

Working with Consultants

Consultants are independent contractors who work with an organization on a clearly defined project for a limited period of time.

There are several benefits to working with a consultant:

- **Objectivity** – a third party view of your organization's situation
- **Expertise** – professional ideas and advice
- **Cost effectiveness** – may be less expensive than hiring a new employee or doing a job that your organization is not capable of completing properly

Consultants work with nonprofit organizations in many areas, including:

- Capacity building
- Fundraising
- Graphic and web design
- Information technology

To locate a consultant for your project...

- Ask other organizations for recommendations.
- Ask your local United Way or other community resources for ideas.
- Check with your state association – consultants are often members of these associations, too.
- Check with professional associations related to the field for which you are seeking assistance.
- Look in an online directory of consultants, such as those on Idealist.org and CharityChannel.com.

Tips for Hiring a Consultant

- 1. Interview before hiring** and make sure you are comfortable with the consultant both personally and professionally. Consultants should not charge for an initial meeting.
- 2. Ask to see work samples**, or a list of the types of projects that he or she has worked on. Make sure that his or her experience is relevant to your organization's needs.
- 3. Check his or her references** and ask a lot of questions.
- 4. Clearly define responsibilities and expectations** of both your organization and the consultant. Make sure you clearly understand your role.
- 5. Provide as much information as possible.** Withholding information will make the consultant's job more difficult and will deprive your organization of the opportunity for assistance, clarification, and growth.
- 6. Sign a written contract.** Usually the consultant will prepare this document. It should include a list of each parties' responsibilities, a timeline, and an estimate of costs.