

Proposal Submission Protocols & Evaluation Best Practices

Webinar



Agenda

- **Ten Tips to Improve Proposal Evaluations**
- **Explain how this approach saves money**
- **Recommendations for industry partners**

Center for Procurement Excellence (CPE)

Center for Procurement Excellence (CPE)

CPE is a non-profit, 501(c)6 membership organization

MISSION

Improve effectiveness of RFPs for public and private organizations worldwide

GOAL

**RFPs that emphasize the CPE Principles of
Fair, Open, Transparent, Value, and Integrity**

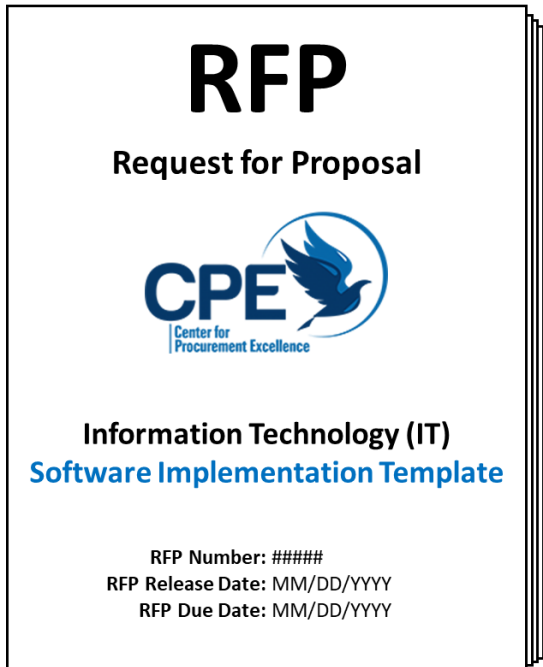
RESOURCES

Professional Development Training, RFP Templates, Advocacy



