

# Determining an OHS Service Provider's Qualifications

Once you find an Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) service provider who offers the services you require, their qualifications and services should be evaluated to ensure they meet your needs. To help you with your assessment, a series of evaluation questions are listed below.

Please note that many qualifications are specific to individual persons, not to companies. It is important to assess the qualifications of the person who will be working on your specific project.

If you need help in interpreting the meaning of the various qualifications, please contact the service provider directly or call the Workers Compensation Board's Occupational Health and Safety Division at 1-800-237-5049 or 902-368-5697.

## Evaluation Questions

1. What are the service provider's qualifications? Do the qualifications relate specifically to the work you want done or simply to a closely related area? Does an independent group attest to the qualifications?
2. How many years has the service provider been active in occupational health and safety consulting? How many years have they been active in the specific area you are interested in?
3. Who have been the service provider's last five clients in this area? *This question has an advantage over the traditional "list of references" question in that it lists all clients, not only those who will provide a positive reference. Please note that this client list may not be available if the client has requested that the information be kept confidential.*
4. Is the service provider associated with the manufacture or sale of a product or service that could possibly be a conflict of interest with their consulting activities?
5. What special conferences or symposia have they attended in the field of interest? When were these events?
6. What professional associations do they belong to? What is their present grade of membership and length of time in that grade for each association?
7. What test methods does the service provider use? Preferably, the test methods would be ones produced by recognized agencies, such as:
  - The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), a branch of the U.S. government
  - The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), a branch of the U.S. government
  - Other jurisdictions within Canada such as Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia
  - Other countries such as the Health and Safety Executive in Great Britain
  - Methods produced by consensus agencies such as the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM)

*For more information on proper testing protocols, please call the Workers Compensation Board's Occupational Health and Safety Division at 1-800-237-5049 or 902-368-5697.*

8. What laboratories do they use for sample analysis? Are they accredited by the American Industrial Hygiene Association? Do they participate in NIOSH's Proficiency Analytical Testing (PAT) program? For what materials?
  9. What are the character and extent of reports that they prepare? Can they supply a sample?
  10. Can they refer you to engineering or similar firms who can install any controls that may be needed as a result of their investigations? Do they have any business connections with these firms?
  11. What is their fee structure? Do they charge by the hour or day? By the total job? How do they treat expenses such as travel, lodging, shipping, report writing, computer time? Do they mark up third party charges such as laboratory fees or fees of other consultants?
  12. Are their cost estimates binding?
  13. What insurance and bonding do they have?
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## Defining the Work to be Completed

Once you have found one or more service providers who can do the work for you, you will need to define precisely the type of work that will be done. One of the best tools to accomplish this task is to have the service provider prepare a project proposal for your review. The proposal should discuss the following:

- The cost. At this point, it should be made clear if this estimate is binding or not.
  - A description of the work. Depending upon the specific job, this section may range from a simple commitment to study the problem to a detailed plan of action. Wherever possible though, details of sample types and methods should be outlined. Also, the standards by which the results will be evaluated should be set out here.
  - The end result. This is usually a written report detailing the service provider's work, findings and recommendations. If you do not wish to pay for a written report, specify this in advance. Please note, report recommendations often call for construction to be carried out by others, whose work is not subject to the service provider's control and results usually cannot be guaranteed. Rather, an estimate of the results to be attained is all that can be expected.
  - Timeline. The service provider should state when the work will start and stop, when the final report can be expected and whether a draft report will be submitted for review before the final report.
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**If you have any questions about determining an OHS service provider's qualifications, please contact Workers Compensation Board's Occupational Health and Safety Division at 1-800-237-5049 or 902-368-5697.**

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