

# Survey Business Best Practices (March 16, 2021)

## Purpose

The following document was prepared by the Professional Standards Committee and is intended to provide survey firms with items to consider to effectively manage a professional survey practice. This is still a draft document and comments are welcome. This is not intended as any form of legal advice and serves as recommendations for consideration only. Any use of this information is at the user's discretion and the Association of Ontario Land Surveyors or its committees and task forces take no responsibility or liability for its usage.

## General Business Best Practices

### IT Hardware and Software

- Establish redundant IT systems.
- Establish project file archiving and restoration procedures.
- Maintain licensed software with current versions of virus protection along with a procedure to keep current.
- Network and data remote access options and security.

### Project Files

- Establish and maintain a file management / index system.

### Financial / Accounting Management

- Establish and maintain a proper financial management and archive system.
- Establish staff rates that reflect staff overhead costs, profit margins goals.
- Establish equipment rates that reflect depreciation, maintenance and licensing costs as well as profit margins goals.
- Prepare annual budgets.
- Determine acceptable retained earnings goals to effectively fund operations.

### Risk Management

- Actively consider risk in business practices – consider mechanisms to reduce it or remove it (e.g. contract language, quality assurance programs) or share it (e.g. insurance policies)
- Consider costs to risks in pricing services

### Health and Safety

- Ensure safety is a major consideration in all practices and projects
- Health and safety practices/policies are established, regularly communicated to staff and enforced
- Health and safety conversations with staff are documented and retained (Sign-offs as appropriate)

### Human Resources

- Clear HR policies and expectations communicated to staff
- Regular performance reviews conducted with all staff

# Project Business Best Practices

## Proposals and Project Contracts

- Create standardized proposals and estimate forms.
  - Standard Terms and Conditions, Sunset Clause, Weather Impacts to schedule or fee.
  - Retainer policy.
  - Payment terms: 100% prior to delivery, milestone payments, 30 days, etc. Must include 100% prior to delivery term in contract to be enforceable.
  - Delivery Schedule (breakdown if phased deliveries).
  - Triggers for extras to scope.
  - Exclusion(s) from proposal scope.
- Create standardized contracts, POs, Client Confirmation Letters.
- Insist on written contracts for all projects prior to commencing work.

## Project Management

- Establish written communication policy for all client conversations.
- Establish proposed project timelines for field and office to delivery with ability to identify schedule variances.
- Documented QC / QA procedures (AOLS samples).
- Establish internal project staff correspondence procedures.
- Written deliverables letter detailing relevant project information and information required by regulation.