CPE specializes in High-Performing RFPs

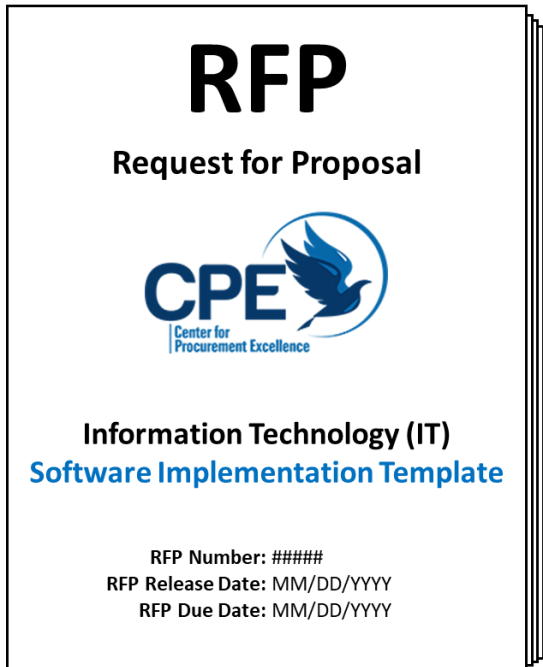
1) Prepare & Advertise



Procurement Process



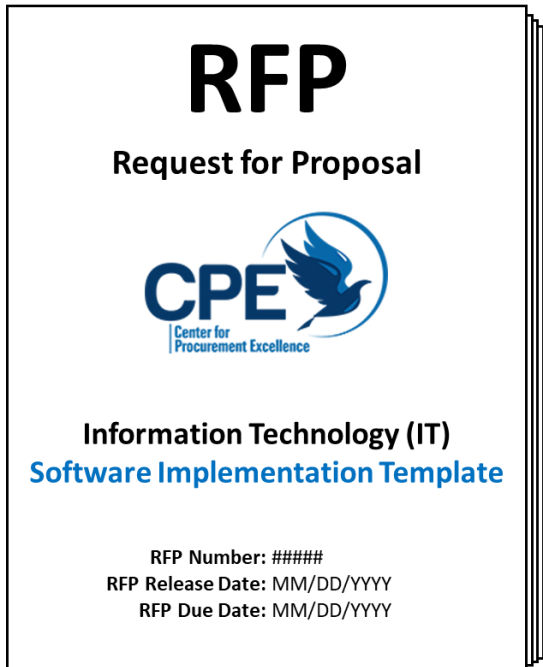
Vendors Submit Responses



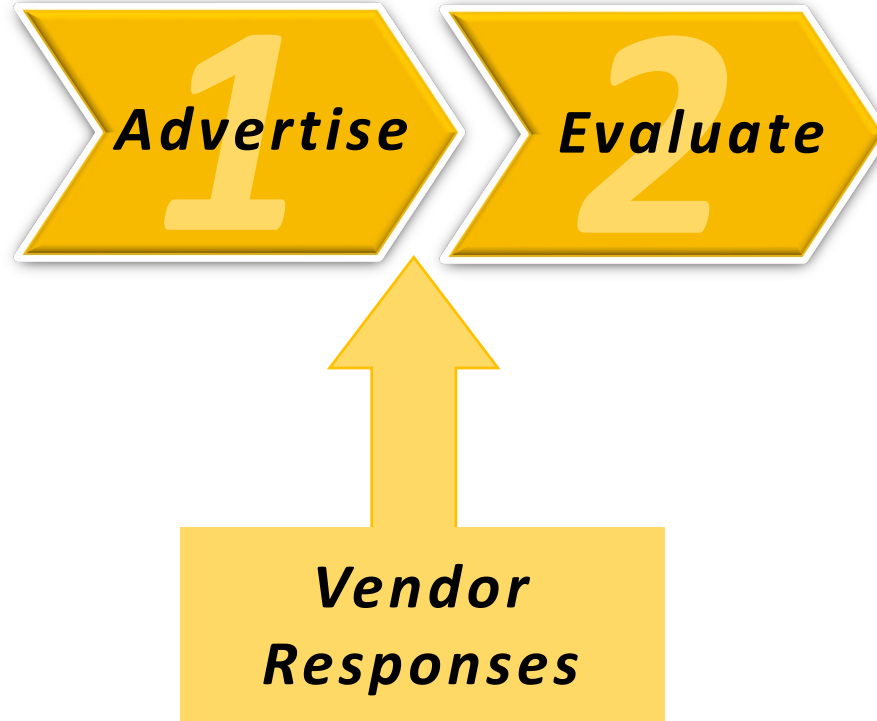
Procurement Process



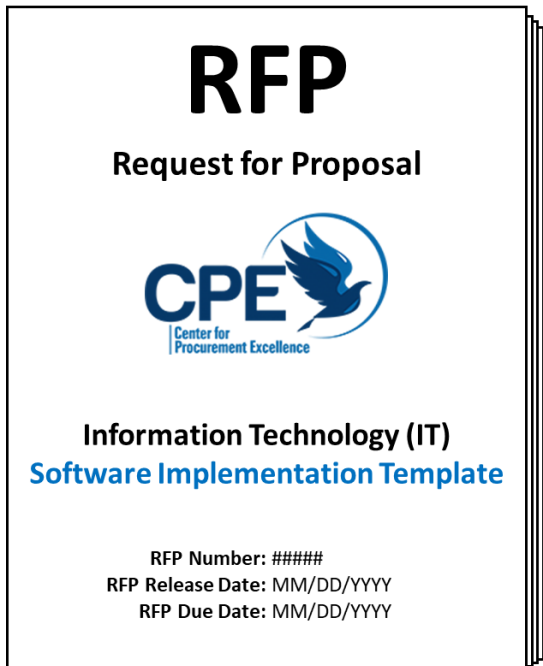
2) Evaluate Responses



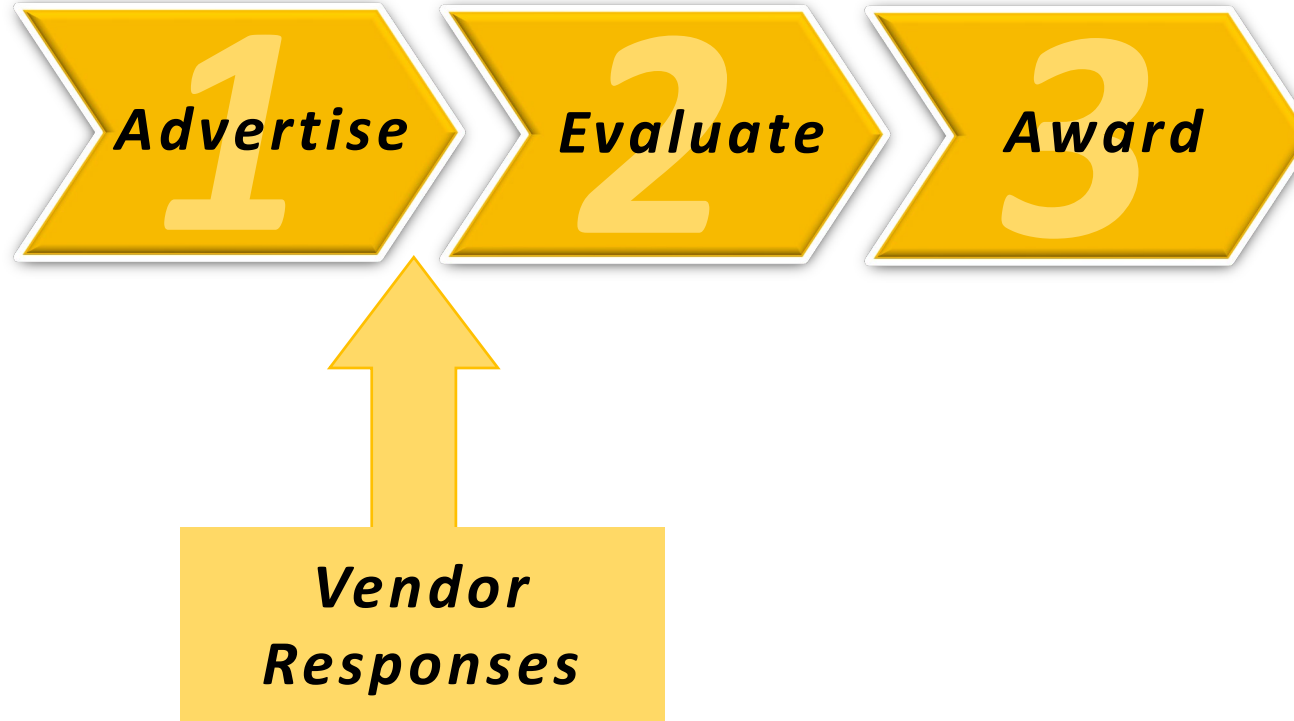
Procurement Process



3) Award Contract



Procurement Process




RFPs are Essential to Successful Project Outcomes

Importance of a High-Performing RFP

RFPs are a direct reflection of your organization and project.

Is your RFP...

