



The Proponent's Guide:

Responding to a Request for Proposals

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Introduction

This guide is designed to answer questions commonly asked by potential contractors about responding to a Request for Proposals. It covers only those Request for Proposals issued by a department of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT). It does not purport to provide insight into preparing a proposal for any other public agency (NWT or otherwise) or for the private sector. We recognize that each organization has its unique way of doing things; this only reflects GNWT's.

Our intent with this guide is to help you submit successful proposals. Unfortunately we cannot guarantee that if you use our suggestions you will be successful. Nothing in here is intended to relieve you from forming your own opinions and conclusions about the best way to respond to a Request for Proposals.

The information contained within this guide is general and will apply to most, but not all, Requests for Proposals issued by the government.

Nothing in this guide is intended to constitute legal advice. Any legal questions that you may have regarding the Request for Proposals should be referred to your lawyer.

Legal Framework

The Request for Proposal process for the GNWT is specified, controlled, and organized by statutes, regulations, policy directives and guidelines.

Generally, the framework imposed by statutes and policies contain three essential elements:

- competition – the procurement is to be accomplished using a competitive process
- best value – selection is based on best value for the GNWT
- treatment of proponents – all proponents must be treated equally and fairly

The GNWT is also required to follow current contract law in its procurement practises. A body of contract law established by the Supreme Court of Canada and lower courts have established a number of duties and responsibilities which the issuer of a request for proposals has. Some of these duties established by the courts, include:

- disclose all the requirements in the proposal document;
- treat bidder fairly and equally;
- publish the basis for evaluating the proposals;
- award a contract based only on the factors described in the proposal document; and
- award the contract only to proposals which meet all of the mandatory requirements.

(Asner, Michael, A Guide to Public Procurement in Canada
Michael Asner Consulting, 2003)

The Request for Proposals process

Request for Proposals versus Tender

What is a Request for Proposals?

A Request for Proposals is a formal solicitation document inviting proposals for delivery of a good or service. The Request for Proposals describes the existing situation and asks proponents to offer their ideas for a solution. It is used when:

- a) a department has a situation for which it is not sure of the best solution;
- b) in selection of a contractor the department wishes to consider factors other than price;
- c) a department would like to see what the experts suggest;
- d) the requirement is complex;
- e) the program is new and the department would like ideas on how to deliver it; or
- f) a department would like to see if there is an alternative to the way it usually acquires the product or service.

How does a Request for Proposals differ from a Tender?

The Request for Proposals differs from a Tender in that with a Request for Proposals the department evaluates responses against a variety of criteria, as opposed to a Tender where the successful bidder is generally the lowest priced bidder who meets the specification. In a Request for Proposals, price is generally just one of the evaluation criteria. Other criteria could include such factors as the proponent's experience, skills of the proposed project team, appropriateness and creativity of proposed solution, or the proponent's sensitivity to the needs of the department and its clients.

“Proponent”

Please explain the word “proponent”

When proposals are invited by government, the term “proponent” is used to describe an individual or company that submits, or intends to submit, a proposal.

The Process

What steps does the Request for Proposals go through?

The following bullets roughly chart the steps in the process:

- The department identifies a need
- The Request for Proposals is drafted and evaluation

criteria determined

- The Request for Proposals is issued
- Proposals are received and evaluated
- A successful proponent is selected
- A contract is negotiated and signed
- Unsuccessful proponents are notified
- Work is performed

How long can I expect the process to take?

From the time you first see the Request for Proposals, it could be months before a contract is signed. However, the length of the process varies significantly from project to project and many contracts are signed within two weeks of the proposal closing date. The Request for Proposals will often provide an outline of the anticipated time-frame. If the information doesn't appear in the Request for Proposals it may be a good idea to ask the department what its timetable is for the requirement in question.

Issuing office

Why are some Requests for Proposals issued by Procurement Shared Services (PSS) and some issued directly by a department?

Generally, when contracting for *goods or services under \$25,000* each department proceeds without going through PSS using its own procurement contracting personnel. However, in the case of real property lease contracts and construction contracts, INF has been mandated by Government Contract Regulations to act as the contract authority.

The document

What information do I get from the Request for Proposals?

