

A **Scope of Works (SoW)** is one of the most important documents in any building project in South Africa.

It defines *exactly* what is to be built, how it must be done, and what standards apply—removing ambiguity between client, contractor, and subcontractors.

What a Scope of Works actually does

At its core, a Scope of Works:

- Describes the **full extent of the project**
- Specifies **materials, finishes, and workmanship standards**
- Defines **who is responsible for what**
- Sets **quality benchmarks and compliance requirements** (e.g. SANS 10400)

Without it, a project relies on **assumptions**—which is where problems begin.

Why it is critically important

1. Prevents disputes and “grey areas”

A proper SoW eliminates phrases like:

- “I thought that was included”
- “That wasn’t priced for”

👉 It creates a **contractual baseline**, which is essential if disputes arise.

2. Protects your money (client side)

- Ensures you only pay for **work that is clearly defined and completed**
- Prevents contractors from charging for “extras” that should have been included
- Links directly to **progress payments and final payment protection**

👉 This is especially important when managing snagging vs final payment

3. Ensures quality and compliance

A good SoW specifies:

- Material standards (e.g. concrete strength, block type)
- Installation methods
- Compliance with regulations like SANS 10400 and so on

👉 Without this, contractors may legally use cheaper or substandard alternatives

4. Enables **accurate pricing** (no hidden surprises)

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to ensure total customer satisfaction and deliver on promises made.

To provide professional services of the highest quality as per quotations submitted.

Contractors can only price properly when:

- Quantities are clear
- Specifications are defined

👉 Poor scope = **cheap quote upfront** → **expensive variations later**

5. Defines roles and responsibilities

Clarifies:

- Who supplies materials
- Who handles approvals and inspections
- Who is liable for defects

👉 Prevents finger-pointing between contractor, subcontractors, and client

6. Controls variations and changes

Any deviation from the Scope:

- Must be **formally approved**
- Must be **costed before work proceeds**

👉 This is your main defence against **budget blowouts**

7. Critical for legal enforceability

If a dispute escalates (lawyer, adjudication, or court):

- The SoW becomes **primary evidence**
- Works alongside your building contract

👉 A vague scope = a weak legal position

What a strong Scope of Works should include

A proper South African SoW typically covers:

- **Site works** (clearing, levels, compaction)
- **Foundations & slabs** (thickness, reinforcement, concrete spec)
- **Superstructure** (blockwork, brickwork, lintels)
- **Roofing** (structure, covering, insulation)
- **Windows & doors** (type, installation)
- **Finishes** (plaster, paint, tiling, ceilings)
- **Services** (plumbing, electrical)
- **External works** (paving, drainage)
- **Standards & compliance** (e.g. SANS 10400)
- **Snagging and defects period**

Real-world risks of NOT having one

Without a proper SoW, you risk:

- Budget overruns of **20–50%+**
- Inferior workmanship
- Endless disputes over “extras”
- Delays due to unclear deliverables
- Weak position in payment disputes

✓ Bottom line

A Scope of Works is not just paperwork—it is:

👉 Your financial control tool

👉 Your quality control system

👉 Your legal protection

WHO can benefit from a Scope of works?

- **A Building contractor** prior to quotation
 - The contractor can call for a Scope of Works to support and clarify his Quotation.
 - This ensures all tenders are based on apples for apples.
 - Contractor has a contractual form indicating what needs to be included / excluded
- **A Client when requesting** quotations from builders –
 - Ensures all Tenders are based on the same criteria – thereby making it easier to adjudicate.
 - Ensures the client has a step-by-step road map of what is expected and when.
 - Sets out expected payment schedules and triggers.
 - Clearly defines what would be an “EXTRA” and what should be included.
 - Provides a contractual document that can be used in arbitration or court should a disagreement arise.
 - It would be highly likely that the client will recover the cost of the Scope of Work many times over during the build process.