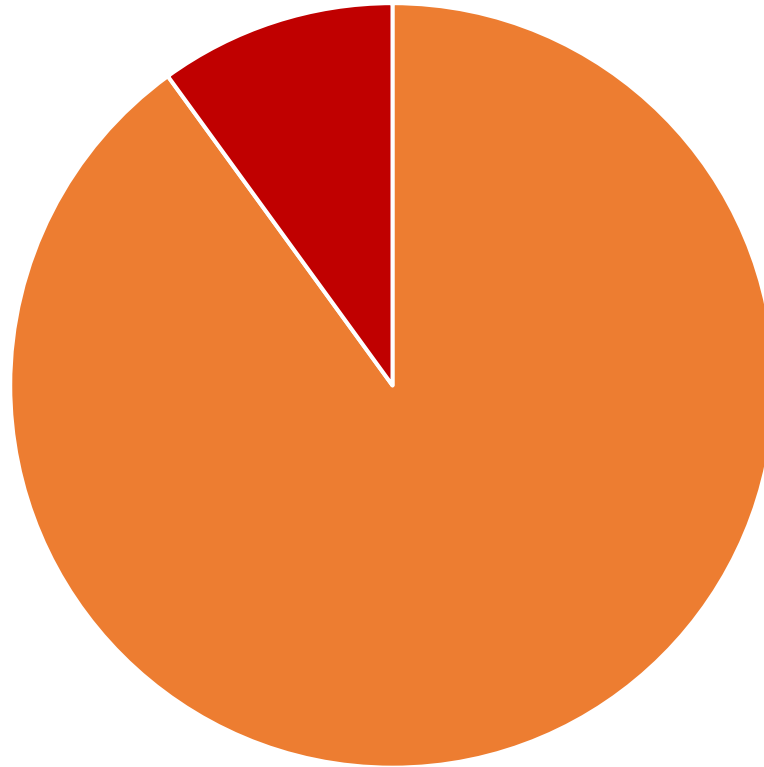
- Organized vs. Scattered?
- Professional vs. “Thrown Together”
- Easy-to-Follow vs. Confusing?
- Tailored vs. Recycled?
- High-Performing vs. “Same Old”?



**RFPs are often
associated with
major, complex, and
high-impact initiatives.**

All Procurements Are Urgent!

10% Extremely Urgent



90% Urgent



What can we do
to move procurement
into **warp speed**?

Foundations of Procurement Excellence

CPE's “Foundations of Procurement Excellence”

- **Fair:** provide all vendors with an equal opportunity to win.
- **Open:** encourage and maximize competition.
- **Transparent:** provide a clear, concise & accurate process.
- **Value:** optimize the organization's return for the spend.
- **Integrity:** ensure confidence & trust with high ethical standards.

Putting RFP Excellence Into Practice

- Fair
- Open
- Transparent
- Value
- Integrity

Strategic Objective:

Become a “**Client of Choice**”
and attract
High-Performing Vendors
across your RFPs

Why are these Foundations so Important?

- **Obvious reason is to stay out of jail or the courtroom**
- **But this is what drives good vendors to your projects, and gets them to invest their time and effort.**

Evaluation Best Practices

Let's Define It: Evaluation Period

- This is an area of weakness for many Clients and can lose **Fairness, Openness, Transparency, Value, and Integrity**



Evaluation Period

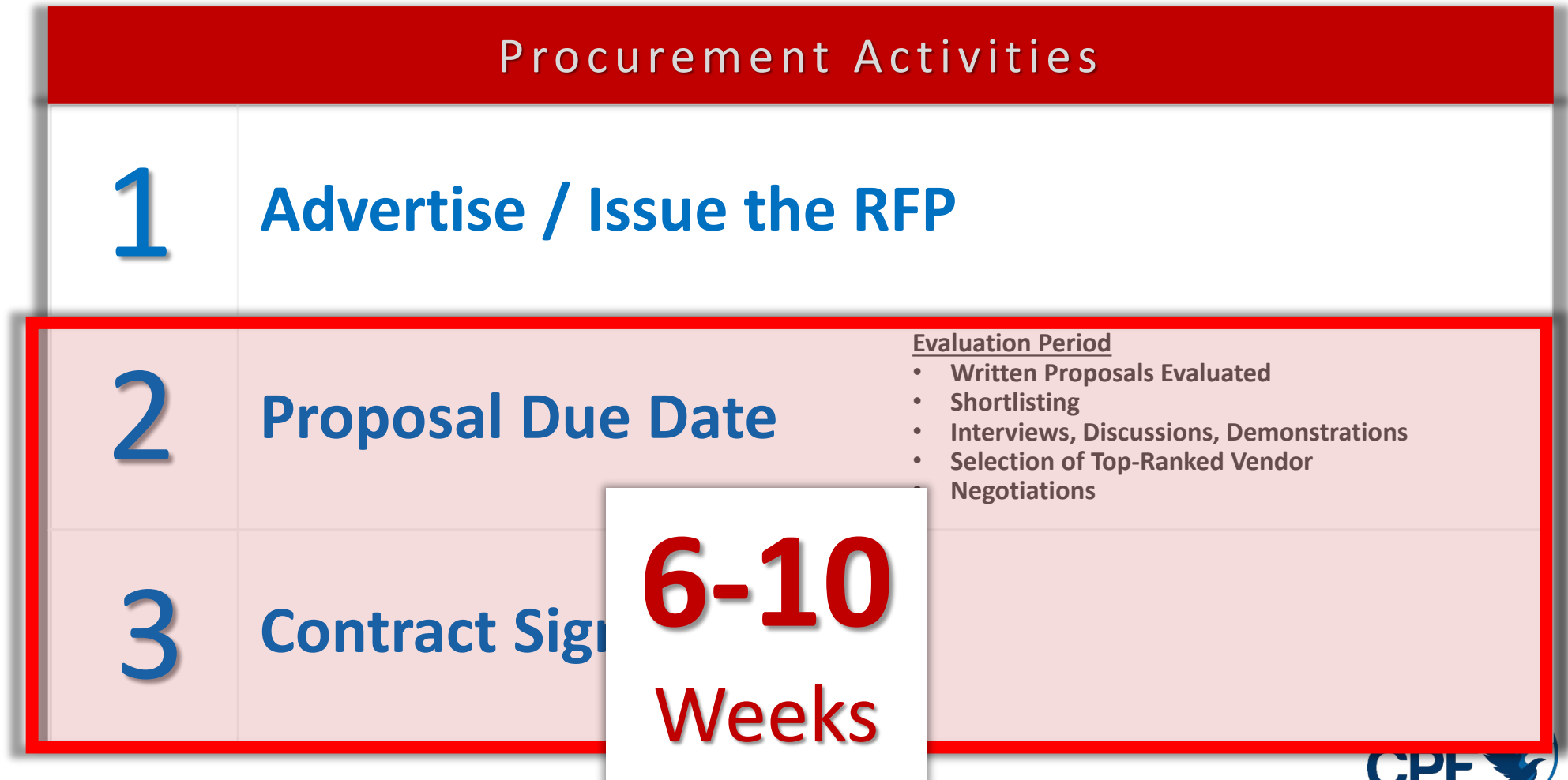


Procurement Activities	
1	Advertise / Issue the RFP
2	Proposal Due Date
3	Contract Signature

