

Contractor Selection Checklist

A tool for selecting contractors for farm dam construction and maintenance in South Australia

This document provides a comprehensive checklist to assist dam owners in the selection of the most suitable, competent and experienced personnel¹ (hereafter referred to as “Contractor”) for the design, construction, modification, maintenance and removal of farm dams in South Australia. This checklist is a guide only and helps with decision making. It is not mandatory to tick all the boxes in the checklist. The dam owner is ultimately responsible for ensuring all dam related activities are done properly.

Purpose

This checklist aims to provide guidance so that dam related activities are carried out by a competent and experienced contractor in accordance with relevant guidelines and good industry practices. Contractors should be well-versed in basic principles, technical guidelines, articles, and manuals relevant to dam construction.

Although, meeting the essential criteria as indicated in this checklist is not mandatory, however, it is recommended that dam owners should ensure that any contractor engaged in dam-related activities fulfills most of the essential recommended criteria.

This checklist can be utilised by dam owners and other stakeholders planning to:

- Construct a new farm dam, or
- Modify an existing dam, or
- Maintain an existing dam, including tasks such as wall reinforcement and structural repairs etc.
- Remove an existing dam.

¹As defined by ANCOLD, a professional engineer who is suitably qualified and recognised by the engineering profession as experienced in the engineering of dams and its various sub fields.



Dams not permitted

In some areas of South Australia (such as Eastern and Western Mount Lofty Ranges), the construction of any new dam/s or dam enlargement/s is currently not permitted, and penalties may apply. Check with your local Landscape Board prior to engaging any contractors if unsure.

www.landscape.sa.gov.au

For further information and any clarifications contact your relevant landscape board or your local council planning officer.



Essential criteria checklist

The checklist below lists the essential and additional recommended criteria that the dam owner may consider when selecting the right contractor for dam construction and maintenance purposes.

No.	Criteria	Check
1	Regulatory knowledge Is the contractor fully aware of all relevant current/existing legislations, policies, dam works permits and permit conditions, necessary approvals, and industry best practice guidelines? To help you answer this, consider asking the contractor: • Is a Development Approval required for my dam? Have you previously navigated the development approval process for a similar dam? • When is a Water Affecting Activity (WAA) permit necessary, and what steps are involved in obtaining one? (Refer to www.environment.sa.gov.au/topics/water-and-river-murray/water-licences-allocations-and-markets/water-affecting-activity-permits) • How have you ensured regulatory compliance in past projects? • What other approvals are required for this project, and how can they be obtained?	
2.	Previous experience Does the contractor have previous experience in completing similar projects, including dams of various sizes and complexities? Or can they demonstrate adaptability and expertise? To help you answer this, consider asking the contractor: • How many farm dams have you constructed or maintained in the past five years? • Can you share examples of dams with similar size and complexity? • Have you worked with different soil types or geological conditions? • What is your specific area of expertise in dam construction?	
3.	Education Does the contractor hold formal qualifications in engineering or relevant science? Or at least be able to demonstrate professionally recognised construction supervision capabilities? To help you answer this, consider asking the contractor: • Do you hold a formal tertiary qualification in engineering or a related field? • Are you registered with any engineering or professional bodies? • Have you managed dam construction projects or worked under professionally recognised supervision?	
4.	Reference checks Have previous clients verified the contractor's reliability, communication, and overall performance? To help you answer this, consider the following: • Checking online reviews (e.g., Google reviews) or social media pages for the contractor's business to see what other customers have said, and recommended. This can provide additional insights into their work quality, customer service, and any recurring issues. • Ask if contractor can provide references from clients whose dam projects are similar in terms of size and complexity? • Contact the previous clients (where possible or relevant) to discuss the quality of work and how the contractor handled challenges? • Ask if there were any issues during previous projects? And if so, how did they resolve them?	



No.	Criteria	Check
5.	Licensing and certification Is the contractor licensed or certified (where applicable)? To help you answer this, consider asking the contractor: • Do you hold a current certification from any relevant industry organisations to demonstrate commitment to high standards and best practice? • Do you have a builder's license or a licence for civil construction work related to large dams? • Have you obtained excavation and earthmoving licences, such as competency-based certifications through Registered Training Organisations for civil excavator, dozer and scraper operations? • Does your company hold any third-party accreditations in national or international standards, such as certifications in quality control, occupational health and safety, and environmental management?	
6.	Safety and compliance Does the contractor adhere to the safety protocols, training programs, and compliance with relevant Work Health and Safety (WHS) regulations? To help you answer this, consider asking the contractor: • What safety protocols do you implement for dam construction projects? • Have you encountered safety incidents in the past? How were they addressed and resolved? • What procedures do you follow to ensure compliance with the Excavation Work, Code of Practice (Safe Work Australia, 2020)?	
7.	Engineering and design capabilities Does the contractor have a team of skilled engineers or people with experience in designing and constructing dams? To help you answer this, consider asking the contractor: • Can you describe the structure of your company and the number of skilled personnel on your team? • Do you have experienced team members capable of assessing site conditions and working with various soil types and geology to ensure structural integrity?	
8.	Quality of materials and equipment Does the contractor use high-quality, locally sourced (where possible) materials such as clay, gravel, and rock and has access to modern, well-maintained construction equipment? To help you answer this, consider asking the contractor: • From where will you source material for dam construction? • Are the materials locally sourced? • Who is your material supplier and how would you assess their reputation and credibility? • What machinery and equipment do you use? Are they well maintained, suitable and sufficient for completing the project effectively? • What equipment have you used in previous projects, and did you encounter any issues achieving the desired outcomes? • Will any work be sub-contracted? If so, who are the sub-contractors, and what roles will they play in this project?	

Additional recommended things to consider

The checklist below lists other things to consider when selecting a contractor to complete any works on your dam.

No.	Additional things to consider	Check
9.	Project management and timelines Has the contractor demonstrated efficient project management processes, clear timelines, milestones, and communication plans to keep the project on track? To help you answer this, consider asking the contractor: • Can you provide a detailed project timeline with clearly defined milestones? • What contingency plans do you have in place to address potential delays or unforeseen challenges during the project? • How do you manage budget overruns while ensuring project completion remains on track?	
10.	Cost estimates and budget transparency Is the contractor transparent with cost estimates, and do they provide clear breakdowns of all project expenses? To help you answer this, consider asking the contractor: • Can you provide a detailed, itemised cost estimate for this dam project? • How do you manage unexpected costs or changes in project scope? • Are there any additional fees or charges I should be aware of? • Can you share examples of previous projects where the final cost closely aligned with the initial estimate?	
11.	Warranty Does the contractor offer warranties on workmanship and materials to ensure long-term dam functionality? To help you answer this, consider asking the contractor: • Do you offer warranties on workmanship and materials? • What are the terms and conditions of these warranties? • Can you provide an example of a past project where a warranty was claimed?	
12.	Public liability insurance Does the contractor carry public liability insurance to cover risks to property and liabilities? To help you answer this, consider asking the contractor: • Can you provide proof of your public liability insurance? • What does your insurance cover, and are there any exclusions I should be aware of? • Have you ever had to make a claim on this insurance for dam construction work? If so, how was it resolved? • Does your insurance cover potential damages or liabilities related to this dam project?	
13.	Other considerations	