The Request for Proposals will usually explain the role of the department, describe the background of the project, outline some of the problems the department is facing, describe the scope of the project, and provide the parameters for submission of solutions. It will describe how proposals will be evaluated and state some of the terms and conditions for proposal acceptance and contract award. It will also tell you to whom you should address questions.

What type of questions can I ask and to whom should they be sent?

If there is an element of the Request for Proposals that is unclear to you, or there is further information that you require to make a business decision to submit a proposal, the questions should be forwarded to the contact person identified in the Request for Proposals. You can ask any question! For example, you can request information as to whether the service was contracted previously or done in-house, if a contractor was involved in the design or writing of the Request for Proposals, the rationale for going to competition. If there is a proponent's meeting as part of the process, it is an excellent venue to ask questions. Typically, the questions and answers will be distributed to all interested parties, and may form an addendum to the RFP package.

To Submit a Proposal or not to Submit?

The decision

Is it worth my while to submit a proposal on this one?



A well prepared Request for Proposals has a clearly defined Terms of Reference with sufficient information to help in the decision of whether or not you should submit a proposal. The Terms of Reference should include information on the following topics:

- Objective
- Background
- Project Description
- Schedule
- Mandatory Requirements/Minimum Standards
- Constraints imposed on the Work
- Support provided to the Contractor
- Deliverables

If the Terms of Reference do not clarify the extent and scope of the work involved you may wish to gather more information through the contact person identified in the RFP.

What will happen if I don't?

Only you can decide whether or not to submit a proposal. But should you choose not to, your eligibility to compete on future projects will be unaffected. Any exceptions to this will be explained in the Request for Proposals. For example, the Request for Proposals may be for the first stage of a project for which competitive offers for subsequent stages will be requested only from respondents to the first stage.

What if I don't agree with all of the terms of the RFP document?

The RFP document outlines the current terms and conditions that all proposals must comply with and will be evaluated on. Non-compliant, conditional or counter-offer responses cannot be considered. Some RFPs may allow for alternate solutions to be presented. If this is not explicitly outlined in the document, then proponents should ensure their proposals directly respond to the requirements outlined in the RFP document to be given full consideration.

What if I win then decide I don't want the contract? Will I be free to back out?

Yes, however you should decide before the closing date and time whether or not you are serious about obtaining & performing the work.

Other proponents

How many firms are invited to submit a proposal?

Depending on the estimated value of the project, the department may invite as few as two firms to submit proposals, may invite all known suppliers of the product or service or issue a public notice with specific invitations. Departments generally will supplement the list by posting a bid opportunity notice on *Contract Registry & Reporting System Website* <http://www.contractregistry.nt.ca> or in a newspaper to ensure all qualified proponents are given the opportunity to compete.

Will you accept proposals from firms other than those invited?

Proposals will usually be accepted from any firm that expresses an interest in submitting a proposal. Exceptions to this would be where an open pre-qualification process was held to identify qualified proponents and where only firms successful on that process were subsequently permitted to submit a proposal.

Preparation time

How much time can I expect to spend on preparing a proposal?

It is difficult to provide advice on this because so much depends on the complexity of the requirement and the magnitude of the potential contract. Some proposals take as little as half a day to prepare and some may take a month or more. This is also dependent on whether the proponent has done a proposal before and whether they are utilizing the services of a professional proposal writer.

How do I make sure I hear about any changes made to the Request for Proposals before it closes?

All information relating to the Request for Proposals, including addendums or minutes of the proponents' meeting will be posted on the GNWT Contract Event Opportunities Website: <https://contracts.fin.gov.nt.ca/>

Project budget

Does the Request for Proposals give the budget? If not, can I find out how much money is set aside for the project?



There are a couple of ways the Request for Proposals can be set up. Usually the Request for Proposals will describe the problem and ask you for a solution and for your fee to deliver that solution. But on occasion, the department, through the Request for Proposals, will describe the project and tell you the budget and say, in effect, "How much of our wish list can you provide for this money?" At other times the departments will provide a range of the available funds. This is in part because creative solutions to our situations are sought and we are often interested in seeing a range of solutions and prices. By releasing a budget figure we may limit the options.