Evaluation Period

- Written Proposals Evaluated
- Shortlisting
- Interviews, Discussions, Demonstrations
- Selection of Top-Ranked Vendor
- Negotiations

Evaluation Period



Ten Tips to Improve Proposal Evaluations

- **Understand the Different Types of Evaluation Criteria**

Understand the Different Types of Evaluation Criteria

Weighted

used to formally compute the “best” proposal

Committee Scores

Vendor Proposals are rated by Client using an Evaluation Scale

e.g. Approach, Portfolio, other Qualifications

Numerical Calculation

Vendor Proposals provide Quantities for the Client’s Evaluation Matrix

e.g. Price, Past Performance, etc.

Non-Weighted

used for due diligence & minimum requirements

Mandatory Pass/Fail

Vendor Information that may disqualify them from participation

e.g. Minimum Quals, Financials, Insurance, etc.

Reference Information

Vendor Information for the Client’s review & consideration

e.g. Org Chart, History, Reference List, etc.

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Understand the Different Types of Evaluation Criteria:

Committee Scores

Written Proposal



Understand the Different Types of Evaluation Criteria: **Committee Scores**

Written Proposal



1) Verify **past experience**

- Team vs Individual experience
- Past Projects
- Resumes & References

Understand the Different Types of Evaluation Criteria:

Committee Scores

Written Proposal



1) Verify **past experience**

- Team vs Individual experience
- Past Projects
- Resumes & References

2) Verify **understanding of our needs**

- Approach & Methodology
- Solution & Workplan
- Schedule

Understand the Different Types of Evaluation Criteria

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used to formally compute the “best” proposal

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Understand the Different Types of Evaluation Criteria:

Numerical Calculation



- **Cost/Price should be numeric!!!**
- **Cost is generally submitted in a separate sealed envelope**
- **Not revealed to the Evaluation Committee until evaluation is complete (to minimize bias)**

Understand the Different Types of Evaluation Criteria

Weighted

used to formally compute the “best” proposal

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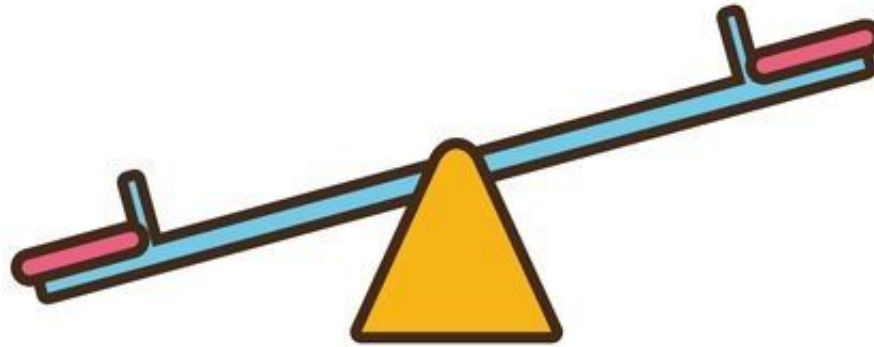
Reference Information

Vendor Information for the Client’s review & consideration

e.g. Org Chart, History, Reference List, etc.

Understand the Different Types of Evaluation Criteria: Mandatory Pass/Fail + Reference Information

- Keep these clear, concise, and understandable!!!
- Do not make these a lot of work for vendors to complete!!!



- What do you need to make an informed selection?
 - Will your org actually read & review this info from all proposals?
- Otherwise gather later but still before signing the contract!

Understand the Different Types of Evaluation Criteria

Weighted

used to formally compute the “best” proposal

Committee Scores

Vendor Proposals are rated by Client using an Evaluation Scale

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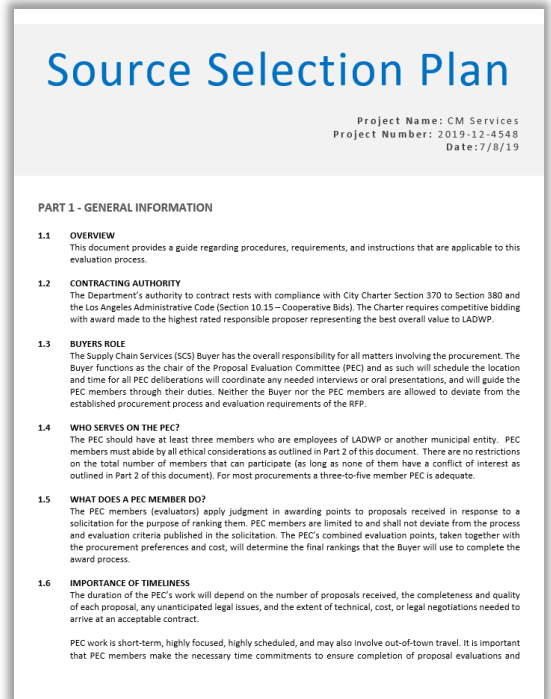
e.g. Org Chart, History, Reference List, etc.

