

2027

Consulting Engineers Fee Guideline

A guideline of standard hourly rates for engineers, technologists, and technicians providing consulting services in British Columbia.

acec-bc.ca

ACEC BRITISH COLUMBIA



Consulting Engineering firms are **partners**, **experts**, and **innovators** working for **British Columbians**.

About ACEC-BC

Since 1976, the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies British Columbia (ACEC-BC) has been the voice of consulting engineering companies in BC. Our mandate is to advance the business interests of consulting engineering firms in BC by advocating for fair business practices and building awareness of the industry's contributions to society and innovative technical expertise.

On behalf of our member organizations, our board of directors endorse our strategic direction and ensure our operations are guided by these principles.

Our purpose is to serve the interests of members through advocacy, creating opportunity for collaboration and building profile of members and the industry. Our member's wisdom, societal contribution, and geographic reach lend credibility and gravity to this purpose.

Advocacy is our primary mission.

We are a consolidated voice for fair procurement practices, balanced contract language including proportional allocation of risk, and removal of barriers to efficient operation of our businesses in BC.

Values unite our members.

Our members and our governance act collaboratively to promote innovative thinking and investment in our community. Our words and actions ensure an inclusive environment: celebrating our diversity and striving for equity in all that we do.

100+
Member firms in BC

40+
Municipalities across BC

27k+
Employed British Columbians

$7b+
Locally to British Columbia

Lets Connect!

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Background

Since 1976, the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies British Columbia (ACEC-BC) has been the voice of consulting engineering companies in BC. Our purpose is to advance the business of consulting engineering in BC, through advocacy, creating opportunity for collaboration, and building profile for members and the industry.

Annually. ACEC-BC produces this comprehensive fee guideline to support firms practicing consulting engineering in BC and BC based clients in determining appropriate minimum fees for services.

This guideline provides information on suggested hourly rates for consulting practice by engineers and technologists, as well as direct and indirect non-labour costs (project expenses, flat rate disbursements) and mark-up on disbursements. It recognizes average fees across the province and does not consider local or specialty markets where conditions may support higher fees. Similarly, the fee guideline does not consider risk premiums to manage contractual or other risk. Where risk is escalated, consultants are strongly encouraged to consider pricing risk in their fee. The guideline is not intended to cover highly specialised services like expert witness.

Clients seeking information regarding selection of a consulting engineering firm should consult the **Federation of Canadian Municipalities National Guide to Sustainable Infrastructure Best Practice Guide on Selecting a Professional Consultant**. The guide and other resources regarding best practice selection may be found at **yes2qbs.com**. Additionally, members are directed to review the updated **Budget Guidelines for Engineering Services Document 1 – Transportation & Infrastructure**, to support the development of consulting engineering fees for projects in British Columbia.



Methodology

The ACEC-BC Board approves a fee guideline based on data impacting the cost of providing services in BC. Data includes:

- British Columbia Consumer Price Index
- Sector market salaries[1]
- Statistics Canada services index
- Sector labour market experience (retention, recruitment, employment statistics)
- Changes to other, typical employer labour costs (statutory remittances, safety, etc.)
- Other factors impacting cost of operation (infrastructure, regulation, insurance, etc.)

Other considerations include member firm forecast performance (backlog), and the impact of capacity on availability of services and the value placed on services by clients.

In preparing this guideline, the Board also considered indirect costs that are not covered in disbursements, which have increased over the past few years in response to client requirements. For example, costs to support increasing demands for reporting (for example, HSE compliance sites, ESG), activity associated with responding to complex proposals, review, negotiation, and management of complex client agreements, organizational investment in systems and security (property and cyber), as well as investment in practitioner growth and development. The Board also noted the need for firms consider how their fees contribute to their ability to invest in research and development, which supports innovation in design and delivery and adoption of emerging technology.

Risk Transfer

Risk transfer from clients to their consultants is typical, and consultants are encouraged to consider ensuring that risk transfer is reflected in their fees. Significant risk transfer – for example, the acceptance of unlimited liability by a consultant – will require the consultant to adapt their practices to better mitigate risk, which may include additional costs supporting quality management and insurance.