Insurance

Is insurance required for the work and who is responsible to pay for it?

The contract usually requires contractors to indemnify the government against any losses it incurs as a result of the contractor's activities in performing the contract. To ensure that contractors fulfil this indemnity, government requires evidence of adequate insurance. Arrangement and payment of insurance are generally the contractor's responsibility.

Proposal preparation

Content

What makes one proposal better than another?

The proposal that best demonstrates that it meets the department's specified needs will receive the highest score. Before you start writing, there are two things you should determine: the audience and the message.



The audience is usually fairly easy to ascertain; proposals are generally evaluated by staff of the issuing department who will be actively involved in the subsequent contract, sometimes with the additional involvement of PWS. Personnel who could be involved in the evaluation process include some or all of the following people: program manager, technical advisor, financial analyst, or client representative.

The second thing of importance is the message: what exactly is the department looking for? Your proposal should not just describe what you would do if successful, it must be able to convince the department that:

- a) you understand its problem; and
- b) its objectives will be achieved by entering into a contract with you.



An example might be a Request for Proposals for provision of day care for children. The Request for Proposals may say that the department is worried about the children being away from their parents. Instead of just describing the number of hours the children would be in the program, how many children you can take, and the staff to children ratio, you might want to add information about the special training your staff have in providing a home-like environment, or describe how you encourage parents to spend ten minutes getting the children started in an activity as they drop them off in the mornings.

With our examples we are not intending to provide sample wording. You are in the best position to decide what should actually go into your proposal, keeping in mind that the proposal must address all the basic requirements in order to score well.

Where do I start?

Read all the instructions and explanations. Ensure that you have read all of the information in the Request for Proposals, and you understand the department's concerns.

I could offer the top-of-the-line solution or the bare-bones version. Which one is going to win me the contract?



The evaluation criteria are the keys to your success. They show you how proposals are going to be evaluated so you can propose an appropriate solution.

First, whichever proposal you submit, it must meet all the mandatory criteria. Then the order of importance of the desirable criteria, and their relative weightings, will determine the content of your response.

If you are still unsure of what type of proposal would be best, you can submit more than one.

Format

What format should my proposal take?



Many Requests for Proposals will include a suggested format, such as the one described below. If so, the suggested format and sequence should be followed to ensure your proposal receives full consideration. If no format is suggested, the following would probably work for most proposals:

- a) Title Page, showing Request for Proposals number, proponent's name and address, closing date and time, proponent's telephone and fax numbers, e-mail address and the name of a contact person.
- b) One page letter of introduction, signed by an authorised signatory for the proponent.
- c) Table of contents including page numbers. (Make sure all the pages are numbered.)
- d) A short one or two page summary of the key features of the proposal.
- e) The body of the proposal.
- f) Price or pricing formula.

Any additional information, brochures, etc. (May take the form of appendices.)

Partners

Can I sub-contract? How should this be addressed in the proposal?

Yes, you are usually free to sub-contract as long as no conflict of interest is created by your doing so. The Request for Proposals usually asks you to identify all sub-contractors in your proposal and state that you are willing to take responsibility for work performed by the sub-contractor(s). If you are awarded the contract and later want to change one of the sub-contractors you will have to get approval from the department to do so.

Can we get together with another company to submit a joint proposal?

Yes, as long as the proposal makes it clear that one of you is going to take overall responsibility for the work done or indicates that both partners will be jointly or severely liable for their collective work and as long as there is a legal entity with whom the GNWT can enter into a contract. Again, this is only permitted where no conflict of interest is created.

Résumés

Should I include résumés?

Sometimes the Request for Proposals will specifically request résumés. If it doesn't mention them and the experience and skills of the project team are being evaluated, it would be a good idea to include them.

Should résumés be customized for each proposal?

Yes, to the extent practical. It is up to you to decide how much time and effort to put into proposal preparation. Ideally, résumés will be in the same typeface as the rest of the proposal and will highlight skills and experience relevant to the project. They should not be too long.

Level of detail

I've done lots of work for this department before, surely I don't have to describe my company's experience in detail, the way I would to a new client?

