



Request for Proposal Instructions

Introduction

A Request for Proposal (RFP) is one of several procurement tools. The University buyer will determine if the RFP process is appropriate. Generally, most products and services can be procured through the Invitation to Bid or a Multi-Step Bid process. At times, the RFP process may be a better tool. Among the criteria the buyer will consider are:

- Specifications or the needs of the department cannot be clearly defined
- The department has defined a need and requests the Vendors to propose the best method for accomplishing it.
- Cost is only one criterion in determining the award and needs to be weighed against other factors in determining the best value.
- Use of the RFP process requires written approval from the Director of Purchasing.
- Other factors as deemed appropriate by Purchasing.
- Instructions in the RFP template are highlighted in **yellow**. Key information that is required from departments is highlighted in **green**.

Proposal Evaluation Committee Guidelines

Chairperson responsibilities and duties:

- A. **Requests a requisition then Coordinates the development of the RFP** using the RFP Template. This should be done in conjunction with the evaluation committee. Include the evaluation committee in the development and weighting of the evaluation criteria. Evaluation criteria and each relative weight are listed in the RFP. An example of an Evaluation Score Sheet is included with this packet.

A Proposal Cost Form is to be provided for vendor response with the RFP and an example is included with this packet.

The Purchasing buyer is the person listed as the contact person for RFP related questions and will forward technical questions to the chairperson for a response.

The chairperson coordinates the project through completion of the procurement and contracting process.

Chairperson prepares a request to issue a Request for Proposals which is sent to the buyer for approval by the Director or Purchasing. This can be included with the draft RFP when it is sent to the buyer if the scope of work has been defined.

- B. **Select at least 3 evaluation committee members (5-recommended)**; evaluators may include:
- 1) Employees of the Department
 - 2) Knowledgeable employees or consultants from other departments or organizations. Purchasing will provide procurement guidance and support, but generally will not serve as an evaluator.
 - 3) Hired project consultants and experts may offer assistance in an advisory role only. These consultants and experts may NOT serve as a scoring member of the committee.
- C. **Review all proposals** received from Purchasing to determine if they are responsive (acceptable) or non-responsive (unacceptable). This may be done in conjunction with the whole evaluation committee or with a subcommittee. **Immediately notify Purchasing in writing of the proposal(s) determined to be non-responsive and the reason for that rating.** Provide details including a reference to the specific section(s) of the RFP specifications in which the vendor did not meet. Purchasing will notify the vendor immediately in order to expedite any potential dispute.

Note: If an vendor indicates that the entire proposal is protected/confidential/proprietary (may be listed in the footer), you must notify the Purchasing buyer immediately. The vendor may be dis-qualified, or the buyer may seek a clarification to have the restriction removed. Also, the vendor may have

exceptions to specific terms and conditions. This is not necessarily a reason to disqualify the vendor, but the buyer is to be notified.

D. Committee Chair and the buyer will conduct initial evaluation committee meeting to:

- Ensure that each evaluator reads, understands and signs the "Evaluator Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Certification" form prior to evaluation.
- Instruct evaluators that they are not allowed to discuss the proposal evaluation process with anyone other than the actual evaluation committee. Gather signed statements from evaluators. Send signed statements to the buyer prior to evaluation.
- Instruct evaluators that they are not to communicate with representatives from any vendor. Questions or other communications received from vendors are to be directed to the Purchasing buyer.
- Distribute technical proposals (without cost) and a copy of the RFP to evaluators
- Distribute score sheets to evaluators for each proposal received.
- Discuss evaluation methodology with evaluators to ensure that everyone is in agreement as to the meaning of each criterion.
- Instruct evaluators that they are to limit the evaluation of the proposals to what is provided in the proposal. Information not contained within the written offer is not to be considered unless it is specific to a reference obtained as part of the solicitation.
- **Schedule subsequent committee evaluation meetings.** Serve as facilitator for meetings. Coordinate evaluation committee review and discussion of individual scores. Committee evaluations should be completed individually and maybe re-score during the committee meeting. Discussions are to be conducted with evaluators to resolve wide scoring variances (example: evaluator A gives a score of 5 and evaluator B gives a score of 2 to the same vendor on the same criteria). After discussion, evaluators may choose to appropriately revise the scores.
- Clarifications on Proposal Responses. If you require clarifications on a proposal, work with the Purchasing buyer on appropriate procedures and instructions regarding types of clarifications allowed.

