



How Do I Choose an Air Quality Consultant?



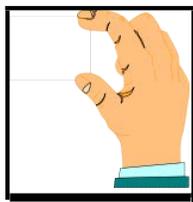
When Do I Need a Consultant?

When is the right time to turn to a consultant to help with obtaining an air quality permit? The most common time for businesses to decide to seek external assistance is when their company does not have the internal resources to address the issue. A consultant is often used to review operations or discuss the impact of regulations in the early stages of a project.

Most often, consultants are used to:

- Supplement existing staff on a very narrow issue such as air permitting.
- Provide technical or regulatory analyses necessary to obtain an air quality permit.
- Develop alternatives and make recommendations as a project is being developed.
- Complete a one-time project in a jurisdiction where the company may not have experience but the consultant does.
- Assist with selection, purchase, installation and start-up of pollution control equipment.
- Complete tasks such as facility audits, regulatory reporting, permit applications, analytical testing, employee training, etc.
- Expedite the permitting process.
- Negotiate permit conditions.
- Provide very specific expertise related to the development and preparation of an air quality permit.

Consultants are available to give your business an objective and impartial review, evaluation or solution to your problem through specialization in the area of permitting. It can be a mistake to use a familiar consultant in one area of your business and try to engage their assistance in obtaining an air quality permit when their experience is limited. With the right guidance from your company's management, a quality consultant can address both the current and future needs of your business as you move from project conception to design, permitting, construction and compliant operation.



Selection

Choosing the right air quality consultant is not an easy task because each service provider will approach your particular project with a unique perspective based on the varying degrees of his/her expertise and the experience of the consulting firm. Some of these consultants are "full service" consultants in that they offer a wide range of services, while others specialize in more defined niche areas such as air quality permitting, ground/water contamination and remediation or underground storage tank removal and clean up. Keep in mind that your company's management will define the consultant's role through its project objectives and company operations.

Before selecting a consultant, develop a preliminary list of consultants through:

- Referrals from friends or associates in industries similar to yours.
- Local/regional trade associations or your own legal counsel.

Once you have obtained a list of potential service providers, **conduct a preliminary survey** of each consultant to find out which one can best service your business. Besides asking several questions pertaining specifically to your project's objective, you should also ask:

- Whether the firm is licensed to practice engineering in the State of Arizona and has licensed, professional experience in the areas of expertise required.
- Whether the consulting firm has successfully completed a project similar to yours, and if staff familiar with the project will be assigned to yours.
- What are the quality control/assurance measures the consulting firm will use to guarantee that a pollutant's emission/dispersion calculations are accurate and complete?
- How the consultant's management is structured and the type of management style to be implemented for a project such as yours (i.e., use of senior-level staff, junior-level staff, or a combination thereof).
- The type of working relationship the consulting firm has with the Maricopa County Air Quality Department.

Close the preliminary contact with each consultant by requesting that each potential service provider **send a description of the consulting firm to you** including the wording and terms of their standard service agreements, billing, licenses, registrations, insurance and liability coverage, relationship to the client if subcontractors are used, and certifications and awards. Include the background experience and qualifications of the team members who may be working on your project and a reference list of previous clients who commissioned work similar to what you want accomplished at your company. It is also important to request the same information from each consultant so you can make a uniform comparison of services between firms.

Once you have established your "short list" of consulting firms, the next step is to **request a proposal** from your top ranked firms or submit your own proposal for services. A proposal is a document that clearly delineates what services will be provided. The proposal should be tailored to address the specific needs of your business and clearly state the paths that will be taken to arrive at a remedy. The proposal should itemize the costs involved for both an anticipated personnel commitment, equipment to be used, as well as other miscellaneous incidentals such as photocopying and postage. The proposal should also include a time frame for project "milestones" (e.g., accomplishments for project stages or requirement deadlines).

When reviewing the proposal, you should keep in mind that the lowest cost or "bottom line" of a proposal may not always give you the best results. The management of a business must review each proposal and weigh the merits of each proposal independently of one another. Beware of hidden costs; although a consulting firm might appear to be lower in cost, it may bill your company extra for outside services (e.g., laboratory analyses, travel, telephone costs, computer time, photocopies, subcontracted work, and other such "reimbursables") which were not included in the original proposal bid. If you have questions about whether your needs are being met in the proposal, contact the potential consultant for more definitive answers. Finally, you should send a short notification letter to those consultants who submitted proposals and whose services you have declined to use.



Managing the Consultant

Once the contract has been signed and the project is underway, it is important that the management in your company take a proactive role with the consultant. To best assist the consultant, you or your company's designee must cooperate with the consulting staff by forwarding records upon request; allowing access to facilities, machinery, and information; assisting in the problem-solving process as needed; and reviewing and commenting on preliminary and progress reports as soon as possible.

Remember, the consultant's role is to aid you in achieving and maintaining compliance. Ultimately, the responsibility for maintaining compliance with all of your company's environmental requirements rests with you, not the consultant.

Finally, here are some additional tips to ensure smooth progress on your environmental project while maintaining an open line of communication between you and your environmental consultant:

- Require the consultant to notify you when certain stages or milestones of your project have been completed, and when they will be interacting with the regulatory agency.
- Provide comments and input on draft permits when presented to the consultant.
- Require the consultant to bill you at regular intervals and pay only for completed work.
- Establish an understanding with the consultant that you expect a level of both professional and quality work.

Keep in mind that you are the client, and only you can evaluate what will work for your company. The consultant's job is to make technical recommendations on a project. In the end, it is you who must make the final decision. Remember, reporting and compliance obligations are the responsibility of your business; but with careful selection and management, the right air quality consultant can best help you meet those obligations.