



Guide

RFP: Request for *Perfection*

Top Practices for Managing a
Competitive Bid Process



POWER RFP

Leading a competitive bidding process can be painful. It all starts fine with sending your competitive bidding invites (RFx) out to your suppliers one by one, but then, very quickly, a lot of information starts coming in from various channels and formats.

For most businesses, buyers conduct competitive bidding initiatives by sending out RFx documents via email one by one. Shortly after, a crisscross of communications, phone conversations, face-to-face meetings, and paper notes, start to take place, making all the information a challenge to sort through and organize.

In the end, you are painfully sorting through all the data and trying to make sense of everything. And that's just one project. As you take on additional and more complex, this process can quickly get messy and overwhelming.

This guide is designed to provide you with best practices on how to conduct multiple competitive bids projects without losing your head (or the best deal).

Here are some best practices and tips to lead a successful competitive bidding project.

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Know what you are looking for.

In order to get exactly what you want, you need to know exactly what you want. It is extremely important to gather all the requirements before starting the procurement process. The first thing a buyer should do is to fully understand the purchase requirement.

This can be achieved through:

- Interviewing the requester, understand the challenge and what the requester what to achieve.
- Reviewing your RFI process with potential vendors, consultants, and other industry experts

Once the requirements are fully understood, it's time to list out the specifications of the request. This is where the project owner needs to be thorough and precise – indicated all the hard requirements. If there are areas to be flexible, you should also include parameters.

Sample Questions for Requirements Gathering

For the Requester

What are you looking to obtain?

How would you rank these attributes in order of importance: quality, performance, speed, service level.

What is the current challenge you are facing?

What is the result you are looking to achieve?

Special requirements, features, work process, etc.

Was this obtained in the past, if yes, any learnings?

For the Vendors

Has proponent delivered such request in the past

Explain current needs and desired outcomes and ask the proponent to make suggestions.

Ask what proponents think is the best solution for the situation



Be precise on your email subject line.

Ever get an email from someone without the subject? That email, after first glance, gets lost very quickly and probably won't even be opened. Email Subject Lines is one of the most important components of your email. This is what your audience sees and decide whether to read it or send it to the junk folder.

Email subject line should provide a quick context to the details of the email. In procurement, if you are sending out an RFP on some landscaping work, your goal is to solicit quality proposals. So don't simply title

your RFP email: "landscape work"; it is important to boldly indicate that this is an important RFP opportunity, it is a big opportunity, and it is urgent. For example, the RFP email should be titled "RFP - 2022 annual landscape program (closing Nov 15th, 2021)". This title indicates it is an RFP opportunity, a full-year contract, and there is an urgency to get the proposal in by Nov 15th.

Email Subject Cheat Sheet

Email Subject Formula

RFP - {project year or period} {Name of the project} {Deadline date}

Email Subject Do's and Don'ts

Good	Bad
RFP - 2022 annual landscape program (closing Nov 15th, 2021)	Landscape work
RFP - 2021 Ocean Avenue Full building appliance replacement (closing Feb 28, 2021)	Appliance purchase
RFQ - 2022-2023 Waste Removal Program (closing Sept 30, 2021)	Garbage Service



Always pre-qualify your suppliers before the invite.

Before inviting suppliers to bid on your project, always pre-qualify the participants. There is a whole art in how to qualify a supplier. But at a minimum, you should at least make sure the seller can deliver what you are looking for, in the scale and spec you are seeking and can deliver to the location you are procuring for. You should also make sure you have the

correct seller rep to send the invite to, and give him a heads up that a business opportunity is coming. Nothing is more embarrassing than sending out an RFx invite to the wrong person or getting a response back that what you are looking for is not their business.

Supplier Pre-Qualification Checklist and Questions:

Vendor Name: _____

- ☐ Does this firm have the experience and capability to deliver the request?
- ☐ Does this team have the capability and scale to deliver the request on time?
- ☐ Check references on service level, quality, and performance
- ☐ Do I have the contact to the correct rep who can help me?
- ☐ Does the rep fully understand what we are looking for?
- ☐ Does the proponent have the resource (facility, equipment, tools, etc) to complete the request?
- ☐ Can the proponent meet the requirements on good ethics, health & safety, and other best practices?
- ☐ Is the proponent in good financial standing to complete the request?



Organize the information as it roll-in.

Competitive bidding projects often involve a lot of files, documents, and communications that all arrive at different times through different channels. It is up to the project owner to sort out all the info to make sense of everything. If you leave it to the end to review all the information, you may be spending hours digging through historic emails, notes, and other

messages to gather all of the info for analysis. Thus, a good practice is to organize information as they arrive. The quick and simple way is always to create folders by project name and archives as info roll-in or have a system that tracks and tags them for you.

