

# Definition of a Request for Proposal

A **request for proposal (RFP)** is basically a **publication of detailed requirements** by a prospective buyer in order to receive vendor offerings. Usually dedicated to software evaluation, comparison, and selection, a request for proposal may be issued to select any kind of products and services. RFP publication is an efficient tool to gather solution capabilities, which are then put into an evaluation matrix that allows the selection of the solution that best fits the requirements.

## How to write a professional RFP

### Information Gathering

It is highly recommended that you to read the suggestions below in order to write a proper and successful RFP.

1. Seems obvious but use a formal letterhead and do not handwrite your RFP. Use the County templates (Purchasing can assist with getting sample RFPs) provided by Purchasing Services. Using a template and sample of an RFP will save you time.
2. Identify all the **key common sections of an RFP** you should include by simply answering each and any of the questions Why? Who? What? How? and When? as shown below:
  - a. **WHY?**  
Why does your organization need to buy a new solution?  
Answering this question allows you to create the section called **Statement of Purpose**.
  - b. **WHO?**  
Provide a brief description of your organization.  
This information will become the **Background information**.
  - c. **WHAT?**  
What is the nature of your project?  
What are the needs?  
What are the expected outcomes?  
Answering these questions allows you to complete the following sections:
    - **Scope of Work**
    - **Outcome and Performance Standards**
    - **Deliverables**
  - d. **HOW?**  
What is the contract?  
What kind of information and documents do you expect to receive from providers?  
How will proposals be evaluated and the best matching solution selected?  
This information will be used for the sections:
    - **Term of Contract**
    - **Payments, Incentives, and Penalties**

- ***Contractual Terms and Conditions***
- ***Requirements for Proposal Preparation***
- ***Evaluation and Award Process***

e. **WHEN?**

When to submit questions, proposal?

When the decision will be taken?

What is the whole selection process timeframe?

Who are the people responsible for evaluating proposals? For taking the final decision?

Answering these questions allows you to populate both sections ***Process Schedule***, and ***Points of contact for future correspondence***.

## Common Sections of an RFP

By answering the questions above, you were able to gather relevant information that will help you detail the common sections of an RFP. Here is a brief description for each and any of the common sections of your RFP:

1. ***Statement of Purpose***

Describe the extent of products and services your organization is looking for, as well as, the overall objectives of the contract.

2. ***Background Information***

Present a brief overview of your organization and its operations, using statistics, customer demographics, and psychographics. State your strengths and weaknesses honestly. Don't forget to include comprehensive information on the people who will handle future correspondence.

3. ***Scope of Work***

Enumerate the specific duties to be performed by the provider and the expected outcomes. Include a detailed listing of responsibilities, particularly when sub-contractors are involved.

4. ***Outcome and Performance Standards***

Specify the outcome targets, minimal performance standards expected from the contractor, and methods for monitoring performance and process for implementing corrective actions.

5. ***Deliverables***

Provide a list of all products, reports, and plans that will be delivered to your organization and propose a delivery schedule.

6. ***Term of Contract***

Specify length, start date and end date of the contract, and the options for renewal.

7. ***Payments, Incentives, and Penalties***

List all the terms of payment for adequate performance. Highlight the basis for incentives for superior performance and penalties for inadequate performance or lack of compliance.

8. ***Contractual Terms and Conditions***

Attach standard contracting forms, certifications, and assurances. You may include requirements specific to this particular contract.

9. ***Requirements for Proposal Preparation***

A consistent structure in terms of content, information, and documents types simplifies things for the people evaluating the proposals. Therefore, you should request a particular structure for the proposal and provide an exhaustive list of documents you want to receive.

10. ***Evaluation and Award Process***

Lay down the procedures and criteria used for evaluating proposals and for making the final contract award.

11. ***Process Schedule***

Clearly and concisely present the timeline for the steps leading to the final decision, such as the dates for submitting the letter of intent, sending questions, attending the pre-proposal conference, submitting the proposal, etc.

12. ***Contacts***

Include a complete list of people to contact for information on the RFP, or with any other questions. Incorporate their name, title, responsibilities, and the various ways of contacting them into this list.

13. Do not forget to post your RFP to the County website and send directly to vendors identified in your market research.