Yes, you do. Each proposal must stand alone and will be assessed on its merits. To ensure fairness to all, information not contained in the proposal will not be considered during evaluation. Also, there may be people on the evaluation committee that are not from the department, such as a client representative or someone from PWS.

How much detail should I include in my proposal?

Evaluation of proposals is not a matter of checking boxes to indicate that a criterion has been addressed or not. Therefore to address a topic by saying "Yes, I will do this" is insufficient. The department wants to know how you will do it. The preferred method is to avoid simply paraphrasing the department's requirement. Here are two examples:



Example One

Statement in Request for Proposals: Building should be readily accessible by people with physical disabilities.

Response A – Not Recommended

Our building is readily accessible by people with disabilities.

Response B - Recommended

Our building was selected with our clientele in mind. We are on a main bus route, the front door of the building is right on the sidewalk in front of the bus stop, and there is a parking lot directly beside the building with a drop-off zone and parking stalls for people with disabilities. The floors inside the building are covered with non-slip coating and are painted with clearly visible markings to assist persons who are visually impaired. Although there is a large elevator to the second level, most events take place on the main floor, which has no steps. The information/security desk at the building entrance is staffed at all times.



Example Two

Statement in Request for Proposals: Proponents should have extensive experience in this or a related field.

Response A – Not Recommended

Proponent has extensive experience in this field

Response B - Recommended

The proposed project manager has been a technical writer for twenty-three years. For nine years she was with the Canadian General Standard Board, responsible for providing technical writing training and advice to staff and clients. She now lectures on Technical Writing at the University of British Columbia. A list of her recent publications is attached.

In addition to her lecturing, in the last three years the proposed project manager has completed the following contracts:

- Co-ordinating the writing and production of both the on-line and hard copy user guides to Microsoft Excel Version 6.0
- Preparation of technical documentation for maintenance of Vancouver's SkyTrain.
- Editing quality control manuals for three Alberta manufacturers, all of whom subsequently became ISO 9000 certified.

The other three proposed project team members are experienced and fully qualified technical writers holding diplomas in technical writing from either University of Calgary or the University of Alberta.

I still can't decide which of my two ideas the department would like. Can I submit them both?

Yes (unless of course the Request for Proposals specifically allows for only one proposal). Submit the two ideas as two separate stand-alone proposals so they can be evaluated separately, in the same way as proposals from two different companies would be.

Evaluation criteria

What do the percentages beside the evaluation criteria mean?

The Request for Proposals document will show the weighting that will be placed on each criterion during evaluation. If “experience” shows as 25%, it means that points for experience account for 25% of the total mark. So, if your proposal scores full marks for experience (based on a total of 100 points) you will have scored 25 points toward the total.

Is it possible to score nothing at all on a section and be the overall winner?

It could be, but it's unlikely. It depends how the evaluation is conducted. In some instances there will be an “upset” score, so that proposals will have to score a minimum mark on a given section in order to be further evaluated. In the example above, where experience is given 25% of the total mark, the department may have decided that experience is sufficiently important that it would be unwilling to enter into a contract with a company that did not have at least a minimum level of experience. In this case, the available percentage could be 25%, but proposals may have to score at least 15% in order to receive further consideration.

What are the mandatory criteria versus desirable criteria?

Mandatory criteria describe the features your proposal must have, or elements it must contain, in order to receive further evaluation. The department's determination of whether or not you have met each criterion is by a simple “yes” or “no”. Desirable criteria represent those features the department would like to see in your proposal. Your score in this section indicates how far your proposal goes towards providing what the department is looking for.

Are evaluation criteria other than those identified in the Request for Proposals used?

No. The evaluation committee can only evaluate your proposal in accordance with the criteria and weightings previously provided.

Price

Do I have to worry about submitting my best price now, or will prices be negotiated later with the winner?

Because price is being evaluated along with all the other aspects of your proposal, you should put forward your best price now in an effort to win the business. Although the department sometimes has to negotiate details with the winner, its preference is for a proposal that meets all the requirements without need for further negotiation.

Expenses

Proposal preparation is costly; can I be reimbursed for my expenses?

No. While we understand that preparing a proposal can be expensive, we believe the Request for Proposals to be the most fair and effective way to solicit ideas and give companies the opportunity to compete for government business. We make every effort to eliminate unnecessary expense to proponents.