Keep track of your vendors.

Create a checklist on invited vendors, when was the project invite sent out, when proposals/quotes have been received, which vendor declined will allow the project owner to stay on top of all the vendor status.

Examples of project folder organization by project year

Examples of project folder organization by project year

- 2020
 - 2020 Window cleaning
 - PFP document
 - Proposals
 - Award/Contract
 - 2020 Tractor Purchase
 - RFQ document
 - Quotes
 - Award/Contract

Examples of project folder organization by project type

- Window cleaning
 - 2020
 - PFP document
 - Proposals
 - Award/Contract
 - 2021
 - PFP document
 - Proposals
 - Award/Contract
- Equipment Purchase
 - 2021 Equipment RFP
 - RFP document
 - Quotes
 - Award/Contract



Simplify evaluation.

Once all the proposals are in, you as the buyer are responsible for preparing all the proposals for evaluation with the stakeholders.

Laying out all the vendor proposals on the table for everyone to read themselves is not elegant. Each vendor usually presents their proposal format that looks very different from one another. Buyers should take a more scientific approach by utilizing Microsoft Excel (or other available applications) to put together a comparison grid.

Create analysis categories and feature comparisons and compare

each vendor's proposal items side by side. This may involve some follow-up communication to gather more info, but the effort will be worth it. Additionally, this may also involve normalizing the answers for comparison. For example, vendors will provide a 52-week schedule while some others will provide a 12-month schedule.

Normalizing these numbers will ensure that you're comparing apples to apples. Remember, Good information will lead to a good decision.

Presenting key findings and summarize

It is your job to present proposals and your analysis and guides the stakeholders on an informed decision. Instead of letting each stakeholder interpret their reading of the vendor proposal, a good practice you can adopt is to summarize the key findings and summarize your recommendations. You can use an excel grid to draw a comparison list, use graphs to show trends and opportunities, or whatever you need to deliver the message. By taking the lead on this, it demonstrates your understanding of the business needs and highlights you as the source of the solution.

Additionally, you may want to provide different options as some stakeholders may prioritize certain aspects more than others.

For example, local service vs low cost vs timeline.

This separates a seasoned procurement professional from a simple coordinator.

Take advantage of existing tools to sharing and archive key documents

Another easily available application is Microsoft OneNote. This application is part of the Microsoft Office suite of applications and should be readily available in most business environments. There are many good ways to good ways to utilize OneNote to improve your procurement business:

- A digital whiteboard for all to contribute – The project owner can create a shared digital whiteboard area through the use of OneNote and invite different stakeholders to join. Engineering, accounting, and marketing can all enter their specs, requirements, concerns, and other important notes. All comments and contributions are available to everyone so the whole team can be on the same page.
- A repository for all to access
 - Project owner can archive documents/contracts on OneNote, organize all the documents by utilizing tabs and sub-tabs, and insert a table on the page. Then invite a colleague to access while limited their ability to edit the repository. This allows appropriate team embers to easily access essential documents from a central location.

Recommended Document saving & sharing



Use an application like Microsoft OneNote for organization and collaboration.

A digital whiteboard for all to contribute in real-time

Specs collection

August 10, 2021 9:10 PM

Hello John, Amy, and Mike,
Please enter your respective requirements below:

Sections	Info to be completed by:	Info
Project Name	James	2021 Annual Window Cleaning
Specification and Requirements	Mike	Annual Window Cleaning service - outside glass only include balcony glass To be performed during May Best Environmental friendly cleaning agents only. Include visual inspection and report on window structure, seal, surround facade
Safety Requirements	Amy	Verify roof anchor certification prior to work start. Ensure all safety signs are displayed Ensure all LOTO protocols are followed.
Business Terms	John	Net 30 day payment terms Invoice to be billed at completion
Other Conditions	James	Please book service with building at least 7 days ahead.

Share

This notebook: James's Notebook

Send an email invitation

Type email addresses

Can edit Can edit Share

This notebook is shared with

James Liang Owner

JL [Woman] RL [Man]

A repository for all to access

2021 Contracts

August 10, 2021 9:10 PM

Tracking #	Program/Project Name	Start Date	End Date	Notes	Agreement File
001	2021 Window Cleaning	May 5, 2021	May 31, 2022	Annual window cleaning to be performed in May	Contract File
002	2021 - 2022 Security Contract	Jan 1, 2021	Dec 31, 2022	Baseline security patrol service for Ocean Ave location.	Contract File
003	2021 Major Appliance Bulk Order			100 Fridge 100 Stoves 100 Dishwashers	Contract File
004	2021 Office Cleaning	Jan 1, 2021	Dec 31, 2021	3x per week, hard office cleaning	Contract File
005	2021 - 2023 office phone plan	May 3, 2021	April 30, 2023	2 year phone contract 4 outside lines, 40 extensions	Contract File
006					Contract File

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Organization is skill.

