

Steps of Evaluation Process

1. State Procurement will review all RFP's to determine if they are administratively acceptable (received on time, signatures, bonds, if applicable, etc.) before releasing to the evaluation committee. It is suggested that a check list of administrative mandatory requirements be developed by the SPO to check proposal compliance.

Proposals containing confidential information are reviewed to determine if proposal "confidential" designations are appropriate in accordance with Section 1.6 of the RFP boilerplate. In general, a proposal marked confidential in its entirety may be rejected without further consideration or recourse. Legal counsel may be necessary for other "confidential" determinations. See section on confidential information and public records request.

State Procurement will turn over copies of all RFP's to the evaluation committee Project Leader for evaluation. State Procurement will retain originals and redacted copies.

2. Prior to any review by the evaluation committee, they must receive instructions (see RFP Evaluation Committee Instructions (Exhibit 6)). The committee should also be given copies of Steps of the Evaluation Process (Exhibit 22) and the Questions to check proposer's references (Exhibit 14) as well as any addenda that were issued.

3. Members of the Evaluation Committee may be given evaluation scoring forms (generally provided by the agency project leader) and copies of the proposals.

4. Each committee member will initiate, conduct, and complete an independent evaluation of each offer. Every proposal received that is acceptable or reasonably susceptible of being made acceptable is to be evaluated equally and fairly. They are to be evaluated against RFP requirements.

5. Members meet in a closed session to discuss their individual evaluation findings and to form consensus scoring of all proposals. OSP will attend as required to ensure adequate documentation of the file and to facilitate the efforts of the evaluation committee as necessary. The committee is encouraged to select someone to document meeting results including methodology of review, scoring, facilitate meetings, etc. During these meetings, members must identify the following:

- (a) strengths and weaknesses of each proposal reviewed
- (b) evaluate responsiveness to the RFP and associated risks with proposal, if any
- (c) identify clarifications and deficiencies of each proposal, if any.

6. Clarifications: Clarifications take place prior to the establishment of the competitive range. The committee must mutually agree upon clarification requests. The committee must submit any clarification request to OSP who will obtain required information from the proposers and return those vendor responses to the committee. Verbal discussions/presentations to obtain clarifications may occur; but must be scheduled by OSP and comply with a formal agenda (more details on this activity can be provided, if required). Exhibit 12 is an example of a clarification letter.

Clarifications are:

- 1) generally of an administrative nature,
- 2) provided to resolve inadequate proposal content, or contradictory statements in a proposer's proposal.

Clarification responses:

- 1) should reflect an understanding of the state's needs for clarification
- 2) provide information that sufficiently clarifies the proposal;
- 3) not reveal a previous unknown deficiency

Deficiencies are:

- 4) any part of a proposer's proposal that, when compared to a pertinent standard, fails to meet the state's level of compliance.

7. Written or oral discussions/presentations: Written or oral discussions may be conducted with Proposers who submit proposals determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award. Proposals may be accepted without such discussions and award made on the basis of the initial offers so proposals should be complete and reflect the most favorable terms available from the Proposer(s).

Any commitments or representations made during these discussions, if conducted, may become formally recorded in the final contract.

The proposal evaluation committee reserves the right to require selected offerors to make an oral presentation/demonstration of their proposed offer **before** the competitive range is established.

Interviews or communications with offerors **prior** to the establishment of the competitive range are to provide clarification and ensure a mutual understanding of the offer. Exchanges must be tightly controlled/constrained. Ambiguities and past performance can be discussed. Offerors whose past performance is a determining factor preventing them from being placed in the competitive range can be given an opportunity to address past performance if he had not been given an opportunity elsewhere to respond to past performance.

Communications with offerors prior to the establishment of the competitive range are usually limited to certain offerors but can include all of the offerors submitting proposals.

Neither negotiations nor changes to vendor proposals will be allowed during these discussions. Proposals may be accepted without such discussions.

Discussions can be a written list of questions individualized to each proposal or may be oral. Exhibit 13 is a sample letter scheduling oral discussions/presentations.

It is suggested that written discussions include objective fact-related data such as performance, design and contractual commitments; cost information (prices cannot change); representations and certifications; and the signed offer sheet. Oral discussions should include subject data such as capabilities, plans and approaches, staffing resources, transition plans and sample tasks; and non-cost information.

Discussions shall not disclose any information derived from proposals submitted by competing proposers.

Discussions need not be conducted if:

- prices are fixed by law or regulation, except consideration shall be given to competitive terms and conditions
- time of delivery or performance will not permit discussions
- it can be clearly demonstrated and documented from the existence of adequate competition or accurate prior cost experience that for this particular service that the acceptance of an initial offer without discussion would result in fair and reasonable prices.
- The RFP must notify all offerers of the possibility that award may be made on the basis of the initial offers.

Oral discussions should be taped or recorded.

The evaluation committee must submit all requests for oral discussions to the OSP. Oral discussions are between the proposer and the evaluation committee. The evaluation committee chairperson and/or OSP shall lead the discussions and explain the ground rules – time allotments, rules on communications with committee, etc. Proposer’s “key personnel” should participate in the discussions – not professionals. The committee shall identify the factors that will be discussed during the oral discussions. The committee may invite presentations if needed to better understand the proposal(s). Proposer’s should be given instructions on what is to be presented and told to avoid sales presentations.

If scoring is to take place after oral discussions, the committee will meet between proposer discussions or after all proposers’ discussions to caucus and reach consensus. If practicable, score immediately after all discussions are completed.

