



Choosing an Environmental Consultant

This fact sheet offers information on finding an environmental consultant. While the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) cannot recommend any specific consultant, we can provide information on how to select a consultant that is right for you.

Why do I need an environmental consultant?

Managing risks to human health or the environment can be complicated. You may need a consultant to help identify and understand hazards and applicable laws or regulations to help design solutions to prevent or mitigate harm.

Who are environmental consultants and what do they do?

Environmental consultants specialize in certain areas such as contaminated land, water, odor, permitting, engineering, sampling and testing, waste management, abatement, assessment/investigation, and cleanup. Some consultants manage all aspects of a client's needs while others only perform single tasks. Other consultants hire subcontractors or act as brokers. Due to the variety of consulting firms available, it is important to know how to find a firm to best meet your needs.

Finding an environmental consultant

In order to find a consultant, first determine what type of work you need done. The work might include the following:

- Property transaction investigation (e.g., phase 1, phase 2)
- Site assessment and investigation
- Petroleum spill cleanup
- Asbestos abatement and removal
- Underground storage tank testing and removal
- Lead paint testing and removal
- Hazardous material spill cleanup (e.g., mercury, solvents)
- Air/water/soil sampling and monitoring
- Laboratory testing and analysis
- Professional design and engineering
- Site remediation and cleanup
- Hazardous waste management or disposal
- Regulatory assistance
- Employee safety and environmental training

Look for consultants with considerable experience in the area of work you need. Search online under Idaho environmental consultants and/or engineers (or a neighboring state for a larger selection). Use general terms like "environmental compliance consultant" or "environmental assistance." If you need specific tasks, (e.g., groundwater monitoring, hazardous waste disposal) search for companies using those specific terms. You can also search for Idaho professional geologists or engineers to find qualified individuals. Ask other businesses or organizations for recommendations. Companies with similar operations to yours may give you valuable insights into consultants they have used.

Engaging environmental consultants

Business owners and operators remain responsible for environmental compliance even when contractors perform work. To ensure that you meet regulatory requirements, hire a consultant who is capable of doing quality work and will follow all applicable regulations. Here are some tips to ensure that you get the best possible service:

- Provide a clear scope of what is required for the job so the consultant can give you an accurate quote.
- Request quotes/bids from multiple consultants. Keep in mind that environmental investigations often turn up new information that may change cost and timeline for the project. A low bid does not always mean that the final cost will be cheapest. A well-prepared consultant may have a higher bid but could save you money in the long run.
- Request a detailed description of the consultant's proposal, including team members, schedule, itemized costs, experience, and health and safety procedures.
- Ask the consultant to provide proof of their insurance (e.g., professional liability insurance).
- Request a list of similar projects and check with companies who had similar work done.
- Read the fine print on the quote, get legal advice, and schedule an in-person meeting with the proposed project manager before signing an agreement.

Ask potential consultants about the following issues:

- Do they have a thorough understanding of the applicable environmental laws and rules?
- Have they previously worked with DEQ? If so, what specific projects or activities and what was the outcome?
- Are they experienced in the type of work you need done? Some consultants advertise a range of skills but are experts in only a few areas.
- Will the company perform the work or does it hire subcontractors? Is the company a broker? Discuss ahead of time and make sure that subcontractors have been vetted.

Look out for the following red flags:

- Is the bid significantly lower than those of competing firms?
- Does the consultant have adequate experience to minimize or maximize potential technical or legal problems?
- Do they have a one-size fits all approach? Environmental projects can be complex. It's important to choose a consultant who can provide options to meet your needs.
- Are there conflicts of interest?
- Are their timelines overly optimistic? Choose a consultant who is ready to handle changes.

For more information

For specific regulatory questions, contact the DEQ Waste Management and Remediation Division at (208) 373-0502 or the regional remediation manager at your nearest DEQ regional office:

- Boise: (208) 373-0550
- Coeur d'Alene: (208) 769-1422
- Idaho Falls: (208) 528-2650
- Lewiston: (208) 799-4370
- Pocatello: (208) 236-6160
- Twin Falls: (208) 736-2190