Ten Tips to Improve Proposal Evaluations

- Establish a Source Selection Plan (SSP) before RFP release

Establish the SSP Before the RFP is Released

- Describes how the evaluation and scoring of proposals will be conducted
- Serves as a guide/instructions for evaluators
- This document can also be referred to as:
 - Source Selection Guide (SSG)
 - Proposal Evaluation Guide (PEG)



Establish the SSP Before the RFP is Released

- **Describes how the evaluation and scoring of proposals will be conducted**
 - **Roles & Responsibilities of Procurement / Buyer**
 - **Evaluation Procedures**
 - **Evaluation Instructions**
 - **Ethics and Conflicts of Interest**
 - **Critical Items**

Establish the SSP Before the RFP is Released

- Do not try to figure out the evaluation process after RFP is released....TOO LATE
- Create the SSP prior to releasing the RFP.
 - This allows the evaluators and SME's time to provide input before releasing the RFP.
- Minimizes time spent trying to figure things out
 - (or do something not permitted based on the RFP language)

The SSP should always
be documented to minimize the
Risk of Protest



Ten Tips to Improve Proposal Evaluations

- **Recognize that Evaluators have Bias**

Recognize that Evaluators have Bias



Recognize that Evaluators have Bias



Recognize that Evaluators have Bias

- **Example #1**



Recognize that Evaluators have Bias

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"Do you have any experience in addition to
'been there, done that?'"

Recognize that Evaluators have Bias

- Bias is not always so “foreword” or “shocking”
- Usually, bias comes from Evaluators who:
 - Think they “already know” the best vendor
 - Look at logo/brand more than resources/approach
 - Have pre-conceived notions about the “right” approach
 - Are not open to new ideas

Ten Tips to Improve Proposal Evaluations

- **Balance the Evaluation Committee**

Balance the Evaluation Committee

Most Common Questions:

- 1. How many people should be on the evaluation committee?**
- 2. Who should we select?**
- 3. When should we select them?**
- 4. What are their expectations?**

Balance the Evaluation Committee

First Big Question: How Many People???

3-7

- 3 to 7 is the “sweet spot”

- **Less than 3** = more difficult to balance & defend the scores.
- **Greater than 7** = more difficult to coordinate and keep on track.
- Very small or simple projects may have **3-5 evaluators**
- Complex projects, you should aim for **5-7 evaluators**

Balance the Evaluation Committee

Important to Remember:

- More evaluators you have = the more you can mitigate someone with **significant bias**.

Balance the Evaluation Committee

- **Watch out for bias from Technically-oriented evaluators.**
 - They will rarely have as much experience as the vendor (the purpose of an RFP is to hire a vendor with more knowledge and skill than you!)

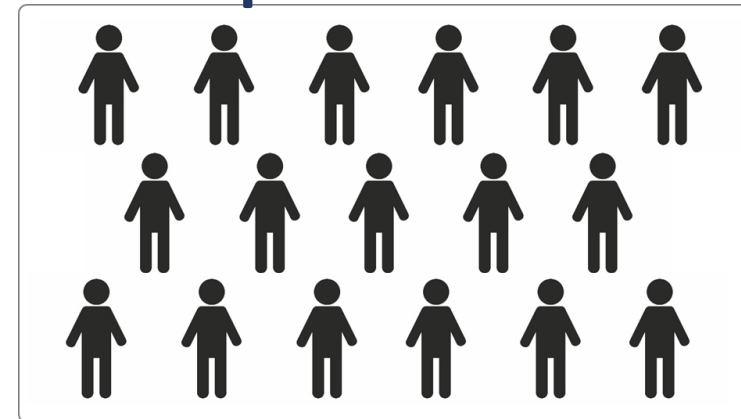
Technical Evaluator



1-2

Lifetime

Expert Vendor



100+

Last 5-Years

Balance the Evaluation Committee

- **Non-technical evaluators are needed too (and can work!)**
 - Need them to fill out the Evaluation Committee
 - (usually not enough technical evaluators to make an entire Evaluation Committee)
 - Every organization has Non-Technical Evaluators
 - Are able to score based on basic “logic” and “reason”



Balance the Evaluation Committee

- **Be cautious of including Executives or Senior Personnel**
 - Can “sway” the rest of the committee
 - Typically very busy = can put timeline in jeopardy