Preparation Instructions for Oral Presentations

When oral presentations will be used to evaluate and select the contractor, it should be indicated in the proposal. Prior instructions for oral presentations are to be provided and should include the following:

- Description of the topics that the offeror must address and the technical and management factors that must be covered;
- Statement concerning the total amount of time that will be available to make the presentation;
- Description of limitations on State-offeror interaction during, and, if possible after, the presentation;
- Statement that the presentation will constitute clarifications only;
- Statement whether the presentation will encompass price or cost and fee (prices cannot change);
- Description and characteristics of the presentation site;
- Rules governing the use of presentation media;
- The anticipated number of State attendees for handouts;
- Description of the format and content of presentation documentation, and their delivery;
- Statement whether the presentation will be recorded (e.g., videotaped or audio tape recorded)

8. If it is applicable to the RFP to check references on the proposer or firm, a sample of possible questions is included in Exhibit 14.

9. Scoring Concepts:

- a) proposals are to be evaluated based on the RFP criteria
- b) evaluation methodology must be consistent for all proposals

10. Identifying Strengths and Weaknesses. An example of an evaluation method designation follows:

Adjective Rating which may be more compressed than the following example and might include as few as three adjective ratings with a scoring range i.e. 7-10

<u>Adjective rating</u>	<u>Score</u>
Outstanding	10
Superior	9
Excellent	8
Very Good	7
Good	6
Adequate	5
Weak	4

Poor	3
Very Poor	2
Inadequate	1
Not Adequate	0

In developing a scoring system, a descriptive narrative of the strengths and weaknesses should support the evaluation findings and the score given.

The following criteria (Items 11 and 12) is also generally considered when evaluating and scoring proposals:

11. Evaluating Soundness of Approach: measures how reasonable a proposer's approach is to accomplishing the criteria being evaluated

Exceptional - Proposer's offer greatly exceeds standards and demonstrates exceptional understanding of the goals and objectives of the acquisition, and several major strengths exist. Only a few minor weaknesses exist.

Very Good - Proposer's offer exceeds standards and demonstrates a very good understanding of the goals and objectives of the acquisition. Strengths exceed weaknesses, and weaknesses are easily correctable.

Acceptable - Proposer's offer meets standards and demonstrates a good understanding of the goals and objectives of the acquisition. There may be strengths or weaknesses, or both. Weaknesses do not significantly detract from the proposer's offer and are correctable.

Marginal - Proposer's offer is below standard and demonstrates a poor understanding of the goals and objectives of the acquisition. Weaknesses exceed strengths and will be difficult to correct.

Unacceptable- Proposer's offer is deficient and demonstrates very little understanding of goals and objectives of the acquisition. Noted deficiencies are expected to be very difficult to correct or are not correctable.

12. Evaluating Risk: evaluates how risky a proposer's approach is in relation to cost and schedule. Risk Scale:

Serious - Expected to cause serious disruption of schedule or increase in cost. Will require a significant level of contractor emphasis and government monitoring to overcome difficulties

Moderate - Expected to cause moderate disruption of schedule or increase in cost. Will require average level of contractor emphasis and government monitoring to overcome difficulties.

Minor - Expected to cause minor disruption of schedule or increase in cost. Will require a low level of contractor emphasis and government monitoring to overcome difficulties.

Minimal - Expected to cause minimal disruption of schedule or increase in cost. Will require little or no contractor emphasis and government monitoring to overcome difficulties.

13. Evaluating Cost – evaluate in compliance with RFP. Evaluation may also include determination of reasonableness and completeness of cost as well as any other cost factors that might be applicable. Calculation example:

Base Cost Score (Maximum Value of 50 points)

The Base Cost Score will be based on the cost information provided in Appendix ___ or Section ___ and computed as follows:

$$BCS = (LPC/PC \times 50)$$

Where: BCS = Computed cost score for Proposer
 LPC = Lowest proposed cost of All Proposers
 PC = Proposer's Cost

14. Evaluator Consensus:

- a) prior to beginning evaluation, evaluators must develop an overall evaluation report that everyone can agree on
- b) Integrate results of individual evaluator review determinations both as to scoring and listing of strengths and weaknesses. See Exhibit 23 for example.
- c) document results for each proposal
- d) develop an award recommendation

15. Evaluations are not complete until the CO (contracting officer – OSP) is satisfied that:

- a) responses to clarifications and deficiencies have been received, reviewed, and completed
- b) all proposers were treated fairly and reasonably
- c) deficiencies have been disclosed and uncertainties and proposal mistakes or strengths and weaknesses have been identified.

It is important that the evaluation report reflect numerical (or other) scoring that is relational to the described strengths and weaknesses. For example:

Vendor A strength - very detailed implementation plan – score 25 of 25
Vendor B strength – detailed implementation plan – score 23 of 25

Lower scoring of Vendor B should be explained i.e. very detailed but with details that are not relevant to mandatory requirements of RFP might explain lower score.

Proposals should be scored consistently. If an area of an offer is scored as a strength/weakness for one, the same area should be considered for other offers (if addressed by other offers).

The evaluation committee has broad discretion in establishing the competitive range. This discretion to include or exclude offerors from the competitive range permits agencies to include marginal proposals in the competitive range in order to broaden the competition. An agency's decision to include only one offeror in the competitive range will be subject to close scrutiny due to the elimination of competition.

Some factors to consider in establishing the competitive range:

Does next proposal contain significant deficiencies?

Is the top offer technically superior?

Does the RFP state award will be made to the offeror that is the most advantageous to the state of Louisiana considering price and other factors with the highest score?

Will consideration of some offers possibly change after oral presentations and/or clarifications?