



SELECTING AN ENGINEERING CONSULTANT FOR A RURAL WATER PIPELINE PROJECT

*Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's Prairie Farm
Rehabilitation Administration (AAFC - PFRA)
works to support a sustainable rural economy,
environment and lifestyle.*

*Rural water pipelines are one of the ways
that PFRA assists prairie people.*

Why Hire an Engineering Consultant?

Before construction of a rural water pipeline project can proceed, detailed design drawings and specifications describing the work are required to provide a basis for tendering the project and selecting a contractor. Often, drawings of proposed works must be submitted to various government departments many months in advance in order to obtain certain approvals prior to construction. Clients want assurance from a knowledgeable professional that their proposed system will function properly. In fact, engineering consultants perform a wide range of services to assist clients in turning ideas or concepts into successful working projects.

How to Select an Engineering Consultant:

There are two main processes for selecting an engineering consultant:

Informal Process:

- The client requests a quote from one or two engineering consultants based on a verbal or brief written description of the work.
- The client hires the consultant directly upon receipt of an acceptable quote.
- This process usually works best when the service to be provided by the consultant is relatively straightforward and the cost is acceptable.

Formal Process:

- Written proposals are received from engineering consultants in response to a "Request for Proposals."
- The Request for Proposals should include Terms of Reference that adequately describe the main areas of work that are envisioned (i.e. preliminary design, detailed design, construction and post-construction services).
- Responses can be solicited through advertising or invitation, but a minimum of two or three proposals should be obtained.
- In the proposals, the engineering consultants are expected to describe:
 - their understanding of the client's requirements,
 - their approach to meeting those requirements,
 - the background and experience of the personnel that will be involved,
 - a schedule of activities, and
 - the fee that will be charged.

Formal Process (cont'd):

- The proposals should be rated by the client according to a formal set of rating criteria that are developed as part of the Request for Proposals. The following should all be indicated in the advertisement or invitation:
 - the rating criteria,
 - the number of copies of the proposal required,
 - a return address, and
 - a fixed deadline for receipt of proposals.
- Sample *Terms of Reference and Rating Criteria* can be found in the PFRA Rural Water Pipeline Handbook for Alberta available at local PFRA offices.

Points to consider when choosing the Informal Process:

- If time is a factor, the informal process of selecting a consultant can be completed in as little as a few days.
- Although the anticipated work may appear to be relatively straightforward, misinterpretations about what is “included” and what is “not included” can still occur. Terms of Reference agreed upon at the outset (as suggested for the formal process) can assist in avoiding some of these issues.

Points to consider when choosing the Formal Process:

- A reasonable length of time of three to four weeks must be allowed for the engineering consultants to prepare and return the proposals.
- Despite having a standard Terms of Reference, there could be quite a variation in the level of service offered by the engineering consultants. It is necessary to establish a basis for rating and comparing the proposals before the Request for Proposals are sent out.

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFORMATION

PFRA District Office Locations in Alberta

Hanna (403) 854-4448
Lethbridge (403) 327-4340
Medicine Hat (403) 526-2429

Red Deer (403) 340-4290
Vegreville (780) 632-2919
Westlock (780) 349-3963
Peace River (780) 624-3386