision-Making Process

- [OpenAsset Resource Center](#)
- [How to Establish Your Go/No-Go Process](#)
- [Proposal Development Process: 11 Research-Backed Ways to Win More Work](#)
- [How to Develop Winning Architecture Proposals](#)
- [Proposal Management: What It Is, Key Skills + Best Practices](#)
- [Free Architecture Proposal Template: Win More Work](#)
- [Digital Asset Management: Your DAM Software Guide](#)
- [Building a DAM Business Case: Steps, ROI, and Stakeholder Buy-In](#)

Conclusion: Say Yes to the Work That Works for You

You don't need to chase every opportunity to win more work—you need to chase the right ones.

A strategic Go/No-Go process helps AEC teams protect their time, align around shared goals, and improve win rates without burning out. Whether it's a quick scorecard or a structured team conversation, the value is in pausing to decide before diving in.

Building a repeatable framework, looping in the right voices, and learning from past pursuits means your team can spend less time reacting and more time winning. Make your Go/No-Go process even more efficient and explore how [OpenAsset](#) helps proposal teams align faster with centralized access to approved visuals, resumes, and project data.

It's time to say “no” to make room for the right “yes.”

**See how OpenAsset supports faster,
smarter proposal decisions**