Timeframe

How can I prepare a schedule with accurate timelines when so much depends on decisions the department makes as the project unfolds?

Perhaps your schedule can make certain assumptions and highlight the various decision points. A separate explanation could identify the assumptions and explain how different decisions might affect the schedule. However, if the department has told you when it wants the work done, make sure you clearly illustrate that your solution meets the department's deadlines.

Executive summary

What should be in the executive summary?

The executive summary should normally not be more than a couple of pages long and it would explain in simple terms what you are proposing. It should describe both the anticipated results and the process you would follow to achieve these. The executive summary should contain all the basic elements of your proposal so that anyone not on the evaluation team would be able to read the summary and understand exactly what you are proposing. The summary should be written in plain English, readily understood by the layperson. It should not contain technical details except to the extent these are essential to an understanding of the proposal.

To avoid

Is there anything I should specifically avoid doing or saying?

- Avoid underestimating the evaluators. People evaluating the proposals are knowledgeable in their fields. Proposals that contain lots of glitz but little substance will not score well.
- Don't take this opportunity to point out flaws in the department's existing program unless it is necessary to do so in order to describe the benefits of your proposal. Proposals should be upbeat and positive and should be suggesting solutions.
- Don't impose conditions on the department. If you make it too difficult for the department to accept your proposal, you can be reasonably sure the proposal won't be accepted.
- Define any acronyms used and refrain from using technical jargon. Your proposal should stand on its substance and not be overly complicated to describe your solution.
- If you are making any assumptions in preparing your proposal, make sure they are clearly stated.
- Do not rely on anyone else to get your proposal in on time. Late proposals can not be accepted, regardless of the reason for being late.

Checklist



Can you provide a proposal checklist?

The following checklist is a useful tool when used in preparing your Request for Proposals:

- Everyone involved in putting together the proposal has read and understood the requirements.
- Note the contact person's name, address, phone numbers, and e-mail address.
- Follow the format required in the Request for Proposals when preparing your proposal.
- The proposal addresses everything asked for.
- The proposal meets all the mandatory requirements.
- Attend the pre-proposal conference if one is offered.
- Use the forms provided, as applicable.
- The appropriate number of copies of the proposal have been made.
- Provide complete answers/descriptions.
- The proposal clearly identifies the proponent, the project, and the Request for Proposals number.
- The proponent's name and the Request for Proposals number appear on the proposal envelopes.
- The proposal will definitely be at the closing location before the closing time.
- Check with the contact person for RFP addenda.
- Review and read the RFP document again to make sure that you have addressed all the requirements.
- The proposal is being delivered using a method consistent with the terms of the RFP.

The Proponents' Meeting



Attendance

Do I have to go to the proponents' meeting?

Not usually. If attendance is mandatory the Request for Proposals will say so. Generally attendance is optional unless the meeting incorporates a site visit. However, if attendance at the meeting is mandatory you will have to go if you want your proposal to receive consideration.

Asking questions

Can I ask questions without having the competition find out who asked?

Yes. Usually you will be offered the opportunity to submit questions in writing in advance of the meeting. These questions should be answered at the meeting without identifying the enquirer.

What sort of information should I expect to get from the proponents' meeting?

The proponents' meeting is intended as an information session to ensure you have all the information needed to submit a sound proposal. You can get clarification on anything that is unclear in the Request for Proposals. If the Request for Proposals doesn't say so, you can find out if the service was contracted previously or done in-house; you can gain an understanding of the rationale for decisions made; you might get an idea of who else is bidding; and you can ask the department what its budget is and what the anticipated time-frame is for contract award.

How can I make sure that I ask enough questions at the proponents' meeting to get the information I need, but not in such a way that I lose any advantage I may have?

Because it would be too easy to give away your ideas, and with them your competitive edge, by asking questions in the wrong manner, it is a good idea to spend some time in advance of the meeting preparing the questions you are going to ask. You might think twice about asking questions along the lines of "Would the following approach be acceptable?"

Proposal presentation and Submission

Appearance

Does it matter how my proposal looks?