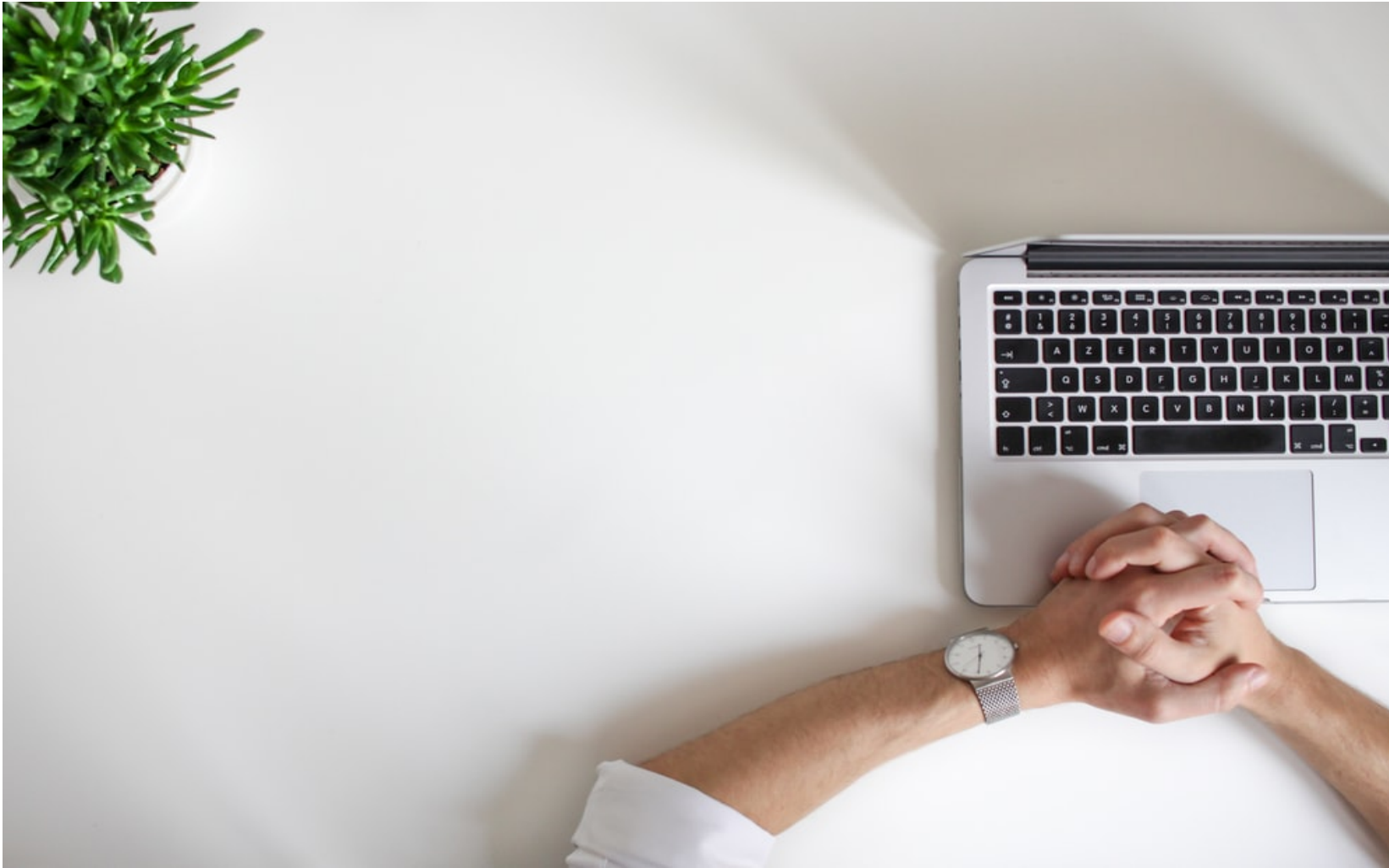
Balance the Evaluation Committee

- **Example #1**



Balance the Evaluation Committee

- **Example #2**



Ten Tips to Improve Proposal Evaluations

- **Avoid Consensus Meetings!**

Avoid Consensus Meetings!

- Avoid at all costs!!!



Avoid Consensus Meetings!

- Example #1: Tax-Accounting system for a State
- 3 vendors proposed. 5 evaluators.
- During consensus meeting, the internal IT “expert” stated:
 - “Vendor 1’s proposal may sound great....but they actually don’t have a major component of what the State needs (data warehousing)”.
 - This individual had done “a lot” of background research (outside of the proposals) and determined that this vendor is not capable of doing the work.
- So the evaluators all adjusted their scores based on what their internal expert said (scores dropped by 25-35%) – yikes!

Avoid Consensus Meetings!

- **Example #1: Tax-Accounting system for a State**
- **However, since only 3 vendors, all were shortlisted to Interviews.**
- **During interviews, Vendor 1 was asked about their inability to perform 'data warehousing'.**
 - The supplier laughed at the question!
 - Said that they have one of the largest data warehousing systems in North America. They went on to list major institutions that were using their systems.
- **After the interviews were over...the IT expert apologized to everyone and said that they were not aware.**

Avoid Consensus Meetings!

- **Example #2: Personal Push for a Score**
- **7 evaluators. Scores were shown. One evaluator argued for 2hrs.**
 - Eventually 4 evaluators said:
“OK, fine, I give up, just change our score to whatever you want, I don’t care any more, I just want to get out of this meeting!”
- **Procurement intervened:**
 - **“Please provide justification for these changes so we can defend your actions in court.”**

Avoid Consensus Meetings!

- It's amazing what actually happens behind the scenes!!!!
- These examples are not unique...they happen frequently.
- Which is why we NEVER recommend consensus meetings.
- They result in a lot of time being wasted, but more importantly, it encourages evaluator influence which goes against core procurement principles!
- If you want to streamline your evaluation process, and improve the fairness, just use the average evaluator scores. This is simple, takes less time, and is much easier to justify.

Individual Evaluations



- Evaluations must be performed **individually** (not group consensus)
- Evaluators must **not discuss** with anyone (only contact Buyer for clarification)
- Evaluations should be **non-biased** (use logic and/or verifiable performance documentation to assist in determining the rating.)
- Evaluators must be **honest and fair** as possible with the rating (with the understanding that these ratings are not being used to award an actual project, but to pre-qualify vendors into an overall program).
- The Buyer reserves the right to **clarify any ratings**, request additional evaluator comments, or modify/reject a rating.

Ten Tips to Improve Proposal Evaluations

- **Use Standardized Proposal Forms**

Use Standardized Proposal Forms

- Major problem with RFP's....when they don't think ahead and plan for when proposals come in.
- You can get a **wide range of proposals** that are very difficult to navigate.

Use Standardized Proposal Forms

Simple Solution: All Criteria Must Be Transformed into a Proposal Form Template!

SUBMITTAL FORM A Proposer Information	
PROJECT INFORMATION	
RFP Number:	_____
Project Name:	_____
PROPOSER INFORMATION	
Company Name:	_____
Contact Information (Individual that can be contacted for clarification on this proposal package)	
Name	_____
Title	_____
Email	_____
Telephone	_____
TAX REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE OR VENDOR REGISTRATION NUMBER	
Each Proposer must provide the Controller's Office with a registration account number issued by the Los Angeles Office of Finance, prior to being paid for any goods or services provided. Persons engaged in any business or occupation within the City of Los Angeles are required to register and pay the required tax. Businesses, including Proposers, subject to this tax are issued a Business Tax Registration Certificate (BTRC) or a Vendor Registration Number (VRN). A BTRC application package is provided in the exhibit of this RFP. Additional information regarding this requirement may be obtained at Office of Finance, Tax & Permit Division, 200 North Spring Street, Room 101, Los Angeles, CA 90012, Phone: (844)663-4411, or on the web at: http://www.lacity.org/finance/ . Please provide your Tax Registration Certificate (TRC) and/or your Vendor Registration Number (VRN) below:	
Tax Registration Certificate (TRC):	_____
Vendor Registration Number (VRN):	_____
TAXPAYER IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (TIN)	
The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) requires that all service providers and goods and materials suppliers furnish a Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) to the party that pays them. After the proposal's due date and upon request by Supply Chain Services, the "Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification (Form W-9)" SHALL be emailed to the Utility Buyer within 5 business days. Any change in Form W-9 information, including legal name or address of the Proposer, will require a submittal of a new Form W-9. Please provide your Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) below:	
Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN):	_____
CONTRACTOR LICENSE	
Please provide your California Contractor License below:	
Contractor License:	_____

