

MODEL REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

An RFP is made up of several elements, which may vary depending upon the particular RFP. This model RFP is designed to help agencies in the preparation of the body of the RFP. Detailed information on how to develop an RFP can be found on the Division of Purchasing website, www2.state.id.us/adm/purchasing, in the publication *Guidelines for Developing and Evaluating a Request for Proposal*. Care should be taken during the development as the RFP document and the offeror's response to it will form the essential part of the final contract. All language needs to be precise and complete.

The following is a typical RFP layout.

1 Cover Letter

The Division of Purchasing will supply the RFP cover letter. It is automatically generated by the Division of Purchasing electronic purchasing system at the time of RFP release. The cover letter contains instructions to vendors such as the RFP closing/opening date and time, procedures and requirements for vendor questions, number of RFP copies required, state of domicile information, information regarding trade secrets, F.O.B. requirements, and reference to the Idaho Standard Terms and Conditions. Information regarding Proposal Discussions (Best and Final Offers) and Negotiations are also supplied by the Division of Purchasing in the cover letter.

2 Signature Page

While some RFP's issued by the Division of Purchasing may be responded to electronically via the internet-based system, the majority of the proposals are submitted manually. The Division of Purchasing includes a signature page that an offeror must manually sign, in ink, and return with the proposal response. Manually submitted RFP's without a signature page are rejected. RFP's submitted electronically via Purchasing internet-based system possess a digitally encrypted signature and are acceptable without the signature page.

3 Title Page

A simple, single page that identifies the title of the RFP and issuing entity.

4 Table of Contents

A Table of Contents should be supplied with the RFP that outlines information included within. The Table of Contents should include at the minimum the following information:

- Schedule of Events
- Standard and Special Terms and Conditions

- General Information
 - Definitions
 - Purpose or Intent
 - Background
 - Method of Payment
 - Contract Term
 - Presentations or Demonstrations
 - Pre-Proposal Conference
- Technical Specifications
 - Specifications (goods) or Scope of Work (services)
 - Scope of Activity (projects)
 - Project Management
 - Deliverables Schedule
 - Support, Training, or Maintenance
- Vendor Requirements
 - Mandatory Requirements
 - Vendor Organization
 - Vendor Qualifications and Experience
 - References
 - Financials
 - Resumes
- Proposal Response Format
- Cost Proposal
- Method of Evaluation and Award
 - Evaluation Criteria
 - Discussions and Best and Final Offer
 - Negotiations
- Attachments

5 Schedule of Events

A schedule of events is valuable information for potential proposers. It outlines the expected timetable for the procurement process.

Sample:

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>
RFP Release Date	November 3, 2003
Deadline for Receipt of Written Inquiries	November 17, 2003
Written Responses Distributed	November 21, 2003
Proposal Due Date	December 8, 2003 @ 5:00 PM MST
Proposal Public Opening Date/Time	December 9, 2003 @ 10:00 AM MST
Evaluation Period	December 10-22, 2003
Anticipated Contract Award	January 1, 2004

6 Standard and Special Terms and Conditions

The cover letter issued by the Division of Purchasing references the Idaho Standard Contract Terms and Conditions and, where required, the Idaho Hardware and Software Terms and Conditions and gives the URL address on the Internet where a vendor can view and download them. The State of Idaho Standard Contract Terms and Conditions contain many of the general contract terms that apply to the RFP. These include the requirements for termination of the contract, a non-appropriations clause, and a term specifying that Idaho law applies to the contract.

Special Terms and Conditions that are specific to the individual RFP being issued such as those for janitorial contracts, lease/time purchases, vehicle leases, price agreements, and/or other miscellaneous terms and conditions are provided by the Division of Purchasing. Any other special terms and conditions required by the agency should be supplied to the Division of Purchasing for inclusion in the RFP, such as unique requirements related to receipt of federal funds or complying to federal or state regulations.

Agencies should review all terms and conditions to consider whether or not they are appropriate for the particular RFP. Agencies and Division of Purchasing should take time to consider the implications of using the standard language in each transaction. Agencies are admonished to work with Purchasing and their assigned legal counsel if they feel that the State of Idaho Standard Contract Terms and Conditions or the Idaho Hardware and Software Terms and Conditions are not appropriate for the particular RFP.

