
12.1.1 Purchasing Process

Do you acquire environmental engineering services or do you have such capabilities in-house? What process do you follow in acquiring environmental engineering services? How should prospective contractors approach you?

- Those firms with in-house engineers also acquire outside services when the need exists, the workload is too great, the in-house expertise is unavailable and/or when a particular problem needs to be resolved.
- Most large corporations use a competitive process and pre-qualify vendors who then go on a bidders list. The majority of firms are open and willing to add new firms to their list.
- Firms purchasing outside services will use small firms for small contracts and look for large national engineering firms to handle the large contracts where there is more exposure to liability.
- Small manufacturers tend to either stick to a small group of trusted firms or they rely on their insurance company, or raw materials vendors to provide assistance.
- There does not appear to be any one preferred way in which environmental affairs managers of U.S. firms would like to be approached by Canadian environmental engineering consulting firms. Approaches vary from one firm to the next depending on a number of factors, including the type of project work, the purchasing policies of the firm and the personality of the manager hiring the consultants. Many respondents state that they don't have time for telephone calls, but admit that they are often approached in this way. As well, many state that they prefer to be sent promotional literature outlining the firm's capabilities, but only that which is relevant to their particular problems.
- Representatives of a number of larger corporations indicated that they preferred to gather information about potential consultants themselves through the conferences and seminars they attend. They appreciate hearing from consultants who are well recognized in their field.
- A few companies remarked that they look to their head office or parent company for recommendations regarding which environmental engineering consulting firms to hire.
- When questioned regarding the types of services that would be sourced externally, respondents listed (in no particular order): groundwater monitoring; site assessment; oil removal from sludge; soil and groundwater remediation; site contamination assessments; environmental audits; design and modelling of specific equipment, machinery and applications; emission reduction and clean-up processes to adapt to air and water regulations; plant dust reduction; handling of chemical spills; waste management through recycling; employee training; and the preparation of documents for the government.
- When questioned regarding relevant trade shows and information sources, respondents suggested a number of shows and associations. Most of these are of a regional nature, such as state environmental expositions, the American Iron and Steel Engineers Conference, and the Water Environment Federation in Washington. In general, Canadian firms will have to determine the most appropriate regional and sectoral shows through following the steps outlined earlier.