SUBMITTAL FORM I Past Performance Questionnaire		
LADWP has requested past performance information on vendors. The vendor listed below has identified you as a client for which they have previously performed work for. We would appreciate you taking the time to complete this survey.		
PART A – VENDOR NAME		
Name of the DB Firm: _____		
PART B – PROJECT BACKGROUND		
Client Name: _____		
Project Name: _____		
Location (City/State): _____		
Date Completed: _____		
Project Size (\$): _____		
PART C – REFERENCE EVALUATION		
Please rate your overall level of satisfaction on a scale of 1 to 10 (with 10 representing that you were very satisfied and 1 representing that you were very unsatisfied).		
CRITERIA	UNIT	RATING
Ability to manage costs	(1-10)	_____
Ability to manage schedule	(1-10)	_____
Ability to meet quality expectations	(1-10)	_____
Overall customer satisfaction	(1-10)	_____
Please provide any additional comments (consider: anything you would do differently, the greatest risk/problems/challenges that were encountered, accomplishments, etc.):		
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 100px; width: 100%;"></div>		
Printed Name of Evaluator	Title	Phone Number
Signature		
Thank you for your time and effort in assisting us in this important endeavor.		
Please return the completed survey to: << The Vendor should enter a valid fax or email here >>		

SUBMITTAL FORM E Approach & Methodology	
SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: This Submittal Form must NOT contain any names that can be used to identify the Proposer, must NOT identify the cost/fee, and must NOT exceed the maximum page limit (see RFP Sections 4.6).	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 500px; width: 100%;"></div>	

Use Standardized Proposal Forms

Example #1:

The Proposer is required to comply with the State's accessibility policies, practices and procedures established in accordance with the American Disabilities Act (ADA). The Proposer must identify if your company have an accessibility policy? If so, Proposers may include a copy of the policy. Identify if your company provide accessibility training and resources to all employees? If so, please describe. Identify if your company provide accessible customer service? If so, please describe. Describe the accessibility features of the service your company is offering. What is your company's process for regular review and updates on accessibility within your industry? Does your service comply with all relevant portions of the ADA? Please describe. Proposers should also include their most recent ADA compliance report. If your company's service does not currently meet ADA or similar accessibility standards, is there an action plan to reach compliance? Please describe and include timelines.

Use Standardized Proposal Forms

- Create a Proposal Form!

PROPOSAL FORM H – ACCESSIBILITY (ADA)

1) Does your company have an accessibility policy? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If so, Offerors may include a copy with your submission

2) Does your company provide accessibility training and resources to all employees? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If so, please describe

3) Does your company provide accessible customer service? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If so, please describe

4) Describe the accessibility features of the service your company is offering.

5) What is your company's process for regular review and updates on accessibility within your industry?

6) Does your service comply with all relevant portions of the ADA? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If so, please describe

Offerors should also include their most recent ADA compliance report, or similar if outside of the State, with submission in Bonfire under 'Supporting Documentation'.

7) If your company's service does not currently meet ADA or similar accessibility standards, is there an action plan to reach compliance? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If so, please describe and include timelines

Use Standardized Proposal Forms

SCENARIO 1

The Proposer is required to comply with the State's accessibility policies, practices and procedures established in accordance with the American Disabilities Act (ADA). The Proposer must identify if your company have an accessibility policy? If so, Proposers may include a copy of the policy. Identify if your company provide accessibility training and resources to all employees? If so, please describe. Identify if your company provide accessible customer service? If so, please describe. Describe the accessibility features of the service your company is offering. What is your company's process for regular review and updates on accessibility within your industry? Does your service comply with all relevant portions of the ADA? Please describe. Proposers should also include their most recent ADA compliance report. If your company's service does not currently meet ADA or similar accessibility standards, is there an action plan to reach compliance? Please describe and include timelines.

SCENARIO 2

PROPOSAL FORM H – ACCESSIBILITY (ADA)

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Use Standardized Proposal Forms

54. Explain at what point the maintenance contract/service level agreement begins and the software warranty or installation/acceptance period ends.
55. Do proposed acquisition and/or ongoing maintenance/support costs include:
- Future enhancements to acquired/licensed application modules?
 - Operating system and related environmental software?
 - Interface maintenance?
 - Architectural changes such as migration to emerging technologies and new methods of systems deployment?
 - If not, describe the conditions and terms under which enhancements/new releases are made available to existing customers.
56. What are your normal support hours (specify time zone)? Where is support staff located?
57. Which of the following support features are available?
- Toll-free hotline
 - Remote monitoring
 - Remote diagnostics
 - Training tutorials
 - Web-based support tracking
58. Do you offer 24/7 software and hardware support?
59. What is the response time for problems reported:
- During regular business hours (and what are your regular business hours)?
 - During off-hours
60. Describe your problem reporting software and tools. Are they available via the Internet? Can a list of outstanding problems and enhancements by clients be accessed online and downloaded?
61. List the top five support questions you receive from your clients.
62. Describe your support process for evaluating and fixing bugs or problems in your software. How would you coordinate problem analysis and resolution with other third party products?
63. Provide a guideline for the type of internal support that will be required, for the number of information systems personnel, by classification, and also non-information systems personnel (i.e., department-based). Describe their roles and responsibilities.
64. What is the range and average for system downtime (scheduled and unscheduled) for your clients' systems?



