



CLEVELAND
RESTORATION
SOCIETY

HIRING A CONTRACTOR

YOUR GUIDE TO WORKING ON A HOME REHABILITATION PROJECT

Your home is important to you and when starting a construction or rehabilitation project, you want to take the proper steps to ensure the project will go smoothly and the right person is selected for the job. Here are some simple steps...

1. Make a Plan

Define the scope of work

Before you pick up the phone, decide what work you would like to have done. Make a list of the projects you are going to pursue now and define your priorities. Deal with roofs, code violations, structural, or moisture problems before you tackle cosmetic improvements.

Determine your budget

Decide how much money you are comfortable spending on the project. This will help you with the planning. Chances are the work you want to do will cost more than you anticipated. Don't be afraid to adjust the scope of work once you start receiving pricing on materials or projects, but be realistic about what is necessary to get the job done. It might be important to include a 5-10% contingency in your budget for unforeseen issues that come up during construction.

2. Look for a contractor

Investigate contractors

Do some research to determine the right companies for your project. Check with your municipality, a local landmarks commission, Better Business Bureau, and friends or neighbors. Talk to local architects, building suppliers or look for yard signs in front of houses you admire.

Make an appointment

From your preliminary research, make an appointment for three to four contractors to come out to the house and look at the proposed project. Contractors should not charge you for this initial meeting. This first interview will set the stage for how the contractor will approach the rest of the project. First impressions are important. Note the contractor's professional habits: Were they punctual? Attentive? Organized? Specific? Prompt in returning calls? Ask if they are licensed and insured, what type of insurance do they carry, and if they will pull permits. If you were not comfortable at the initial meeting, keep looking.

Outline the job

Create a detailed list or outline that you can provide to your contractor that spells out the type of work you are interested in and the kinds of thing you want in a quote. A clearly written scope of work allows each contractor to bid on the same information. If you are having trouble explaining what you are envisioning, clip pictures or sketch out your ideas. Write out questions that you want to ask the contractor before they come to you home so that you are sure to ask the same things of each contractor, and so that you don't forget items of importance.

Identify the timetable

Be sure your contractor knows when you are looking to start AND complete the project. Be sure to make seasonal considerations. This will help lay out expectations between you and your contractor which will allow the contractor to determine availability for the job. It is important to remember that construction causes inconveniences and you should expect to change your daily routines to some degree during the project.

Request a bid

Ask for a bid from your contractor and request that it be returned to you in writing by a specific date. Ask that your contractor provide plenty of detail and that he break down the components of the bid when possible. A bid should be given to you on company letter head or invoice with the company's name, Federal Identification Number and contact information listed on it. Be sure that the estimate includes proposed start and finish dates, along with the payment schedule. Full payment should not be administered to the contractor until the project has been completely finished.

Check references

Check the references of your most preferred contractors by phone and in person. A good contractor should be comfortable supplying you with a list. Don't be afraid to go to the addresses provided and look at the work that was performed. Gauge the customer's satisfaction and be sure to ask the reference the following questions:

- Were you satisfied with the work?
- Was the project done in a timely manner?
- Did the contractor and crew keep a broom clean job site?
- How did the contractor handle any problems that arose?
- Did the contractor need to come back to fix or complete anything?
- If they needed to come back for minor repairs did they do so in a timely manner?
- Would you work with them again?

3. Hire a contractor

Choose the contractor

Once bids are returned compare them with your scope of work and budget. If all bids exceed your budget scale back your scope of work. Don't automatically get frustrated and assume you have to continue to shop around. Be realistic about the cost of services and remember the cheapest bid isn't always the best bid. Trust your gut instincts when making your decision and choose someone you are comfortable with. Once you have selected your contractor get a signed contract and be sure to go over the work schedule, the payment schedule and how change orders will be handled. Change orders should always be signed and occur before the change takes place. Remember throughout the project that flexibility and good communication is the key to successful project!

Questions you should be asking...

Ask your contractor about his qualifications:

	Yes	No
Are you licensed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you insured?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are you registered with the city I live in?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have references?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How long have you been in business?	_____	
How much experience do you have working with older homes?	_____	
What kind of labor and material warranty do you offer?	_____	

Ask your contractor about the project:

	Yes	No
Have you done a project similar to this one?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can the job be completed in the requested period of time?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will a supervisor be on site?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you arrange for building permits and debris removal?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What are the payment terms?	_____	
How many people will typically be on the job site?	_____	

Ask the contractor's reference:

	Yes	No
Were you satisfied with the work that was done?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was the project done in a timely manner?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did the contractor and crew keep a neat and clean job site?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did any problems arise?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did the contractor need to come back to fix or complete anything?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If they needed to come back did they do so in a timely manner?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Would you work with them again?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Ask yourself about the contractor:

	Yes	No
Did I get a good impression of the contractor?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was the contractor punctual?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did the contractor return my calls promptly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was the contractor organized?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Was the contractor specific?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did the contractor answer all of my questions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did the contractor return a bid to me on time?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did the contractor require follow up?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Did the contractor break down the pricing in the bid?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Did the contractor break down the project schedule in writing?

Did the contractor break down the payment schedule in writing?

Were the contractors references positive?

Ask yourself about the project:

What is my total budget?

What is my time table?

Are there any special circumstances or requests that I need to make the contractor aware of? _____

In order of importance what is the scope of work and how much is budgeted for each project:

Project _____ Amount Budgeted _____

Project _____ Amount Budgeted _____

Project _____ Amount Budgeted _____

Project _____ Amount Budgeted _____