7 General Information

7.1 Definitions: List any terms or definitions that are specific to the RFP that may not be clear to all offerors. Special attention should be given to information technology terms that may not be clear to all offerors.

7.2 Purpose or Intent: A statement of intent or purpose relating to the general type of service or goods required, the location(s), and any requirement for specialized personnel, equipment or tools. This information should be sufficient enough for interested offerors to determine whether or not they are able or wish to offer a proposal. The purpose must be a clear and complete overview of everything the agency wants, needs, and requires.

Suggested Wording: The purpose (or intent) of this RFP is to solicit competitive, sealed, proposals to establish a contract for the (lease, purchase, development, management, etc.) of (description of product or type of service) for the (agency name).

7.3 Background: Description of the function of the agency that requires the service or goods. Explain why the service or goods are needed and the objectives of the agency. If applicable, describe the current method or system in use and its deficiencies.

7.4 Method of Payment: The agency should address how payment will be made to the contractor, whether monthly, quarterly, upon specific deliverables, or at completion of project. If applicable, the agency should outline any information required on the invoice or statement, to whom and where it is to be submitted, at what date and time it is due, and any other relative information.

7.5 Contract Term: Specify exactly the term of the contract, when it begins and when it expires, along with any provisions for renewal.

Suggested Wording: The contract resulting from this RFP will commence upon the State's execution of the contract and will end (date, months, or years later), with an option to renew for a period of (months or years).

7.6 Presentations or Demonstrations: If required, explain in detail the format, time, and any other relevant information that offerors would need to know to prepare a presentation or demonstration.

7.7 Pre-Proposal Conference: Consider whether a pre-proposal conference for potential offerors is needed to further explain, clarify, or identify areas of concern in the RFP.

Suggested Wording: A (mandatory or optional) pre-proposal conference is scheduled at (place and time) on (date) as identified on the RFP cover letter. Each potential offeror may send a maximum of two (2) representatives.

Specific questions concerning the RFP should be submitted in writing prior to the pre-proposal conference. Additional questions may be entertained at the conference; however, responses may be deferred and answered at a later date. Oral responses by the State are to be considered tentative. Written copies of all questions and official State responses will be supplied to potential offerors.

8 Technical Specifications

8.1 Specifications: Used for goods, specifications should list the minimum characteristics and objectives required by the user. They should include issues such as environmental concerns, product-testing requirements, or other specific concerns relative to the RFP.

8.2 Scope of Work: Used for services, this is a detailed, step-by-step description of the work to be performed by the contractor, organized to reflect the order in which the work is to be performed. Identify the major task headings and subtasks for performing the work. Describe each task as carefully and with as much detail as possible. Each task should be described in a separate, numbered paragraph, and there should be a deliverable product or measurable standard for completion for each task.

8.3 Scope of Activity: For long-term projects, this is a comprehensive definition of the exact area(s) to be addressed during the project. Define the working environment. This is a project overview, which closely relates to the objectives, except it will be used to address the areas (geographic, organizational, etc.), in which the project activity takes place. Define both the vendor's and the state's responsibilities.

8.4 Project Management: Outline how the agency and the contractor will monitor timetables and deliverables or measurable standards for completion specified in the RFP. In a complicated, long-term project, specify who will be responsible for meeting goals, keeping the project within the contracted cost, and keeping the project within the scope of work outlined in the RFP.

8.5 Deliverable Summary and Schedule: If applicable, establish a general schedule of events or estimated timetable that lists the deliverables or measurable standards for completion in sequential order, beginning with issuance of the RFP to the final expected date of completion of the contract.

8.6 Support, Training and Maintenance: If required, identify in detail any support, training, and maintenance required.

9 Vendor Requirements

9.1 Mandatory Requirements: This section outlines any mandatory requirements that an offeror must meet to perform the work described in the RFP. This may include such things as proper licensing or special accreditation, proof of insurance, bonding requirements, etc. Mandatory requirements are evaluated on a pass-or-fail basis.

