

What constitutes a satisfactory reference in connection with an application for licensure as a Professional Engineer, a Geotechnical Engineer, or a Structural Engineer?

a. PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS:

For a professional engineer applicant, a satisfactory reference is one that contains a positive response from the reference person, one that is completed fully and signed by both the applicant and the reference person, one that is completed by a person who is not a relative of the applicant, and one which meets the additional requirements indicated herein. **A "Not yet ready" response to the question, "Do you consider the applicant technically qualified to be licensed as a Professional Engineer?" is not considered a positive response from a reference when the application is evaluated and will result in that reference being considered as unsatisfactory.**

(1) CIVIL ENGINEER

In general, **civil engineer** applicants are required to provide references from licensed civil engineers or from persons otherwise authorized to practice civil engineering. Except for applicants with qualifying experience gained while in Federal employment, all civil engineer applicants verifying California work experience must provide references from persons who are licensed as civil engineers in California. Unlicensed persons or persons not licensed in the applicant's branch of engineering, who are completing reference forms for federal employees, should indicate their educational background or other information to signify their engineering qualifications. If a civil engineer applicant has had qualifying work experience outside of the United States, the references for that experience must be from persons authorized to practice civil engineering in accordance with the laws of the country in which the experience took place. If such references are not licensed engineers, they must provide information which indicates by what authority they are (or were) authorized to practice civil engineering in that country. For civil engineering work experience which was gained in California or any other place where such work is required to be under the jurisdiction of a licensed civil engineer, at least one of the applicants' licensed references must be from someone who is or was in responsible charge of the work done by the applicant for each engagement for which the applicant desires credit. An engagement not verified by a licensed civil engineer in responsible charge will be considered as either non-civil engineering experience or illegal civil engineering experience, and in either case, it will not be acceptable.

(2) **ELECTRICAL and MECHANICAL ENGINEER**

For **electrical and mechanical engineer** applicants who have worked in situations where they were not exempt from all licensing requirements, and for experience which has occurred in California, the reference forms must be signed by licensed engineers authorized to practice in the branch in which the applicant is applying.

In California, electrical and mechanical engineering work performed by employees of the Federal Government and employees of manufacturing, mining, public utility, research and development, or other industrial corporations **is exempt**, and thus, such employees may serve as references whether or not they are licensed as long as they are qualified to appraise the technical competency of the applicant. Typical examples of **exempt employers** would be aerospace companies, such as Boeing or McDonnell Douglas; public utilities, such as San Diego Gas & Electric or P.G.&E.; manufacturers of electrical or mechanical equipment such as Allen Bradley, Square D, Trane, or Carrier, etc. Examples of **non-exempt employers** include consulting electrical or mechanical engineering firms and state and local governments.

Also, since licensed civil engineers are authorized to practice electrical and mechanical engineering in connection with or supplementary to their civil engineering work, such engineers may serve as references.

If the applicant has worked in a **non-exempt** situation, and if the applicant does not know or has not worked with sufficient licensed engineers in his or her field to be able to procure the minimum number of appropriately licensed references, the applicant can solicit any appropriately licensed engineer to review her/his work samples (drawings, calculations, reports, etc.). Based on that review and a discussion with the applicant, such an engineer can then serve as a reference. The foregoing procedure is only permissible for supplementary references, and it is based on the assumption that the applicant's primary reference for an engagement is an licensed engineer in responsible charge of the applicant's work. If all else fails, the applicant should contact the Board for instructions on how to obtain licensed references. In no case, however, will references from unlicensed persons or references not licensed in the applicant's branch of engineering be accepted in lieu of references from appropriately licensed engineers, when the requirement for having licensed references applies (i.e., when the applicant has been working in a non-exempt area). Persons working in California in industry or otherwise covered by the exemptions need not submit references from licensed engineers but must submit sufficient references to cover the required period of experience. The determination as to whether or not the employment is exempt is based on whether or not the employer is a corporation and usually, but not always, whether or not the primary business activity of the corporation is the making of a product. Unlicensed persons or persons not licensed in the applicant's branch of engineering who are completing reference forms should indicate their educational background or other information to signify their engineering qualifications.

