

## Selecting an Environmental Consultant



State of Oregon  
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Environmental  
Quality

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### Welcome

Welcome to DEQ's Environmental Cleanup Program. This fact sheet offers tips on how to choose an environmental consultant to help you address your property's cleanup issues. Asking questions and checking references is essential.

A competent consultant will help you define the problem and develop protective solutions that comply with environmental regulations and are cost effective.

Your consulting team should have:

- A thorough understanding of Oregon's environmental cleanup law and rules.
- Experience in projects that are similar to yours in scope and nature.
- Excellent communication skills, both verbal and written.

### Where to begin

Compile all the information you can about the property, including a history of site operations, potential sources of contamination, and company records on where and how hazardous substances have been used and/or stored. Prepare a brief written description of the site, including current use and work you think is needed. Providing as much information as you can allows consulting firms to give you more accurate estimates. This can save you time and money. While DEQ cannot recommend specific consultants, it can give you references from other cleanup projects.

The firm you select must demonstrate not only that it is capable, but also that it has qualified staff available at the time you want the work done. Ask the consulting firm to estimate the time needed to complete required work and how they might phase the work to fit your site budget and plans. Keep in mind that environmental investigations often turn up new information that may change the work scope.

### Questions for prospective consultants

You may want to ask prospective consultants questions, such as:

- Names of companies they have worked for, and how similar the projects are to yours.

- How much work was subcontracted and to which firms? Would they use them again?
- Did they encounter unexpected delays or staff turnover? How was this handled?
- Did they complete the project on time and within budget?
- What is their experience in working with DEQ or other regulators?
- What potential impact will the cleanup have on customers, neighbors, or traffic?

### Check references!

Checking references is probably the most important part of the selection process. Before choosing a consulting firm, it's critical to talk with businesses the firm cites as references.

Some questions to ask include:

- Were you satisfied with your consultant's work?
- Did you have any concerns about the firm's performance or fees?
- Did DEQ issue any enforcement notices (warning letters or notices of noncompliance) because of the work performed?
- Which specific staff members were on your team?
- Was your project completed on time and within budget?
- Did you encounter any unexpected delays or staff turnover? If so, were these handled to your satisfaction?
- Did the firm have to "re-do" any part of your project that wasn't done right the first time?

### Request proposals

Ask for proposals from firms or individuals that seem to best meet your needs. Proposals should include a scope of work, staff resumes, estimated work schedules, anticipated costs/ fees, estimated total project costs with an itemized fee schedule, and references. Make sure the estimated work schedule also includes time for DEQ review and approval. In reviewing proposals, look out for:

- Bids that are significantly lower than those of competing firms.
- “Hard sell” approaches.
- **Minimizing or maximizing potential technical or legal problems.**
- Strong biases against certain investigation techniques or cleanup alternatives.
- Conflicts of interest.
- Overly optimistic timelines.

Interviewing prospective consultants, checking their references, and reviewing the proposals will help you make an informed decision about which consultant to hire for your project.

### **Alternative formats**

Documents can be provided upon request in an alternate format for individuals with disabilities or in a language other than English for people with limited English skills. To request a document in another format or language, call DEQ in Portland at 503-229-5696, or toll-free in Oregon at 1-800-452-4011, ext. 5696; or email [deqinfo@deq.Oregon.gov](mailto:deqinfo@deq.Oregon.gov).