Suggested Wording: The offeror must provide the following mandatory information (list the requirements). Failure to provide this information may be cause for the proposal to be rejected.

9.2 Vendor Organization: The offeror should outline their organization and describe how this qualifies the organization to be responsive to the requirements of the RFP. Examples might include their company size, distribution system, customer service structure, number of employees, technical licenses or certificates relative to the product or service being offered.

Suggested Wording: Describe your organizational structure and explain how your organization qualifies to be responsive to the requirements of this RFP.

9.3 Vendor Qualifications and Experience: The offeror should describe their organizational and staff experience providing similar services or goods described in the RFP in sufficient detail to demonstrate their ability to perform the functions outlined in the RFP. In long-term projects, ask for their experience, capability, and commitment to perform project management functions.

Suggested Wording: Describe your (or your company's staff) qualifications and experience providing similar services or goods as required in this RFP.

9.4 References: Industry references may be required and used as an evaluation tool if identified as such in the RFP. A minimum of three references where the offeror has provided similar products or services should be used

Suggested Wording: The offeror shall provide a minimum of three (3) trade references including names of persons who may be contacted, position of person, addresses, and phone numbers where similar products or services similar in scope to the requirements of this RFP have been provided.

Optional Wording: Included with this RFP is a questionnaire that must be sent to any references cited in your proposal response. The questionnaire instructs references to fill out and return the document directly to the Division of Purchasing office. The offeror shall send this questionnaire to a minimum of three (3) trade references where similar products or services similar in scope to the requirements of this RFP have been provided. The offeror shall provide a listing of references where the questionnaires were sent, including names of persons, position of person, addresses, and phone numbers.

9.5 Financials: A disclosure of financial resources may also be required to assure that the offeror has sufficient resources and stability to complete the RFP project.

Suggested Wording: The offeror shall provide with the RFP response proof of financial stability in the form of financial statements, credit ratings, a line of credit, or other financial arrangements sufficient to enable the offeror to be capable of meeting the requirements of this RFP.

9.6 Resumes: Resumes may also be used as an evaluation tool.

Suggested Wording: The offeror shall provide resumes for each staff member responsible for design, implementation, project management, or other positions identified in the requirements of the RFP. Resumes shall include education, experience, license, and/or certifications of each individual.

10 Proposal Response Format

Requiring all offerors to use the same or similar format when submitting proposals can make the evaluation process much easier and speed the process. You may provide specific directions to the offeror on preparation of the proposal. If used, clearly define the type and nature of the information required in the proposal. The offeror must be made aware that their proposal will not be considered if required information is not provided.

A few suggested formats and wording are:

- The proposal must be submitted in the following fashion [describe]. If the proposal is not submitted in the required format, the proposal will not be considered.
- The proposal shall be submitted under the same cover at the same time, in two (2) distinct sections: a *Business or Technical Proposal* and a *Cost Proposal*.
- Proposals are to be prepared on standard 8-1/2" x 11" paper. Foldouts containing charts, spreadsheets, and oversize exhibits are permissible. The pages should be placed in a binder with tabs separating the sections of the proposal. Manuals and other reference documentation may be bound separately. All responses, as well as any reference materials presented must be written in English.
- Proposals must respond to the RFP requirements by restating the number and text of the requirement in sequence and writing the response immediately after the requirement statement.
- Figures and tables must be numbered and referenced in the text by that number. They should be placed as close to possible to the referencing text. Pages must be numbered consecutively within each section of the proposal showing proposal section and page number.
- Proposals shall be based only on the material contained in this RFP. The RFP includes official responses to pre-proposal conference questions, addenda, and any other material published by the State pursuant to the RFP. The offeror is to disregard any previous draft materials and any oral representations it may have received. All responses to the requirements in Sections [list appropriate section] if this RFP must clearly state whether the proposal will satisfy the referenced requirements, and the manner in which the requirement will be satisfied.

11 Cost Proposal

This should contain all costs to the agency and be presented in the format described by the RFP. For example: the RFP may require detailed costs by tasks and to be acceptable the offeror must present it in that format. Generally, cost proposals are submitted in a *separate sealed envelope* marked *Confidential Cost Proposal* to be opened only after the evaluation of the technical section of the proposal is complete.