E. Schedule oral presentations. To properly evaluate proposals, oral presentations may be scheduled to answer questions by evaluation committee members. After consultation with the Purchasing buyer, all firms that are acceptable or potentially acceptable are invited to participate in oral presentations. If you want to limit the number of firms invited to the oral presentation, you must specifically identify this restriction in the RFP or identify and eliminate those proposals that fall below a significant scoring gap. Invitations to provide an oral presentation are sent to the vendors by the Purchasing buyer. The vendor's original proposal cannot be changed in any aspect at the oral presentation. The oral presentation is only to allow vendors to clarify portions of their proposal.

During oral presentations, if it becomes evident that vendors may need to amend their proposal, a Best and Final process may be initiated.

F. **Best and Final Offers (BAFO).** The Best and Final Offer process, **if needed**, may only be requested under the following conditions:

1. No single proposal adequately addresses all the RFP specifications
2. All proposals are unclear or deficient
3. All proposals exceed the identified budget of available funds
4. Two proposals receive an identical score

The BAFO process may make minor alterations to an RFP but significant changes would require cancellation of the RFP and reissuance. It is important that each vendor receives fair and equal treatment with respect to the other vendors. The committee chairperson works closely with the Purchasing buyer who conducts this process to establish a schedule and procedures to request a BAFO. More than one BAFO may be required.

G. **Work with the Purchasing buyer to evaluate cost**, ensuring that an appropriate comparison is made. Cost/pricing details will not be sent to the evaluation committee for review until after the technical scoring has been completed and submitted to the Purchasing buyer for final review. The evaluation committee is generally not involved in the cost evaluation, since costs are scored objectively rather than subjectively. The typical formula used by Purchasing to calculate cost is as follows:
Cost Points Possible X (2- (Proposal Price / Lowest Proposed Price))

Other formulas may be used if approved by the Purchasing buyer. The formula must be identified in RFP document.

H. **Create a compilation of each evaluator's final scores for each criterion. Compile a summary sheet of all scores.**

I. **Compile all evaluation-related documentation.**

J. **Prepare a written award recommendation and justification statement, including strengths and weaknesses of all firms submitting proposals, and a summary of the evaluation process. Send that completed statement to the Purchasing buyer with:**

- 1) compilation of evaluators final scores.
- 2) price for which award is recommended, if applicable.
- 3) any other compiled evaluation-related documentation.

Note: If the highest scoring vendor has a higher total price than a lower priced vendor, you must complete a cost benefit analysis. This analysis is required to quantify the value vs. cost. The analysis is to include a cost breakdown of the additional services/product the University can expect to receive for the

additional money paid to the higher priced vendor.

- K. **De-briefings with unsuccessful vendors.** Purchasing generally does not conduct face to face or teleconference debriefings. Generally debriefings will be conducted in writing. Vendors must submit a debriefing request in writing to the Purchasing buyer within seven (7) calendar days of the award notification or rejection notification made through written correspondence or posted on BidSync. The debriefing response will be limited to critiquing the strengths/weaknesses of an vendor's proposal based on the evaluation criteria. The debriefing is intended as a courtesy to vendors, providing feedback to be used for future opportunities. Comparisons between proposals or evaluations of other proposals will not be allowed.

- L. **Participate in contract negotiations** and contract development. If the procurement results in a department contract, the Office of General Counsel and your department will be responsible to negotiate exceptions to the terms and conditions. Purchasing will provide assistance when requested. If the procurement results in a contract for the entire University as a result of your department requesting the product/service, and writing the specifications, your department will be required to assist in the negotiations of some of the terms and conditions working closely with Purchasing and the Office of General Counsel.

- M. **Protest of RFP:** An aggrieved prospective or actual vendor may submit a written protest to the Director of Purchasing within seven days after the day on which the person knows or should have known of facts giving rise to the protest such as the publication of an award. The procurement process is put on hold until the protest is either settled by mutual agreement, denied or upheld. If the protest is denied, the protestor has the right to appeal to the Procurement Policy Board.

Committee Member Responsibilities and Duties:

- A. Participate with the evaluation committee chairperson in developing the RFP, evaluation criteria and evaluation form.
- B. Attend the pre-proposal conference if one is scheduled.
- C. Attend the initial evaluator meeting to receive proposals and discuss the evaluation process.
- D. Read and sign a Conflict of Interest Certification. This form can be accessed at http://fbs.admin.utah.edu/purchasing/forms_pur/. This requires a commitment to not discuss the RFP responses nor the evaluation process with anyone other than members of the Evaluation Committee or Purchasing.
- E. Read each proposal, evaluate against the technical criteria and complete an evaluation form. Price scoring will be done by the Purchasing buyer in conjunction with the Evaluation Committee Chairperson.
- F. **Attend all committee meetings, oral presentations and product demonstrations.**
- G. Do not communicate with vendors other than at meetings scheduled as part of the RFP process. Direct questions or communications received from vendors to the Purchasing Buyer.
- H. Accept assignments from the chairperson such as conducting reference checks, assisting with creation of a Cost Benefit Analysis, etc.

