

CHAPTER 2

Research Methodology

Performance specifications emphasize desired outcomes and results, challenging owners and their industry partners to think in terms of user needs and to recognize that more than one solution may achieve the project objectives. Incorporating such concepts into a specification represents a distinct departure from today's build-to-print culture and demands a new approach to specification writing, contract administration, and construction execution.

To help advance this new approach, the R07 research team developed guide specifications and associated implementation guidelines to support the application of performance specifications across a wide range of work and projects. In preparing these documents, the team focused its research efforts on addressing the following fundamental questions:

- What are performance specifications?
- How are effective performance specifications developed and drafted?
- Why use performance specifications?
- What are the risks associated with using performance specifications?
- When should performance specifications be used instead of method specifications?
- Who is affected by the implementation of performance specifications and how are they affected?

What Are Performance Specifications?

Context drives how performance specifications are defined within the construction industry. For example, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) describes a performance specification as one that

states requirements in terms of the required results and the criteria for verifying compliance, without specifically stating how the results are to be achieved. A performance specification

describes the functional requirements for an item, its capabilities, the environment in which it must operate, and any interface, interoperability, or compatibility requirements. It does not present a preconceived solution to a requirement. (DoD 2009)

In addition to addressing end-product performance, as contemplated by the DoD definition, requirements for a highway construction project could conceivably extend to project-related performance in terms of work zone management, safety, and timely completion. Postconstruction and operational performance, as found in warranties and maintenance agreements, also could be included.

The first task for the research team was therefore to conduct a comprehensive literature review to establish what the term *performance specifications* encompasses when applied to the highway construction industry.

Literature Review

To provide focus to the literature review, the team first determined which elements of a rapid renewal project would benefit from the development and implementation of performance specifications. Bearing in mind the objectives of rapid renewal (i.e., accelerated construction, minimal disruption, and long-life facilities), the team identified both physical products of construction (bridges, earthwork and geotechnical systems, and asphalt and concrete pavements) and project-level requirements (work zone management, public relations, quality indexing, and time incentives) as areas for possible application of performance specifications.

To provide additional structure to the literature review, the team also established baseline definitions (presented in Appendix B) of specification types and contracting methods that would fall under the umbrella term performance specifications. As described in Chapter 1, performance specifications may be viewed in terms of a continuum. Categorizing specifications (e.g., as end-result specifications or PRS) helps identify the

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