



REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) MANUAL



INTRODUCTION

A Request for Proposal (RFP) is one of several procurement tools. An RFP is used in those situations where specifications or need cannot clearly be defined, or when cost is only one criterion in determining the award and needs to be weighed against other factors in determining best value.

This manual will help you to understand and develop the following areas necessary for a successful RFP:

- Preparation
- Creation
- Evaluation



Preparation- Planning the RFP

A successful Request for Proposal requires a great deal of planning. RFP preparation can be difficult and time intensive. However, a well written RFP can alleviate many problems. Departments are encouraged to involve the Purchasing Department early in the development of the RFP. The Department can provide assistance and valuable advice. This section will discuss several items that need to be considered when considering and planning your RFP, including:

- Appropriateness of using the RFP process
- Preparation- Planning the RFP
- Roles of the Purchasing Department
- Preparation and Response Time
- Developing Evaluation Factors
- Deciding to use a pre-proposal conference
- Other considerations

Appropriateness

It is important to consider if the RFP format is the best method to satisfy your requirement(s). Generally, most products or services can be procured through an Invitation to Bid which is a less risky, less time consuming process. An RFP should be used when the relative skills, expertise, or technical capability of the consultant will have to be evaluated, when cost is secondary to the characteristics of the item or service being sought, when the conditions of the product or service are unable to be sufficiently described in an Invitation to Bid, when the acquisition is for highly complex or technical products or services, and evaluation of the consultants approach, management capabilities, innovation, or other technical factors are secondary to cost.

Roles of the Purchasing

Jessica Baraket – Purchasing Agent, everything that goes through purchasing has to be approved by the Purchasing Agent. The Purchasing Agent assists in the RFP writing and process. You will contact the Purchasing Agent, for the following:

- If you are having problems with the RFP process
- Payment information
- Decision making question

Clary Peralta- Purchasing Coordinator, the Purchasing Coordinator, writes in conjunction with the department all the RFP's. The Purchasing Coordinator set's up all technical evaluations, cost openings, and oral interviews if necessary. You will contact the Purchasing Coordinator for the following:

- General questions
- Vendor questions
- Questions in regards to an RFP
- Questions in regards to the RFP process
- Questions about Public Purchase.
- Questions in regards to the memo
- PIF information
- Vendor reach out
- Assistance in an RFP

Jeanette Rogulski- Purchasing Contract Administrator, is responsible for all the contracts that the Department creates. You will contact the Purchasing Contract Administrator for the following:

- Budget numbers
- Questions in regards to City Council approval
- Questions in regards to the contract
- Questions in regards to EDEN

Preparation and Response Time

RFP's take a significant amount of time to prepare and review so be sure to allow for adequate time. The planning process needs to allow adequate time for writing/re-writing of specifications, questions from the vendors, pre-proposal conferences for vendors to prepare their proposals, evaluations, and award. All RFP's will have a tentative timeline with tentative dates for each step of the process. Below is a sample timeline:

SCHEDULE

Advertise Request for Proposal- Min. 4 weeks of advertisement

Deadline for Questions

Publish Addendum, If necessary

Public Opening

Evaluation Committee Review of Technical Proposal- up to a week

Evaluation Committee Review of Cost Proposal- the week after technical proposals are opened

Responding Firms Oral Interview/Presentation- a week after cost review is opened if necessary

Presentation to City Council- on the first or third Wednesday of the month

Note:

Before the RFP becomes a contract and goes on City Council's agenda the committee must write a memo and submit the memo to the Purchasing Contract Administrator, two weeks before the said City Council meeting.



Choosing your Evaluation Team

Evaluation of RFP responses is a team effort. The evaluation committee is comprised of a Chairperson and a number of knowledgeable personnel with a professional interest in the contents and results of the proposals. Committee members must be unbiased and **MUST NOT** have a personal or beneficial interest in the proposal. A representative from Purchasing will be present and will serve in an advisory capacity to the committee, they will not be a voting member. The committee may have non city employees but they cannot be a voting member. Committees may not exceed 7 members. All voting members must be present at all meetings.

Evaluation Factors

It is important to identify all evaluation factors and their relative importance, including price, early in the RFP development stages. These factors will be the only way to properly evaluate the proposals and assure that the awarded proposals meets all the requirements. Factors not specified in the RFP cannot be used for evaluating the proposals.

Determine Mandatory Requirements: Make a list of the requirements that will absolutely be required in order to accomplish the work outlined in the RFP and/or enter into a contract. They may include things such as proper licensing or accreditation and special insurance or bonding. They are evaluated strictly on a pass-fail basis. If the vendor fails to meet the minimum requirement, their proposal will be rejected.

Determine Evaluation Factors: Make a detailed list of the most important aspects of the service or goods required, including cost, and how the vendor should include rates, whether it be hourly, monthly, per job or a lump sum. Each item on the list is a potential evaluation factor. Arrange the list in sequence of most important.

Assign Point Factors: Assign a point factor to each criterion based on its relative importance. The most important items will naturally be evaluated heavier and have more points. Points assigned to each criterion will be included in the RFP, this makes vendors aware of which items are relatively more important than others and can influence a vendor in the preparation of their RFP response. Below is a sample of the criterion:

| Criteria |
|--|
| Statement of Interest and Introduction |
| Qualifications |
| Project Team |
| Experience |
| Separate Sealed Envelope: Pricing |

Pre-Proposal Conference

Consider whether a pre-proposal conference for potential vendors is needed to further explain, clarify, or identify areas of concern in the RFP. These must always be held prior to submission of initial proposals. If using a pre-proposal conference, follow these guidelines:

Scheduling a conference: The pre-proposal conference should be scheduled at a date and time identified in the RFP. Indicate how many representatives from each company should be allowed to attend. Keep in mind that some vendors may have to travel a distance to attend, so sufficient time should be allowed for vendors to receive the RFP, formulate questions, and make necessary travel plans.