Use Standardized Proposal Forms

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COMPANY EXPERIENCE – Water Treatment Facilities

Provide information on regarding your company's experience designing and constructing water treatment facilities over the past ten years. Only projects that are 100% complete and operational can be counted (on-going or in-progress projects cannot be counted in this analysis).

	2009-2019
Number of Water Treatment Facilities constructed (#)	
Number of Design-Build Water Treatment Facilities constructed (#)	
If you are a joint-venture (between a construction firm and a design firm), identify the number of Design-Build Water Treatment Facilities constructed together as a team (#)	

PERSONNEL EXPERIENCE

Provide information on regarding the experience of the Key Personnel that have been assigned to this contract (as identified in Submittal Form A) over the past ten years. Only projects that are 100% complete and operational can be counted (on-going or in-progress projects cannot be counted in this analysis).



	Overall Project Lead	Design Lead	Pre-Con Lead	Project Manager	Site Superintendent					
Number of Water Treatment Facilities the individual has participated in (#)										
Number of Water Treatment Facilities the individual has managed/led in a similar role that they will be in on this project (#)										
Number of Design-Build Facilities the individual has participated in (#)										
Number of Design-Build Water Treatment Facilities the individual has managed/led in a similar role that they will be in on this project (#)										
Number of years the individual has been employed with your company (Years)										



Ten Tips to Improve Proposal Evaluations

- **Reduce the Length of Evaluated Documents**

Reduce the Length of Evaluated Documents

- **50 pages vs 5 pages....which is better?**
- **Which one will you actually read and evaluate?**
- **Which one will contractors actually spend more time preparing?**

Reduce the Length of Evaluated Documents



Ten Tips to Improve Proposal Evaluations

- **Ask for the Right Info at the Right Time**

Ask for the Right Info at the Right Time

- **Asking for a Safety Plan on a \$500 Million project...
... is this a good idea???**

Case Study

(2017 High Tech Facility - \$ Billion)

Contents included:

1. Cost
2. Experience
3. Capacity
4. Innovation
5. CX, QA, QC Processes
6. Management Approach
7. Cost Management
8. Cost Control Approach
9. Similar Experience
10. Contract Exceptions
11. Goals
12. KPI
13. Insurance
- 14. Safety Plan**



Ask for the Right Info at the Right Time

- Not saying the Safety isn't important...but these are oftentimes 'canned' & 'copy-and-paste' documents.
 - All qualified vendors will have them.
 - They don't help you differentiate.
 - They are a waste of time to try and read as evaluators
- Not saying to ignore this info...but get it during the negotiation period prior to contract signature!
 - There is approximately "ZERO" value during evaluation.
- Another example: org charts...very rarely do evaluators give different scores for these documents.

Ten Tips to Improve Proposal Evaluations

- **Conduct Effective Interviews**

Conduct Effective Interviews

Interview Checklist:

- Identify an exact time for each interview
- Email the shortlisted vendors (topics and time slot)
- Reserve a room with adequate space (vendor + eval)
- Ensure proper equipment (computer, screen, wifi)
- Copies of rating sheets for evaluators



Traditional Presentation Process?



Key Personnel Interviews



- Conduct an actual ‘interview’ (not presentation)
- No notes, handouts, presentation material
- Interview 2-3 key personnel (primary, secondary, other SME if critical)
 - IT Software: Project Manager, Integration Lead, Technical Lead
 - Construction: Project Manager & Site Superintendent
 - Design: Lead Architect & Lead Engineer
 - Etc.

Whiteboard Exercise



- Layout the project/service from start to end
- Identify areas of greatest risk/concern
- What activities worry you the most
- Anything that you need from us



Ten Tips to Improve Proposal Evaluations

- **Be sure to track Return on Investment!**

Be sure to track Return on Investment!

- **So... does this save money (time)?**

- **Public utility providing electrical power to the Seattle metro area.**
- **10th largest public utility in the U.S.**
- **First in the US to own and operate a hydroelectric facility.**
- **In 2005, it became the first electric utility in the US to fully offset all its carbon emissions and has remained carbon neutral every year since.**

**BECAUSE WE'VE
ALWAYS DONE IT
THIS WAY**

Results of Streamlined Evaluations



- Time Savings on City Light's Major RFPs/RFOs
 - 50% reduction in Evaluation time (per proposal)
 - 75% reduction in Interview time (per vendor)
 - 50% reduction in total procurement duration
- \$20K saved in evaluator time per RFP/RFO

Take-Aways

Evaluation Best Practices: Summary

1. Understand the Different Types of Evaluation Criteria
2. Establish the Source Selection Plan (SSP) before RFP release
3. Recognize that Evaluators have bias
4. Avoid Consensus Meetings!
5. Balance the Evaluation Committee
6. Use Proposal Forms
7. Reduce the Length of Evaluated Documents
8. Ask for the Right Information at the Right Time
9. Conduct Effective Interviews
10. Be sure to track Return on Investment!

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Evaluation Training is Critical

- **Procurement / Buyers must be skilled at training their internal client teams on how to be better evaluators!**
 - Takes Soft-Skills → essentially acting as a “Teacher”
 - Can be difficult for younger / inexperienced Buyers
 - Right templates and tools for RFPs = much easier to accomplish!
- **Remember the “80/20” rule!!!**
 - Perhaps only 20% of transactions are RFPs... but might represent 80% of the dollars!

Thank you!

RFP Templates

General Construction

Construction Manager @ Risk (CMAR)

Roofing

Food Services Management and
Operation

RFP Tools

Source Selection Plan

Reasons to Release Your Budget

SOW Checklist

Would you like a Free Copy of the CPE RFP Roofing template?

Don't see the one you want? Contact us!

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