

Tips for Hiring an Environmental Consultant

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The 1990 Clean Air Act Amendments affect Wisconsin businesses of every size. Where can you go for help if your business must comply with air pollution rules and regulations? Some businesses will attempt to figure out the rules, regulations, and forms on their own. Other businesses may turn to an environmental consultant.

An environmental consultant can help you understand state and federal air requirements. Consultants may also help you estimate emissions, complete air permit applications, or develop permitting strategies. Few businesses question the need for improved air quality, but many question how they are affected by air regulations and what they must do to comply. It is the consultant's job to answer your questions and provide cost-efficient solutions.

Where to Find an Environmental Consultant

If you decide to seek the services of an environmental consultant, where do you find one?

- ✓ Network with other businesses like yours. Find out who has used a consultant. Ask for the consultant's contact information. Did the consultant do a good job? Would the person use them again?
- ✓ Contact your trade association, Chamber of Commerce, or the Better Business Bureau.
- ✓ Look in the Yellow Pages under consultants, attorneys (some lawyers specialize in environmental law and offer consulting services), or environmental services.
- ✓ Use the Federation of Environmental Technologists (FET) membership directory, which lists environmental consultants. Membership includes consultants trained in air permitting and environmental regulations. You can contact FET at 262-437-1700 or <http://www.fetinc.org/>.
- ✓ Use the Small Business Environmental Assistance Program (SBEAP) Clean Air Consultant Listing (<https://dnr.wi.gov/files/pdf/pubs/sb/sb004.pdf>).
- ✓ Use the American Council of Engineering Companies of Wisconsin (ACEC, Inc.) directory of environmental consulting firms and their specialties. Contact ACEC, Inc. at 608-257-9223 or <http://www.acecwi.org/>.

Contact several consultants and request a project proposal including qualifications, references, scope of services, and fees to complete the project. Remember, you are putting your business into the consultant's hands. Look for a reputable environmental consultant you feel comfortable with and can trust.

What to Look for in an Environmental Consultant

While the cost of a consultant is an important concern, the least expensive consultant may not always offer the best value or be right for your business. This is especially true as the number of environmental regulations affecting small businesses increases.

Consultants may not have direct experience or specific training in the area your business needs. Some issues to consider when choosing a consultant:

Consider Compatibility

- Has the consultant worked with your type of business before?
- Some regulations and deadlines vary from county to county. Does the consultant have experience in your county?
- Does the consultant have experience with your types of pollutants or your specific area of concern?
- Can the consultant communicate with you in a clear manner?

Consider Credibility

- What kind of reputation does the consultant have?
- Does the consultant have solid references?
- Does the consultant have experience with Wisconsin's regulatory agencies?
- How many years has the consultant been in business?
- Does the consultant belong to any professional associations?



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- What type of training, certifications, licenses, and/or registration does the consultant have? What is the consultant's educational background?
- Does the consultant have experience with EPA Region V's Air Compliance and Enforcement Division?

Consider Cost-Effectiveness

- Are the consultant's fees in your price range?
- Do you understand what you're paying for?
- Can you get assistance from some other source?
- Has the consultant provided a detailed a scope of services? Is the scope of work complete?
- If DNR needs more information after the permit application has been prepared, will it cost more money for the consultant to provide it?

Questions to ask an Environmental Consultant

Call several consultants. Don't hesitate to ask questions. Talk to the person with whom you'll be working, not to a marketing or sales person. Ask the same questions of every consultant.

Basic questions could include:

- √ What kind of training, experience, education or certification does your firm have?
- √ Have you helped businesses similar to mine in the past? How many? How long ago?
- √ Have you helped other businesses in this area (i.e., permitting, emission control)?
- √ Have you taken training courses on air permitting?
- √ How many permit applications have you prepared?
- √ Can I get a list of references from you?
- √ What are your contract terms and provisions? How are your fees negotiated?
- √ How long will it take to complete this work?
- √ Will you do a site visit of my business?
- √ How many visits to my business will you require?
- √ What guarantee will you give me to ensure that your services will be accurate and adequate to bring my business into compliance?

- √ Do you have professional liability insurance? If yes, does it cover pollution-related claims? Who is the insurer?
- √ Does your firm have a certified lab to handle stack/effluent/soil testing samples?
- √ How much will this project cost me?
- √ How much of my time will you require? What responsibilities will be required of me?
- √ Who will be assigned to my project? What are his or her credentials?

Establishing a Contract with an Environmental Consultant

A contract between you and the consultant may be a formal detailed document or a simple letter of agreement. Either way, all agreements must be in writing! Contracts should specify who will do what, how tasks will be done, and when work will be completed. Determine in advance how any follow-up requests for information will be handled. Be sure that both parties sign the contract. Some other considerations when preparing a contract:

- √ spell out the exact nature of the work expected
- √ clearly state the method of determining fees for services and any anticipated expenses, (i.e., hourly compensation, lump sum per project, standard prices for a particular service, etc.)
- √ clearly state the method and schedule for payment (one lump sum, several payments over time, monthly as work is completed, etc.)
- √ ask questions if you do not understand any part of the contract
- √ ask whether requests for follow-up information will result in any charges

In your contract, consider including insurance requirements for Commercial General Liability (CGL), Business Automotive Liability, Workers Compensation and Professional Liability insurance.

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