Guidelines for Scoring Proposals:

Each technical proposal will be evaluated against a set of pre-determined criteria to assess the degree to which it meets that criterion. Compliance with requirements will be assessed as a point score on a scale from 0 to 5 as shown below and which will be included on the evaluation form. Other pre-determined criteria may be used with approval of the buyer.

- 0 = Failure, no response
- 1 = Poor, inadequate, fails to meet requirement
- 2 = Fair, only partially responsive
- 3 = Average, meets minimum requirement
- 4 = Above average, exceeds minimum requirement
- 5 = Superior

Reference checks - certain requirements, such as those that pertain to previous experience in required areas of expertise, may be evaluated further through reference checks. Designated evaluators may conduct reference checks. The results will be provided to all evaluators. Once reference checks are completed, evaluators will review their initial scoring of vendor responses in the context of reference responses.

The evaluation committee will meet to review the scores and to determine whether there are significant differences among evaluators.

The purpose of this is to ensure that scoring differences are not the result of misunderstandings or an inability to locate appropriate material in the technical proposal. If either of these is the cause of divergent scoring, correction of scores should be made.

Preparing a Scope of Work

The purpose of the scope of work is to define correctly, clearly, concisely and completely all the obligations of the parties with respect to the effort to be performed. This section of the RFP is very important. If appropriately done it will produce responsive proposals and ease the task of managing the project/contract. The scope of work generally consists of a few paragraphs of text rather than a sentence or two.

The scope of work needs to include an accurate and detailed description of the essential and technical requirements that the vendor must meet.

Vague references such as “prepared to our satisfaction” or “in a timely manner” are not acceptable. The scope of work needs to be written with language that is free from ambiguity and redundancy.

The scope of work is: (1) what the vendor is expected to be able to do, (2) what the agency agrees to do, (3) instructions to the vendor (4) the specifications that will form the basis for the contract.

The scope of work might include details such as:

- Services or work to be performed
- Timeline for completion of work
- How and where work is to be performed
- Procedures to be followed
- Safety and liability issues
- Any specific requirements
- Any limitations
- RFP may designate a brand name “or equal” as a means to identify the performance or other specific requirements of procurement. When so used, the salient features of the brand name that must be met by vendors shall be clearly specified.
- etc.

Cost Proposal Form

Example #1

RFP TITLE: _____

RFP #: _____

Vendor Name: _____

Item #	Description of Service	Quantity	Hourly Rate	Extended Price	Total
1					\$0.00
2					\$0.00
3					\$0.00
4					\$0.00
5					\$0.00
6					\$0.00
7					\$0.00
8					\$0.00
9					\$0.00
10					\$0.00
					\$0.00

Cost Proposals will be scored as follows: The points assigned to each vendors cost proposal will be based on the lowest proposal price. The vendor with the lowest Proposed Price will receive 100% of the price points. All other vendors will receive a portion of the total cost points based on what percentage higher their Proposed Price is than the Lowest Proposed Price. An vendor whose Proposed Price is more than double (200%) the Lowest Proposed Price will receive no points. The formula to compute the points is: Cost Points x (2- (Proposed Price/Lowest Proposed Price)).

TITLE OF PROJECT AND SOLICITATION # _____

RFP EVALUATION SCORESHEET Example #1

Firm Name: _____

Evaluator: _____

Date: _____

Score will be assigned as follows:

- 0 = Failure, no response
- 1 = Poor, inadequate, fails to meet requirement
- 2 = Fair, only partially responsive
- 3 = Average, meets minimum requirement
- 4 = Above average, exceeds minimum requirement
- 5 = Superior

		Score (0-5)	Weight	Points
1. Demonstrated Ability to meet scope of work (30 points possible)		----	----	----
(Criteria from RFP)	10 points possible		X 2	
	10 points possible		X 2	
	10 points possible		X 2	
2. Demonstrated Technical Capability (15 points possible)		----	----	----
(Criteria from RFP)	10 points possible		X 2	
	5 points possible		X 1	
3. Qualification and Expertise of Staff (15 points possible)		----	----	----
(Criteria from RFP)	5 points possible		X 1	
	5 points possible		X 1	
	5 points possible		X 1	
4. References (10 points possible)	10 points possible		X 2	
5. Cost (30 points possible)	30 points possible			* Inserted by Purchasing
TOTAL EVALUATION POINTS	(100 points possible)		Total	

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