

CHOOSING CONTRACTORS

A reliable contractor is imperative to your satisfaction. Choosing whom to hire to upgrade insulation, a water heater or HVAC equipment (heating, ventilation and air conditioning), can be daunting. Consider these tips:

1. A contractor who charges less, but requires vigilant, assertive oversight is no bargain. It's great that most of Louisville's trade firms are independent, locally owned firms. But some owners and sales staff can be too independent; some are poor listeners or insist on doing things their way. Choose a Better Business Bureau certified firm. See LCAN's web site for required special certifications. Ask friends who've had similar work done for feedback on their contractors.
2. Some project owners decide what product or service they want, then shop for the best price. Others find a trustworthy contractor, then work out the details of what product or service to buy, based on his/her recommendations. We recommend the latter approach for the above, bigger projects.
3. If you require more than one bid, invite no more than four firms for bids. If a bid is significantly lower or higher than other bids, ask why—without showing the other bids, which is improper.
4. After deciding scope (what, where), most projects have three interdependent attributes—quality of work (how), time to completion (when) and cost (how much)—of which you, the project owner, may control or optimize only two.
5. Better contractors will rescue established customers whose equipment failed. Otherwise, they stay in high demand and nearly always must finish previously agreed work before starting your project.
6. Living amid a project as contractors work is stressful. Each decision is an opportunity for miscommunication. Prevent misunderstandings and surprises by limiting communications to between one project owner and one person per contractor firm.

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