

Six Steps to Successful Bids for Segmental Retaining Wall Installers

Review these suggestions when preparing a competitive bid with all of your costs covered.

1. **Read the specifications carefully.**

Sometimes an unexpected paragraph slips into the specs. It's important to read the specifications carefully EVERY TIME, since what may appear to be boilerplate might instead include new directives that, if disregarded, may cost you significantly. The general contractor will hold you accountable for the specifications.

2. **Develop strong relationships with industry partners.**

Develop relationships with quality block manufacturers who have produced a licensed retaining wall block and engineers with experience in the design of segmental retaining walls. They'll be your best allies in the bidding process, helping you to assemble an accurate bid. Good relationships mean you're more likely to get good prices, and less likely to be turned down when you need a site inspection on short notice or a quick turnaround on a preliminary design. Another tip: Bring a grading plan and soils report for the site to the engineer who's going to design it, which will help to keep costs down. The industry average for wall design costs is about \$.50 per square foot, with a minimum of \$750-1,000.

3. **Consult a specialist.**

An engineer who specializes in walls and slopes can help you avoid mistakes typically made by less experienced engineers. Geotechnical engineers, while qualified to analyze site conditions, may not have the proper specialization to adequately bid and design a segmental retaining wall.

4. **Communicate clearly with key players.**

After you've carefully reviewed your specs, communicate with the general contractor and engineer regarding what the owner wants. Then relay this understanding to the engineer. It's important that your engineer also provide a detailed bid. To avoid losing money over misunderstandings, take the time to make certain everyone understands what is being agreed to.

5. **Clearly define the scope of your work.**

Spell out exactly what you're including AND what you're excluding in your bid. With regard to engineering, clearly state whether your bid covers engineering costs. In most instances, soil-testing services provided by a geotechnical engineer are the owner's responsibility and should be specified accordingly in your bid. Remember to mark up engineering costs as you would any other subcontractor service you are required to estimate and manage.

6. **Don't forget to include "onsite assistance."**

Frequently the owner or civil engineer will request that a manufacturers' representative (wall engineer) be on site a majority of the time, which can cost up to \$500/day. This type of requirement is not unusual for Department of Transportation and other tall-wall projects.