(3) OTHER BRANCHES OF PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS

For applicants applying for licensure in any of the other branches of professional engineering, all references should be from engineers, scientists, or technical persons who meet the satisfactory reference requirements described herein. Since these other branches are not practice regulated, anyone is authorized to practice in those branches, and thus anyone can serve as a reference. However, the reference must have sufficient knowledge of the applicant's engineering specialty to be able to make knowledgeable comments about the applicant's performance of their engineering work.

For an applicant verifying experience that has occurred in another state, and where the applicant's experience did not fall under any of the exemptions existing in that state, the reference forms must be signed by a professional engineer authorized to practice in the state where the experience occurred. Applicants claiming to have worked under an exemption in another state shall indicate and provide the basis for that exemption.

The Board will accept valid references from individuals licensed or legally authorized to practice outside the U.S. if the applicant has had experience in another country. Applicants verifying experience in another country should use reference persons who are authorized to practice in that country.

b. GEOTECHNICAL ENGINEER

For a geotechnical engineer applicant, a satisfactory reference is one that contains a positive response from the reference person, is completed by a person who is not a relative of the applicant, is completed fully and signed by both the applicant and reference, and meets the additional requirements indicated herein. **A "No" or "Don't know" response to the question, "Do you consider the applicant technically qualified to be licensed as a Geotechnical Engineer?" is not considered a positive response from a reference when the application is evaluated and will result in that reference being considered as unsatisfactory.** References from persons licensed as civil engineers in another state may be offered in addition to the required California civil engineer references to supplement the applicant's experience verification.

The Board will accept valid references from individuals licensed or legally authorized to practice outside the U.S. if the applicant has had experience in another country. Applicants verifying experience in another country should use reference persons who are authorized to practice in that country.

c. STRUCTURAL ENGINEER

For a structural engineer applicant, a satisfactory reference is one from a person who holds the structural engineer authority license in California or in another state for work done in that state, is one that contains a positive response from the reference person, is completed by a person who is not a relative of the applicant, is completed fully and signed by both the applicant and reference, and meets the additional requirements indicated herein. **An "I don't know" response from a reference to the question, "Do you consider the applicant technically qualified to be licensed as a Structural Engineer?" is not considered a**

positive response when the application is evaluated and will result in that reference being considered as unsatisfactory. If the applicant does not know or has not worked with sufficient licensed structural engineers to be able to procure the minimum number of appropriate references, the applicant should review the instructions that are available on the structural engineer application page of the Board's website or contact the Board for instructions on how to obtain the required references. In no case will references from persons licensed as only civil engineers in another state or country or from persons who are licensed as only civil engineers in California be accepted in lieu of the minimum of three references from appropriately licensed structural engineers. Such references may be offered in addition to the required references, however, to supplement the applicant's experience verification.

The Board will accept valid references from individuals licensed outside the U.S. if the applicant has had experience in another country. However, such references would be considered to be supplementary, and would have to be in addition to the three references from Structural Engineers licensed in California or in the state in which the work was performed.

In addition to whichever of the above apply, to be satisfactory, a reference person must also be able to indicate that his or her evaluation of the applicant is based upon personal knowledge, either gained by direct association in the work environment or by a review of sufficient and diverse work samples and an interview of the applicant. It is the applicants' responsibility to demonstrate their qualifications to the person who will be completing the reference form. Toward that end, in general, the Board considers references in the following descending order of preference:

- (1) immediate supervisors/individuals in responsible charge of the work
- (2) indirect supervisors
- (3) co-workers at an equal or higher level
- (4) co-workers not closely associated with the applicant
- (5) clients/others

In the case of an applicant whose experience appears to be marginal, or where there is a conflict between reference evaluations of the applicant, more weight will be given to reference sources who were in the best position to have personal knowledge of the applicant's qualifying experience (i.e., immediate supervisor, etc.).