A sample Second opinion

See what a written review of a smart home proposal looks like.

Sample. The house, the people and every number are invented. Product names are covered, because a real plan is written for one real house. This is a shortened version; the real document is longer and covers your whole job.

Proposal reviewed: an invented $184,000 system for an invented house

The short answer

It's a capable proposal that doesn't solve your first goal. Don't sign until you've had answers to the five questions below.

Your goals against the proposal

You said	Covered?	Note
Afternoon glare	Partly	Shades on five windows. The two that face west aren't on the list
Easy for guests	Unclear	Nine touchscreens; the keypads aren't explained (page 6, lines 14 to 22)
Music outside	Yes	Four speakers, one zone
Works offline	Not stated	Ask

Ranked by what it could cost you

Issue	If nothing changes	Who can answer
West windows missing	The main goal isn't met after the money is spent	The designer of the proposal
No ownership of files	Every later change goes through one company	The company, in writing
Network not listed	A second bill, or a system on weak Wi-Fi	The company and your low-voltage contractor
Touchscreens beside keypads	Money on glass nobody uses	You

What locks you in

- The programming file isn't listed as yours (page 11, terms).
- It doesn't say who can add a light later, or what that costs.
- Three features need a subscription, and the cost isn't shown (page 8).

What you could leave out

- Seven of nine touchscreens. Each is beside a keypad.
- Audio in the hallway and laundry.
- The second equipment rack, unless they can say what it's for.

What isn't there

- Network wiring and Wi-Fi
- Power for the shades, and who does it
- Training, a manual, and support hours
- How each room is tested before final payment

Ask before you sign

1. Who holds the programming file at the end, in writing?
2. What stops if a subscription lapses?
3. What does it cost to add one dimmer next year?
4. Why aren't the west windows included?
5. What triggers the last payment?

What I couldn't tell

Whether the wiring suits these products, and whether labor is priced well for your area. A licensed contractor who sees the house can.

Limits

This is an opinion on a document. It isn't a safety or code inspection, and it's no judgment of the company.