

Section 2: Evaluating Disaster Recovery Services & Products

General Questions to Ask Vendors -- Services

- What experience does your company or staff have working with my type of facility (libraries, archives, or museums, etc.)? Will you provide references?
- Has your company or staff undergone special training focused on working with libraries, archives, or museums?
- Are you bonded or licensed? What type of insurance do you carry? By what agencies? Will you provide a copy of license and proof of insurance?
- How do the services you offer libraries, archives, and museums differ from those offered to other businesses?
- What industry standards do you follow in your work? What protocols or established standards have you used previously in disaster recovery projects?
- What quality control measures are included in your services? Do you guarantee your work? If so, what are the conditions of the guarantee?
- What does your standard service include? Which services are classified as extra or additional, and what are their associated costs?
- What kind of prearrangement for services can customers make with you? May customers provide you with a profile containing their preferences?
- What services/prices do you offer that your competitors do not?
- Do you use a written service contract? Can you provide a review copy before we sign?
- Do you have limitations (e.g., size — large or small jobs) or restrictions (weight, quantity, geographic area, etc.) on your service?
- Will you provide a free estimate (including extra and associated costs)?
- How soon can you provide service? Are the service dates guaranteed?
- How many qualified workers will you assign to this project for its duration? [Note: Most companies hire “pick-up“ labor and train them as needed to do various tasks so that the number fluctuates daily as work and availability changes. Your institution will want to know how many trained and experienced supervisors/crew bosses will be on site and will they be there full-time?]
- Will your employees be made aware that they will not be permitted to smoke, eat, or drink around our materials?
- Do you subcontract work? If so, how are subcontractors trained and supervised?
- Will you work on-site or remove the work to your facilities? Who makes this decision? What shipping/transportation arrangements will you make if you treat our materials off-site? Are our materials fully insured during transit? What are the additional costs?
- Would you allow a small team of qualified staff from our institution to supervise work in progress or monitor it on-site? How often should they expect to meet with your project managers for information exchange?
- What equipment will you bring in, and how much space do you need for its safe operation? What supplies will you bring in and how much storage space do you need onsite for them?

- Do you use any chemicals? Will you provide a list of these chemicals and their Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) prior to providing service? Can you provide documentation verifying that OSHA/EPA requirements are met?
- Would you require closing or a temporary evacuation of the building while you do your work?

General Questions to Ask Vendors -- Products/Equipment

- Do you rent equipment? If so, for what time period(s)?
- Do you sell new and/or reconditioned equipment?
- What kind of warranties/service do you provide?
- What kind of insurance do you provide with rented equipment? Is there an associated cost?
- Do you deliver and install equipment that is rented and/or purchased? Do you provide training? Is there an associated cost?
- What information do you provide about safety precautions for this equipment?
- How soon can you provide rental/purchase equipment and services? Do you guarantee availability?
- Will you provide a price list? Are there any discounts for non-profit or educational organizations? Are there any discounts for long-term or short-term use?
- Can you put me on a mailing list to receive periodic price and equipment updates?
- Do you provide on-site repairs for rental equipment breakdowns?
- Do you provide 24-hour service?

General Questions to Ask Vendors -- Products/Supplies

- Do you have products specifically designed for my type of facility (libraries, archives, or museums, etc.)?
- What other facilities similar to mine have used your product?
- Do you provide free delivery?
- What kind of quality control do you maintain? What is your policy on returning or replacing faulty merchandise?
- Do you provide discounts to non-profit or educational organizations?
- Do you provide discounts for bulk purchases?
- What information do you provide about safety precautions for the use of your product? Are there any human or environmental hazards associated with your product?
- Will you provide Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), copies of product labels, and written information about any state and federal (e.g., OSHA/EPA) regulations for your product?
- Do your products have expiration dates printed on them? If not, can you give me information about product expiration?
- Are there any specifications for storage of your products (temperature, light exposure, etc.)?

General Questions to Ask Consultants

- What professional degree or certified training do you have?
- What other specialized training do you have?
- Are you licensed or certified? Are you a current member of any professional organizations in your field?
- What experience do you have with our institution's specific problem or situation?
- What other facilities like mine (libraries, archives, or museums, etc.) have you worked for? Can you provide references?