ACEC-BC recommends that members always negotiate a reasonable limit of liability in agreements[2] and where additional insurance is obligated, ACEC-BC encourages members to negotiate payment of premiums[3] or ensure that fees reasonably cover additional premiums.

1 Western Compensation & Benefits Consultants "Consulting Engineers Compensation Survey. **https://wcbc.ca/published-surveys/consulting-engineers/**

2 Association of Consulting Engineering Companies – British Columbia. Position Paper on Limitation of Liability, February 2023. **https://acec-bc.ca/2023/02/position-paper-on-limitation-of-liability/**

3 Master Municipal Construction Documents Association. Client-Consultant Agreement 2024. Section8.5 – Insurance and Liability. **https://www.mmcd.net/media/43746/mmcda-2024-client-consultant-agreement.pdf**

Disbursements

Disbursements – non-labour costs associated with performance of work for a client – are categorized as normal and project specific. Mark-up of disbursement varies by category in recognition of the effort and expense associated with each. When permitted, member firms are encouraged to charge clients a flat rate disbursement (FRD) recovery charge as a percentage of their fees.

The Consulting Engineers Fee Guideline was updated to include the additional disbursement category Sub-Contractor, which includes important services that when used may carry additional risk to the Consultant managing the project.

Normal disbursements:
8% of professional fees

Project specific disbursements:
Cost plus 10%

Subconsultant invoices:
Cost plus 5%

Subcontractor invoices:
Cost plus 10%

Normal disbursements may include: communications, production of routine drawings and documents, local travel/ mileage (up to 30km from the consultant's office), office supplies including courier and postage, insurance, standard software licensing and standard computer expenses, technology and data security infrastructure, data storage, and cost of compliance with corporate regulation. Where a normal disbursement is not allowed by a client, consultants may adjust rates to support coverage of these costs.

Recent industry studies have indicated rising operating expenses for member firms which have required increase in flat rate disbursements to cover increased corporate expenses.

Project specific disbursements may include: production of non-routine tender or other documents, non-local travel, (client approved) living expenses, specialized or project specific software and/or services, specialized equipment and/ or testing services, project advertising expense, project specific insurance, other third-party expenses paid by the consultant on the client's behalf, approvals, permits, licenses and specific taxes applied to fees.

Subcontractor disbursements may include: site preparation and exploratory services including drilling, arborist, archaeological investigation / excavation, traffic counts.

It is recommended that the client and consultant review projected expenses prior to the start of the project and agree on the applicable disbursement category and reimbursement process.

Hourly Rates

Hourly rates are the charge out fee per hour of service. Rates are recommended based on classification of professional engineering and technical service personnel based on the degree of practice independence and associated expertise required to perform at that level. Classifications are described in the following section. Rates are expressed in Canadian dollars per hour.

Professional Engineering Services

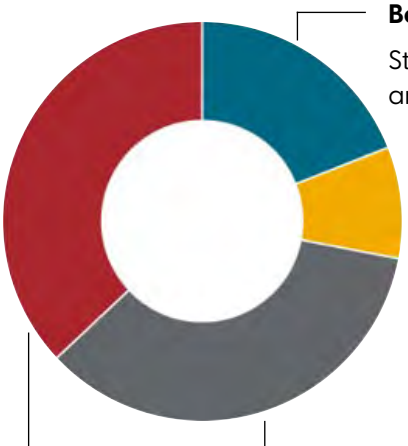
Classification	Rate
E1	$182
E2	$220
E3	$256
E4	$302
E5	$337
E6	$380
E7	$422

Technical Services

Classification	Rate
T1	$155
T2	$180
T3	$207
T4	$232
T5	$254
T6	$275
T7	$299

Distribution of Consulting Fees

The following graphic provides context on the typical distribution of fees within a consulting engineering company.



Benefits

Statutory benefits, taxes, health and safety, retirement, etc.

Net Profit

Overhead

Facilities, taxes, services, supplies, etc.

