# Tips for Hiring an Environmental Consultant

Many businesses question how they are affected by air regulations and what they must do to comply. An environmental consultant can help you understand state, local, and federal air pollution control requirements. Consultants may also help you estimate emissions, complete air permit applications, or develop permitting strategies. 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.
- Do online searches through sites such as Google, Bing, etc.

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. When choosing a consultant:

### Consider Compatibility

- Has the consultant worked with your type of business before?
- Do they provide Environmental Consulting and Environmental Engineering services?
- 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 Iowa's regulatory agencies?
- How many years has the consultant been in business?
- Does the consultant belong to any professional associations?
- What type of training, certifications, licenses, and/or registration does the consultant have?
- What is the consultant's background?

### 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 the DNR needs more information after the permit application has been prepared, will it cost more money for the consultant to provide it?

Adapted from Wisconsin Department of Commerce – Small Business Clear Air Assistance Program "Tips for Hiring an Environmental Consultant"

## 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 much will this project cost me?
- 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?
- Does your firm have the ability to conduct air dispersion modeling if required?
- How much of my time will you require? What responsibilities will be required of me?
- Who will be assigned to my project? Will more than one person work on my project?
- What are his/her/their credentials? Do those people work in this state or are they located in another state?

## 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, certain standard prices for a particular service, etc)
- Clearly state the method and schedule for payment (one lump sum, several payments over time)
- Ask questions if you do not understand any part of the contract
- Ask whether requests for follow-up information will result in any charges
- Determine if insurance requirements should be included (might include Commercial General Liability (CGL), Workers Compensation and Professional Liability insurance).