

Working effectively with consultants

1. Plan ahead (a long way ahead)

- Advertise the vacancy at least 3 months before you need the work to start – especially if you want a specific consultant. The best ones are usually booked up months ahead.
- Select the consultant at least 2 months before the work needs to start, and issue the contract promptly – consultants cannot start work before they have signed a contract.
- Even before you have recruited, begin to collect all the documents that the consultants will need, especially if you want them to review internal reports.

2. Have a suitable application process

- Tight application deadlines might mean you miss the consultant you want because they are too busy to write their application or proposal in time.
- Make the application or tendering process proportionate to the scale of the assignment (e.g. a one-week consultancy does not need a 10-page tender).

3. Develop detailed, clear Terms of Reference (ToR)

- Be clear about your expectations, goals, context and deliverables.
- Explain clearly what you need the consultant to budget for and whether they will need to make their own logistical arrangements for travel or meetings. Ensure there will be no last minute financial or logistical surprises for the consultant!
- Have your ToR ready before you advertise the vacancy, and don't recruit if you are not completely clear what you want the consultant to do.

4. Be realistic

- Be realistic about the range of skills/experiences needed for the piece of work – can you actually find one person with all the skills/experience you have requested?
- Be clear about how quickly you need the work to be completed and therefore how many consultants you need to hire.

5. Be flexible

- If your chosen consultant is unable to start work exactly when you want them, decide how flexible you can be. Waiting a few weeks for your preferred consultant may still yield better results than rushing to complete the work with a less suitable consultant.



6. Avoid 'scope creep'

- Make sure everyone involved in the consultancy understands the scope of work as presented in the ToR, so you can prevent the work escalating or unexpected (and potentially unpaid) tasks being added to the consultant's workload.
- Remember consultants are not obliged to carry out work that exceeds the amount agreed in the ToR/contract, or that involves types of activities or travelling that were not stated in the ToR/contract.

7. Be open, provide all necessary background information

- Consultants need to know the context of the project and how their work fits in. Provide an initial briefing (face-to-face, phone, Skype) and some essential reading.
- Be honest about any challenges you think they may encounter. Consultants' contracts usually contain confidentiality clauses, and consultants understand the importance of discretion.

8. Be sociable

- Help your consultant to feel positive about their assignment, especially if they are working away from home, by advising them on how to stay safe, how to access transport and medicine, and occasionally joining them for a meal or drink.

9. Offer realistic deadlines and timely feedback

- Consultants need to (and are entitled to) take weekends and family time – if a task needs 10 working days, this won't be deliverable within 10 calendar days.
- Check progress regularly through informal communication, and build feedback sessions into the ToR. Delays in providing feedback cause delays to the overall work, so agree timescales for providing your inputs and feedback.

10. Be humane

- Consultants are used to working long hours, but they are still human, and they need to rest in order to work well for you.

If you have any questions about the best ways to find, recruit and manage a consultant, please do not hesitate to contact EENET – we are happy to provide advice.

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