Salaries / Wages

Looking Ahead – Evolving Pricing Models

As consulting services and project delivery continue to evolve, ACEC-BC is exploring a range of pricing models to complement traditional hourly rates. The objective is to provide clients and consultants with more options to align fees with project scope, risk, and desired outcomes, while supporting greater cost predictability, transparency, innovation, and project success. Additional guidance will be provided as this work progresses.

Classification Guide

Hourly rates are based on the classification of professional engineering and technical service personnel. The guide considers the degree of practice independence and associated expertise required to perform at that level. Most technical personnel within a consulting engineering company will align with these classifications.

Professional Engineering Services

Classification	Description
E1 Engineer-in-Training	Practitioner is a university graduate from an accredited engineering program with little or no prior professional practice.
E2 Assistant Project Engineer	Practitioner performs engineering assignments of limited scope and complexity. Work is supervised in detail. Practitioner may give some guidance to technicians, technologists, contractors and/or other employees within a limited scope. Practitioner may be either registered as Engineer-In-Training (EIT) or Professional Engineer (P.Eng.)
E3 Project Engineer	Practitioner is independently responsible for a variety of engineering assignments. Work is not generally supervised in detail; may provide guidance to other engineers, but supervision is not usually a core responsibility.
E4 Supervisory Engineer	Practitioner directly supervises other engineers over a sustained period.
E4 Specialist Engineer	Practitioner has achieved a full specialization in complex engineering applications such as research, design, product application or sales.
E5 Management Engineer	Practitioner directs and supervises a broad group of professional technical practitioners, Supervisory Engineers (E4) and other personnel.
E5 Advanced Specialist Engineer	In addition to the skills of a Specialist Engineer (E4), Advanced Specialist Engineers generally exercises authority over a group of highly qualified professionals engaged in complex engineering applications.
E6 Senior Management Engineer	Practitioner has authority over several related professional groups in different fields each under the direct supervision of a Management Engineer (E5).
E7 Senior Specialist Engineer	Practitioner is a recognized authority in a field of significant importance and generally exercises ultimate design authority over a group of other, highly qualified professionals engaged in complex engineering applications.

Classification Guide – Continued

Technical Services

Classification	Description
T1 Technician	Practitioner has little or no prior experience and carries out straight-forward duties under close supervision. Duties may include the preparation of repetitive drawings, maintenance of drawing files and assisting with field surveys. Little independent judgment is expected, and performance is according to standard procedures.
T2 Technician/Technologist	Practitioner supports engineering personnel in field, design, drawing production and/or construction specifications and quality control all under close supervision. All tasks are clearly defined, straight-forward and according to standard procedures. Practitioner may also perform common computational work using standard accepted formulae and manuals.
T3 Technician/Technologist	Practitioner supports engineering personnel in field, design, drawing production and/or construction specifications and quality control all under direct supervision. A variety of defined assignments are performed with some independent judgment. Practitioner may provide technical guidance to T1 and T2 technical personnel within the same area of specialty.
T4 Technician/Technologist	Practitioner may complete design tasks, complex CAD assignments and perform field quality control functions all with minimal supervision. Performs analysis and provides recommendations about technical problems encountered. Practitioner may guide or supervise the activities of T1, T2 and T3 technical personnel including processes and procedures and verification of the adequacy of work.
T5 Supervising Technician/ Technologist	Practitioner likely to supervise directly or indirectly the work of T1 to T4 Technician / Technologists including review and verification of adequacy. Practitioner is also likely to undertake project related functions on a continued basis. Supporting the Project Manager, the Practitioner may act as “CAD Lead” and may prepare production and progress reports as needed. Practitioner assists the Project Manager in determining personnel and person-hour requirements.
T6 Management Technician/ Technologist	Practitioner independently manages design functions on a variety of projects, supervises the activities of other personnel and may be responsible for administrative management of personnel. Practitioner may assume the role of Project Manager on projects and may regularly engage in marketing and other client services.
T7 Group Manager or Discipline Lead Technician/Technologist	Practitioner may independently represent the firm with clients, manage and supervise personnel on a continued basis and manage major projects. The T7 Technician/Technologist may assume all manner of administrative responsibilities including recruitment, training, and budget accountability.