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IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A NEW LANDSCAPING TEAM

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KEY QUESTIONS TO ASK A POTENTIAL COMMERCIAL LANDSCAPE CONTRACTOR

When you're selecting a partner for your commercial landscape needs, make sure you cover all your bases. Whether it's via your RFP or interviews, asking these seven questions can help you find a landscape contractor you can trust to partner with for the long haul.

1. How much experience do you have?

To help confirm your potential vendor can deliver the level of service you need, find out how long they've been in business—both overall and in the specific area(s) where you need service. Don't be afraid to ask for references as a follow-up to this question.

2. How can I view the work you've completed for other clients?

Whether it's via photos in a professional portfolio or a location you can visit, you'll want to see examples of their work to know whether it meets your standards. While photos are indeed common, if conducting a site visit helps you feel more comfortable, don't hesitate to request one.

3. What is your service model?

Does the potential vendor self-perform, contract their work out or use a hybrid model to complete their work? Knowing when and how the work will be completed—and by whom—can give you confidence in their ability to meet your requirements consistently.

4. What is your QC process?

What items are typically on their quality control checklist? And can additional tasks you require be added as well? Is there just a single check or multiple layers of review? Understanding a potential vendor's QC process can help ensure your work is completed to the standards you expect. You may also want to ask how you'll gain insight into any QC reporting the vendor offers. For example, will you have access to reports and photos? Is there a software platform where you can stay informed of job progress and QC checks?

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5. In your own words, can you summarize the scope of my request?

Make sure your landscape contractor has heard and understood your goals and requirements by asking them to sum up your requests. This is an opportunity to make sure you're working with a team who listens and is well-versed in the landscaping field. (Pro Tip: Make sure your statement of work (SOW) is well-thought-out and specific and clearly establishes your expectations up front. This helps establish the framework for the overall work product once an agreement is executed.)

6. Why should I select you as my landscape contractor over your competitors?

Pricing is commonly a leading decision-making factor, but it shouldn't be the only criterion driving your decision. Yes, be mindful of your budget, but keep an eye on overall value. To that end, give the vendor an opportunity to tell you what makes them, their services and their team unique, and why that makes them the right fit for your landscaping needs.

7. What technology platform do you use to track your clients' landscape jobs?

When you're managing multiple commercial properties, you need to be able to easily monitor your properties. Is each property's landscaping being maintained on schedule as promised? Are there photos you can view to ensure quality? If you need to make a change to a schedule or add an out-of-scope request, can you easily communicate that to your contractor?

These are important questions, so when you're interviewing potential landscaping vendors, be sure to ask how they manage their jobs and what you'll have access to. Can you see a demo? And if you have your own software platform, can theirs integrate seamlessly with yours?

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