

## **Tips for choosing a Consultant to assist with a software selection exercise**

If you are planning to select a consulting firm to help you with the selection of application software you should closely consider the questions listed below.

Before you start, clearly define the objectives that you hope to achieve from employing a consultant.

- Describe the job you want done and specify the outcomes you expect from the assignment.
- Decide on the timescale, scope and any constraints on the assignment.
- Clarify your own role, which key staff will be involved, and how their time will be made available.

***Does the Consulting firm have relevant experience?*** It is helpful to know if the firm has been involved in relevant vendor selection work previously. An understanding of how to select a solution isn't usually enough – consultants should be able to advise on both the application and the vendor proposing it as a solution.

***Can the Consulting firm provide specific references from the client community?*** References are an important part of due diligence work. Good consulting firms are able to produce good references and their customer base speaks for themselves. Ask the firm for references from clients where they have done similar assignments.

***What does the client list look like?*** Ask to see a list of recent clients – look for organisations you know to be similar to your own.

***Who will work on your project?*** Using a stable, reputable consulting firm should ensure that multiple experienced consultants are available to select from. The firm must be willing to outline the experience set and project experience of the individuals they propose for the assignment.

***Does the Consultant have experience in this particular area?*** It is important to ensure that your consultant has had experience with your particular requirements. As above, make sure you know who will be working on your project and what certifications and experience they possess.

***Is the Consulting firm impartial?*** A consultant that provides independent advice to enable your firm to select the best solution for your needs is key to your firm's success. If the consultancy has links to a vendor you should ask the vendor to exclude themselves from any implementation work that arises and to confirm any financial arrangements that could impact on the advice they provide.

***What is their fee structure?*** As in every business, fee structures vary. Some firms charge by the hour and some charge on a project basis. Get accurate estimates and a detailed description of what is included in the scope of the project.

***Do you understand the selection process?*** A selection exercise can be as long or as short as you choose. When selecting consultants ask them about the methodology they will use and the key steps it will contain. Consultants who understand the industry will very often know the potential shortlist of vendors, which can reduce the amount of effort needed to hone the list of potential suppliers.