There may not be any points allocated to the beauty of the proposal, but first impressions count. You want the department to believe that your company is professional and organized, and your proposal should reflect this. It shouldn't be necessary to go to a lot of expense, but care should certainly go into presentation. Here are some examples or suggestions. None are rules. Although we have tried to identify common approaches, your judgement will always be the best.

- Use a binding method that works, even if it's only a staple. The pages shouldn't fall out when the evaluation committee reads your proposal.
- Use short paragraphs and leave plenty of white space on each page.
- As much material as possible should look as if it was created specifically for this proposal. Attachments should all be pertinent to the proposal. Keep in mind that too much material can be off-putting to evaluators and can even detract from the parts you want them to focus on.
- Related topics should be kept together and statements should not be repeated in the proposal (except, perhaps, statements from the executive summary).
- Avoid cross-references to the extent possible, as it can be hard for evaluators to evaluate the proposal if they have to frequently jump between sections to get the full picture.
- If you choose to use colour to highlight, use it sparingly for greater impact. Any photographs used to illustrate a point should be clear and attractive and not too busy.
- Section headings usually work best if they are the same size as the text or only slightly larger, and it's often best to stick to one typeface throughout the proposal, varying only by using bold face or underline or other formatting. Avoid excessive use of capital letters.
- Always number the pages, preferably with one numbering series from the first to the last page.
- Make sure each copy of the proposal you submit has all of its pages. We cannot accept or consider any missing pages or other information after the closing deadline.

How much emphasis should be put on grammar, spelling, etc?

Your proposal should be easy to read and to understand. Use plain language and write in short, clear sentences. You want to make sure the evaluation team gets the right message. Errors can be distracting so although you are not writing a novel and are not being given marks for creative writing, your spelling and grammar should be accurate.

Should I send in my proposal on a disk or in hard copy?

This is not necessary unless the Request for Proposals states otherwise. Sometimes the department will request the proposal, or a portion of the proposal, to be submitted on a disk, though, so you should read the Request for Proposals carefully for instruction.

How long should the proposal be?

Only as long as it takes to provide the information.

Number of copies

How serious are you about the number of copies of the proposal I am expected to submit? Did anyone stop to think how expensive and how much work the additional copies are?

The reason for the number of copies (often three to five) is that usually a team of people will be evaluating proposals and in order to give your proposal fair consideration these team members will each need a copy. Although it is a lot to ask of you, (and yes, we did think about it) the department has determined that this is the only fair way to ensure that your proposal, looking the way you intended it to look, is evaluated by each team member in a fair manner.

Sending it in

Can I send in my proposal by fax?

Usually the Request for Proposals makes reference to faxed proposals but if you are unsure you should get this clarified.

How important are the noted closing date and time?

Absolutely crucial. Proposals received after the closing time will not be evaluated.



Evaluation of proposals

The steps

How are proposals evaluated?



- i. Shortly after the closing time, the evaluation team meets to review the proposals. The first thing the team does is make sure each proposal has met all of the mandatory criteria. Those not meeting all the mandatory requirements are put aside and will receive no further consideration.
- ii. Those proposals meeting the mandatory criteria are assessed and given points to indicate how the proposal performs against each of the desirable criteria. This can be done by each team member giving a number and the recorder writing down the average of the marks, or it can be done by consensus. Either way, the proposal is discussed in detail and opinions are exchanged as to the extent to which each criterion is met. A scoring sheet similar to the one provided at the end of this document, although with additional space for comments, is usually used.
- iii. The proponent with the highest score becomes the leading proponent. A date may be set with the leading proponent to commence discussions relating to the contract.
- iv. When agreement has been reached with the leading proponent and a contract signed the unsuccessful proponents are then notified.

What is the evaluation committee looking for?

The committee will score your proposal against the evaluation criteria shown in the Request for Proposals. Sometimes the Request for Proposals shows broad headings (for example: proponent experience 40%, program content 20%, price 40%). These headings may be further broken down into sub-criteria for assignment of points, but the sub-criteria will only enlarge upon the already-provided criteria. They won't introduce new categories. The only things the committee can evaluate are those identified in the Request for Proposals.

Presentation

Will I be given the opportunity to make a presentation to explain my proposal?