Suggested Wording: The offeror shall submit a cost proposal in a separate sealed envelope marked Confidential Cost Proposal. The Cost Proposal shall be opened only after the technical portion of the proposal has been evaluated.

12 Method of Evaluation and Award

12.1 Evaluation Criteria The RFP must state in general terms all of the evaluation factors and their relative importance, including price. Points assigned to each criterion are usually included in the RFP. Including points makes offerors aware of which items are relatively more important than others can influence an offeror in the preparation of their RFP response.

Suggested Wording: An Evaluation Team composed of representatives of the State of Idaho will review the proposals. The criteria listed below will be used to evaluate proposals for the purpose of ranking them in relative position based on how fully each proposal meets the requirements of this RFP.

<u>Evaluation Criteria</u>	<u>Points</u>
Mandatory Requirements	Pass-or-Fail
Technical Capability and Solution Approach	300
Understanding of project requirements	
Ability to meet timelines	
Other	
Managerial and Staff Capability	300
Past performance (experience)	
Key personnel	
References	
Other	
Cost	<u>400</u>
Maximum Total Points	1000

12.2 Discussions and Best and Final Offers Detailed information is provided as a part of the cover instructions provided by the Division of Purchasing. Suggested wording to use here:

BEST AND FINAL OFFERS: The State may, at its sole option, either accept an offeror's initial proposal by award of a contract or enter into discussions with offerors whose proposals are deemed to be reasonably susceptible of being considered for award. After discussions are concluded an offeror may be allowed to submit a "Best and Final Offer" for consideration.

12.3 Negotiations Detailed information is part of the cover instructions provided by the Division of Purchasing when an RFP is released. Use the following suggested wording here:

NEGOTIATIONS: The State may, in its best interests, elect to enter into negotiations with the apparent low responsive and responsible bidder.

13 Attachments

This section is for any additional information that relates to the RFP and is necessary to further clarify contents of the RFP. Any appendices, charts, diagrams, or graphs referenced in the RFP would be placed here. Information technology diagrams, such as LAN or WAN diagrams, would appear here.

14 Format and Numbering

While this is no correct form or numbering scheme, find one that works and use it consistently. Here is a suggested format:

1. Main Topic
 - 1.1. Sub Topic
 - 1.1.1 Detail
 - 1.2 Another Sub Topic
 - 1.2.1 Detail
 - 1.2.2 More Detail
 - 1.2.3 More Detail
 - 1.3 Another Sub Topic

2. Main Topic
 - 1.1 Sub Topic
 - 2.1.1 Detail

Add page numbers to facilitate quick reference for yourself and vendors. Make sure any internal references to any page number are correct and stay aligned during pagination and you revise the document.

15 Helpful Hits

Here are some helpful hints based on tears of experience and embarrassing errors:

- Use caution with spell check. Don't be a victim of "Wrong word, spelled correctly."
- Have someone else proofread the final document.
- Beware of the "search and replace" monster.
- Time is your friend, speed is your enemy. Take time to do it right.
- Save often.
- When making corrections, amendments, and addendums to an RFP, be sure to correct the original document in your file.
- Think like a vendor. Imagine you are trying to respond to the RFP. Is it presented in a clear and legible manner?

16 Checklist

A checklist is helpful tool for compiling information for your RFP. Attached is a sample based on this “model” RFP format.

RFP Checklist

- ❑ Cover Letter
- ❑ Signature Page
- ❑ Title Page
- ❑ Table of Contents
- ❑ Schedule of Events
- ❑ Standard Terms and Conditions
- ❑ Special Terms and Conditions
- ❑ General Information
 - Definitions
 - Purpose or Intent
 - Background
 - Method of Payment
 - Contract Term
 - Presentations or Demonstrations
 - Pre-Proposal Conference
- ❑ Technical Specifications
 - Specifications (Goods)
 - Scope of Work (Services)
 - Scope of Activity
 - Project Management

- Deliverables/Measurable Standards Schedule
 - Support
 - Training
 - Maintenance
- Vendor Requirements
 - Mandatory Requirements
 - Vendor Organization
 - Vendor Qualifications & Experience
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