



### Successful 'Requests for Proposal' (RFP)

We have seen a lot of RFP's. Some good, some average and some bad. Writing a good request for proposal (RFP) starts with asking the right RFP questions. Not only the right questions, but in the right way. Here are some of our tips.

#### 1. Goals

This two-step process begins with you asking yourself what your project goals are and what you are looking for in a vendor. What sort of company would you like to be partnering with?

- A vendor with experience in your industry.
- Locally sourced.
- Aligned standards.
- Globally experienced.

In the second step, sit down with your stakeholders and ask the following questions to help you formulate your RFP questions:

- What major problem do we want to solve?
- What are our specific requirements for this project?
- What specific services do vendors need to fulfill?
- What specific experience do vendors need to have to qualify?
- What specific certifications or licenses (if any) are required?

#### 2. Write focused RFP questions

Keep RFP questions focused on your immediate project needs. Avoid the temptation to ask for information that is beyond the scope of the project. Remember, there can be several stages to this process. Asking for financial statements and evidence at this point is not necessary. Nor are example contract expectations. Identify the shortlist of 'best fit' vendors first.

Keeping your RFP questions focused solely on the project at hand makes it easier for vendors to complete the RFP, and ultimately makes your evaluation process easier. Avoid duplication. If one question covers the logic or capability, avoid asking the same question in a different way.

### 3. Keep RFP questions concise

RFPs do not need to be lengthy to prove themselves effective. In fact, less is often more when it comes to writing RFP questions.

The more concise you are in the range and number of questions you ask in your RFP, the easier it will be for vendors to produce insightful responses.

Broad questions, on the other hand, will have your vendors scrambling around to pull together information for your extraneous questions, information that ultimately will not help with your evaluation.

### 4. Ask one RFP question at a time

We often see RFP writing combining questions into one. No matter how tempting, we strongly suggest avoiding this. Asking double-barreled or multi-part RFP questions can be confusing for the vendor. As a result, vendors may be tempted to provide rambling responses just to make sure they are covering all their basis.

Ultimately, you must read those rambling responses, making it harder for you to evaluate and compare vendors.

### 5. Make sure RFP questions circle back to your goals

Each RFP question should ultimately point back to your project goals.

After developing your RFP questions, sit down with your team and do a final review to make sure that every question is underpinned by your project goals. Doing so will help you attract the sort of vendors you want and will ultimately make it easier to pick the best-fit vendor.

### 6. Weight and score your RFP questions

Once your questions are crafted, assign a weight to each and a score to each response, assigning higher points to your important questions.

This step is critical as it will ensure your evaluation will rank RFP vendors according to their ability to fulfill your most important criteria.

Ultimately, your RFP is meant to ensure you find the vendor that will best be able to meet your goals, either the right product, the right solution, or the right price.

By asking the right RFP questions, you will set yourself on the path for finding that right fit.