

The Bid Margin Scorecard

A 15-minute risk-adjusted margin assessment for any prospective bid over \$5M.

For mid-market energy-infrastructure contractors building utility-scale renewables, T&D, substations, data-center electrical, and BESS.

How to use this scorecard

1. Pull up the bid you're evaluating (or the most recent bid you walked away from)
2. Answer the 12 questions in the companion Excel/Sheets template
3. The template auto-calculates a risk-adjusted margin estimate and a go/no-go score
4. Score under 40 = walk away. 40-65 = bid with extra contingency. 65+ = bid normally.

The scorecard does not replace your full estimating process. It is a

pre-bid sanity check

— a 15-minute filter to surface margin risk you might be ignoring.

The 12 questions

1. Customer-mix risk

Have you completed a project for this customer before? - Yes, multiple — they pay on time, COs are reasonable (+10) - Yes, once — pay was OK, no major drama (+5) - No, but they're a known industry name (0) - No, and they're new to large-scale work (-10)

2. Geography risk

Have you self-performed work in this state in the last 24 months? - Yes, multiple projects (+5) - Yes, one project (0) - No, but you have crew willing to travel (-5) - No, and you'd need to hire local (-10)

3. Prevailing wage / labor compliance

What's the labor classification? - Open shop, no PW exposure (+5) - Federal Davis-Bacon, you've handled it before (0) - State PW (Cal-OSHA, NY, IL, etc.), you've handled it before (-2) - State PW, you have NOT handled it before (-10)

4. Materials lead-time risk

For your top 3 long-lead items on this project, are current vendor lead-times within historical baseline? - Yes, all 3 (+10) - 2 of 3 (+0) - 1 of 3 (-10) - None (-20)

5. Crew availability

Will you need new crew (internal hire or sub) to staff this project on the proposed schedule? - No, existing crews can absorb (+5) - Some — 1-2 new positions or a known sub (0) - Significant — multiple new hires or unknown sub (-10) - Yes, you'd need to grow headcount 20%+ (-15)

6. Concurrent project load

How many active projects will overlap with this one in months 1-6? - 1-3 (no resource collision) (+5) - 4-7 (manageable, requires coordination) (0) - 8-12 (real strain) (-10) - 13+ (you're saturating) (-20)

7. Change-order pattern

For projects with this customer or in this market, what's the typical CO frequency? - Low (<5% of contract value) (+5) - Medium (5-15%) (0) - High (15-30%) (-5) - Customer is known for unbilled change demands (-15)

8. Margin-erosion baseline

For your last 3 projects of similar type/size, what's the average margin variance from bid? - +0% to +5% (you bid accurately) (+5) - -1% to -3% (typical drift) (0) - -4% to -8% (real erosion) (-10) - -9%+ (this is a pattern, not noise) (-15)

9. IRA/PTC/ITC qualification

If this project qualifies for tax credits, are you fully versed in the credit-stacking and domestic-content requirements? - Yes, our team has done it before (+5) - Partial — we'll need outside counsel (0) - No — we're learning on this project (-10) - N/A — project doesn't qualify (0)

10. Subcontractor depth

For the major subcontracted scopes, do you have at least 2 qualified subs willing to bid? - Yes, all major scopes (+5) - Most, but 1 scope is single-source (-2) - Multiple single-source scopes (-10) - You have 1 sub for everything and they're booked (-20)

11. Schedule risk

Is the customer's required completion date within your normal cadence for this project size, or are they pushing? - Comfortable timeline (+5) - Tight but doable (0) - Tight, requires overtime baseline (-10) - Unrealistic — you'd need to bake LD risk in (-15)

12. Bonding capacity

Will this project consume more than 25% of your remaining bonding capacity? - No, comfortable headroom (+5) - Yes, but cycle of completion is short (0) - Yes, and it ties up capacity for 18+ months (-10)

Scoring

Total your points across all 12 questions. The companion Excel/Sheets template does this automatically.

Score	Recommendation
65 to 100	BID — this is in your zone. Standard contingency.
40 to 64	BID with caution — add 4-8% contingency above your baseline. Identify which questions scored low and mitigate those.
0 to 39	WALK AWAY — risk-adjusted margin will not be positive. The bid effort is better spent elsewhere.
Below 0	NEVER bid this — the structural risk exceeds any reasonable margin.

What this scorecard does NOT replace

- A full estimating process with takeoffs, unit pricing, and burdened labor
- Bond underwriting
- A go/no-go conversation with your project executive
- Risk-allocation review with legal/insurance

The scorecard is the **15-minute filter** that runs

before

the full estimating effort. Its job is to kill bad bids early, not to price the good ones.

What's next

If you want this discipline running across all your active projects (not just bids), the same methodology applied to in-flight work surfaces \$500K-\$3M of margin recovery per year for a \$50M-revenue contractor.

That's what The Margin Map™ does. [Book a 30-minute call](#) to see if it's a fit.

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