Answering questions: Any questions regarding the RFP should be submitted in writing on Public Purchase prior to the pre-proposal conference and be answered by the Department at the meeting. If any question asked changes the work scope of the RFP, an addendum will be created, if the question does not they will be answered on a rolling bases on Public Purchase.

Other Considerations

Public Notice: RFP's are distributed in the same manner as formal, sealed Invitation to Bid. If you have certain vendors that you want to make sure get a copy of the RFP, please make sure they register with Public Purchase, or contact the Purchasing Department to assist them. You can also include these vendors on the PIF form.

Amendment, Modification, or Withdrawal: RFP's may be amended, modified, or withdrawn prior to the established due date and time.

Late Proposals, are not accepted.

Receipt and Record of Proposal: Proposals shall be opened publicly, identifying only the name, phone number, and address of the vendors unless otherwise stated in the RFP. Proposals shall be date and time stamped upon receipt and held in a secure place until the established due date on the RFP.

Evaluation Committee

Chairperson/Head Responsibilities and Duties

- Coordination and development of the RFP specifications
- Selection of evaluation committee members
- The committee members should be knowledgeable about the project
- The committee members must be able to make a commitment to the entire process
- Conduct contract negotiations

Committee Members Responsibilities & Duties

- Coordination and development of the RFP specifications (optional)
- Read and sign the Evaluator Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Statement
- Read each proposal carefully, and evaluate independently based only on the criteria stated in the RFP and complete the necessary evaluation forms
- Attend all committee member meetings

Purchasing Department's Responsibilities & Duties

- Distribute and collect the RFP proposals
- Be the point of contact between the vendors and the committee members
- Provide guidance and instruction to the evaluation committee members
- Schedule committee meetings and presentations
- Calculate all scoring
- Maintain all necessary documentation for the bid file
- Collect all documents and notes from committee members at the end of the process

Evaluation Committee Instructions

1. The results of the Committee must be able to be supported and defended
2. Committee members should not discuss these proposals at any time outside of evaluation meetings
3. Each member should have no personal/financial interest in which vendor is recommended for award
4. Vendor contact shall strictly occur through the Purchasing Department during the evaluation period.
5. Committee members must independently evaluate the proposals
6. Be objective, impartial, unbiased, and fair in all aspects of the evaluation process
7. Be consistent and apply the same judgement to each proposal
8. Evaluate based on the material in the proposal as it relates to the criteria on the evaluation form – do not take into account the attractiveness of the proposal – focus on the material
9. Use the evaluation form provided to record your scores in the workspace folder
10. Scores may be adjusted after committee discussion. Any change to a score should be noted by crossing out the original score and replacing with the revised score, initialing the change, erasures should not occur
11. Be sure to sign your evaluation form and turn it in to the Purchasing Coordinator at the end of the evaluation meeting

Evaluation Process

Evaluation Committee Objective: The sole objective of the Evaluation Committee will be to recommend the proposal that is most responsive to the project needs within available resources. The vendor must demonstrate their capability by successfully complying with all mandatory requirements.

- After the proposal opening, the committee will be made aware of the unique RFP workspace folder created. The committee can find all proposals, evaluation score sheets, and the confidentiality agreement form, in said folder.

- Committee members are to independently read the proposals and score them based on criteria stated in the RFP using the evaluation form provided. Evaluators will be required to have reviewed and scored all proposals prior to the Technical Evaluation Team Meeting.

- At the Technical Evaluation Meeting, instructions will be read at the beginning of the first committee meeting. Committee members will have the opportunity to engage in discussion with other committee members and express opinions regarding the proposals. Any inconsistencies should be thoroughly discussed. Evaluators may adjust their scores at any time during this process. All score changes should be noted via crossing out the original score and replacing with the revised score initialing the change, scores should not be erased. The Purchasing Department will ask each committee member to read their scores aloud for calculation purposes.

- At this point the Cost Review will take place and the committee will base score solely on the price. If scored lower, even though the vendor has a low cost price the committee member must be able to justify their score.
- Next, the committee would make the decision if they would like additional information/clarification via oral interviews or if they have adequate information to make a decision at this time.
- If the committee chooses to hear oral interviews, they can make the determination if they want to hear from all the vendors or a shortlist number of vendors based on the scores provided thus far.
- The Purchasing Department will contact the appropriate vendor and make the necessary arrangements or collect the necessary information.
- After the oral interviews the committee will again have the opportunity to openly discuss their opinions, concerns, etc. Once discussions are complete, the committee members will independently review their evaluation sheets for confirmation purposes. The Purchasing Department will ask each committee member to read their scores aloud for calculation purposes. The score sheets will be collected at this point.
- The chairperson will be responsible for negotiating the terms and conditions of the contract based on project need, if negotiations are necessary.
- Once a vendor has been identified the committee chair needs to provide the Purchasing Department with a memo, and verified budget number at least two weeks before the next City Council meeting.
- A contract will be drafted by the Purchasing Contract Administrator.

If you have any questions in regards to this manual please contact the Purchasing Department at
610-437-7624

