

Tips for Best Practices When Hiring a Planning Consultant

Your municipality is hiring a planning consultant and you want to ensure the consultant delivers you a satisfactory product. Here is a quick overview of common problems and pre-emptive solutions for best results.

The most common problems that municipalities have with contracted planners are:

- There is little to no communication with the consultant while the work is being done.
- Ending up with an unoriginal OCP that does not accurately reflect the community.
- The community was disengaged or excluded from the planning process.
- The end product did not meet expectations, due to poor budgeting, poor communication, or other factors.

Being aware of common challenges and best practices will help you establish a good working relationship with your planning consultant. By adhering to the practices outlined below, you can increase your satisfaction with the end product.

- ✓ Have a clear idea of what you want from your consultant and be clear about your expectations for the project. Find out what kind of product you can expect based on your budget.
- ✓ Research and get good advice when determining your project requirements, drafting a Request for Proposal (RFP), and adequately outlining the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the contract. Make sure you understand what is required of the consultant so that you can best monitor the process.
- ✓ Thoroughly discuss the expectations of each party involved in the contract to ensure no assumptions are being made about deliverables, added costs, etc.
- ✓ Request examples of the work the consultant has completed for other communities. Contact those communities to determine their level of satisfaction with the end product.
- ✓ Designate a person or persons to meet with, monitor, and communicate regularly with the consultant throughout the process.
- ✓ Request regular status reporting and outcomes to ensure the work is being done, goals are being met, and that you are staying within your budget.
- ✓ Expect and encourage community engagement throughout the process.
- ✓ Ensure conflict resolution procedures are drafted into the contract, as well as timelines, confidentiality clauses, scope of work, communication guidelines and status reporting.

MCDP provides municipal groups in Saskatchewan with Community Planning resources. For additional information, visit our website at <http://www.municipalcapacity.ca/>.