Not usually. The proposal should contain all the details of your proposed solution so that it can be evaluated without the need for additional information. If presentations are planned, the process is generally described in full in the Request for Proposals.

Consideration

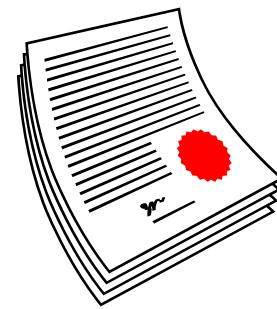
How do I know my proposal will receive full consideration?

Make it easy to read and provide all the requested information. There is usually a section of the Request for Proposals that will tell you what has to be in your proposal. Before you submit your proposal, make sure everything in this section and everything described under "Evaluation Criteria" is either provided or addressed. All proposals that meet all mandatory criteria will be evaluated in full.

Sample spread sheet

	WEIGHTING	AVAILABLE POINTS	PROONENT A	PROONENT B	PROONENT C
Mandatory Criteria	0	0			
a) project team must include an engineer (PEng)		Yes/No			
b) must accommodate at least six clients at all times		Yes/No			
c) tracking tool compatible with Department software		Yes/No			
FOR EACH PROONENT, IF ANSWER IS "YES" TO ALL OF THE MANDATORY CRITERIA, MOVE ON TO EVALUATE THE DESIRABLE CRITERIA					
Desirable Criteria					
a) suitability of the proposed solution	40%	40			
i. extent to which solution meets Department goals		20			
ii. creativity of proposed program		5			
iii. ease of access for clients		5			
iv. implementation plan		5			
v. interaction with related programs		5			
b) price (example scoring system) score = (lowest priced proposal ÷ price on this proposal) x total marks available for price)	35%	35			
c) company background	25%	25			
i. proponent's experience on similar projects		5			
ii. skills of proposed project team		15			
iii. soundness and relevance of references		5			
TOTALS	100%	100 POINTS			

The Contract



Negotiation

What can I expect during contract negotiations?

Typically, items and timings are clarified. Issues not previously dealt with in either the RFP or the proposal are resolved. These are usually small items involving logistics, minor contract terms or timings. They are not usually major cost items or substantive issues

(Asner, Micheal, The Request for Proposal Handbook McGraw Hill, New York, 2000).

What if government and the winner can't reach agreement on contract terms?

Most Requests for Proposal say that if we can't reach agreement with the winner we reserve the right to stop negotiations and move on to try to reach an agreement with the proponent who came in second or to cancel the process.

Content

Is government likely to select another company then incorporate some of my ideas into the contract?

No, prior to use of a proponent's ideas or intellectual property would require permission from the author.

Information Available



Feedback

How soon will I find out whether or not I've won?

Whether you have won or not, you will usually be notified of the outcome within a week or two of the award decision, providing the department has all the necessary approvals to proceed.

Can I get feedback afterwards to find out how I can do better next time?

Yes. Once the decision has been announced you can request information in the form of a "debriefing", conducted either through a meeting or by means of a telephone conversation with one or more members of the evaluation team.

What's the point of attending the debriefing? Will I be able to change the department's mind?

The debriefing is most valuable when you look at it as an opportunity to improve your ability to compete on the next Request for Proposals. The debriefing is not an opportunity to challenge the decision rather the intent of the debriefing is learn about your proposals strengths and weaknesses.

What information is available to me at the end of the process?

Information that is available when requested includes the name of the successful proponent, their overall rating, and the contract amount; the names of other proponents, their overall ratings, and your detailed ratings and overall rating.

Concerns

If I have concerns with the fairness of the process whom should I tell?

Although they are disappointed at not being successful, most proponents find the debriefing satisfies them that the process was conducted fairly. If, however, you still have concerns with the process you should start by talking with the contact person shown in the Request for Proposals.

In closing . . .

Thank you for your interest in submitting a proposal. We trust the information contained in here will be of value and we wish you success with future proposals. Should anything still be unclear it would probably be best to address questions about the specific Request for Proposals directly to the contact person identified in the Request for Proposals.

We would be very interested in hearing whether or not you found this guide helpful. Please address any questions, comments or suggestions to Rebekah Clarke at the following address:

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