Many of the skills required for a great procurement professional are in the organization category. When faced with so many open RFPs, the only way to make it is to be as organized as possible.

Let's Recap:

- Know what you're looking for - ensure to get all your requirements
- Be precise in your invite email subject line - no vagueness
- Pre-Qualify your suppliers
- Organize your information as it comes in
- Keep Track of Vendors
- Simplify Evaluation
- Present Key findings to stakeholders
- Sharing and save key documents

You don't have to do it alone.

Yes, you can do many of the guide points outlined yourself independently, or you can use a procurement tool such as Power RFP.

Power RFP is designed specifically for procurement professionals to centrally coordinate all your competitive bidding requests, project communications, and collect all proposals in one place making it easier for you to be organized, run all your procurement projects and - above all else - keep your sanity.



Power RFP was created by Procurement Professionals for the Procurement Community.

Perfect for all procurement environments. Power RFP is highly flexible, accessible, and will add immediate performance to all your procurement and sourcing initiatives.



Stay Organized and Coordinated



Analytics and Decision Support



Receive Better Proposals



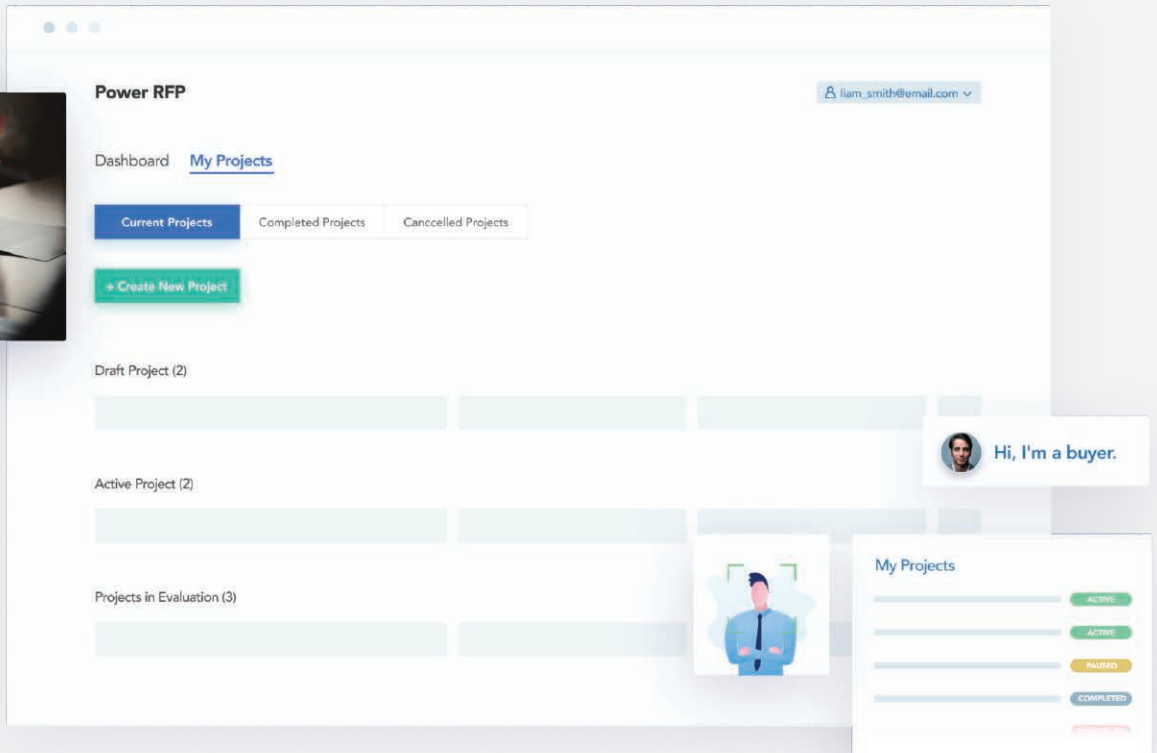
Always Clear Conversation



Drive Performance



Easy Archive



Guide



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Top Practices for Managing a
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POWER RFP

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