



Office of State Procurement

Responding to a Request for Proposals

Vendor Training



Objectives

- Differentiate between an RFP and ITB
- Explain the parts of an RFP
- Determine the key elements
- Construct the best proposal
- Understand the State's evaluation process





RFP vs ITB

Request for Proposal

- Used when seeking solutions to a definitive problem
- Proposals are reviewed by an evaluation committee and award goes to most advantageous proposal
- Contract terms and conditions and non-mandatory requirements can be negotiated
- Reduced to a written contract

Invitation to Bid

- Used when agency has a defined need
- Bids are tabulated, evaluated, and awarded by the State Procurement Analyst to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder
- Bids cannot be negotiated
- Purchase order issued

With RFPs and ITBs, there are a few differences. RFPs are qualitative and subjective where an ITB is strict and objective. From start to finish, a RFP typically takes 9-15 months and an ITB typically takes 1-2 months. Agencies use RFPs when seeking solutions to a definitive problem, but use an ITB when there is a defined need. Additionally, RFPs are used when required by law such as for consulting service contracts over \$75,000/year and social service contracts over \$250,000/year.

With an RFP, proposals are reviewed by an evaluation committee and the award goes to the most advantageous proposal. With an ITB, the bids are tabulated, evaluated, and awarded by the State Procurement Analyst to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder.

In an RFP, terms and conditions, except those designated as non-negotiable and non-mandatory requirements can be negotiated. A bid for an ITB cannot be negotiated.

With an RFP, the RFP and winning proposal are reduced to a written contract, the terms of which are included as part of the attached sample contract. With an ITB, a purchase order is issued.



LaPAC RFP Postings

- RFP posted by OSP

3000013574	RFP Data Collection & Verification Svc. Original: 3000013574 Attachments: _RFP Document	08/30/2019	10/22/2019 10:00:00 AM CT	107001
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- RFP posted by an Agency

3000013606	Microgravimetric Weighing PM 2.5 Filters Original: 3000013606 Attachments: Notification Posting Request for Proposals	09/12/2019	10/15/2019 3:00:00 PM CT	855003
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Finding an RFP in LaPAC is no different than finding an ITB; and we won't spend too much time on how to find a solicitation since that has been covered during these training sessions.

An RFP posted by OSP will contain "RFP" in the name and you can use LaPAC's search option to find all solicitations with "RFP" in the name. An RFP posted by an agency may or may not include "RFP" in the title.

To view an RFP, you'll open the attachment which should have "RFP" in the name. Often there is only one attachment in an initial RFP posting and it will be the actual RFP document.



LaPAC RFP Addenda Postings

- RFP Addendum posted by OSP


3000013574	RFP Data Collection & Verification Svc. Original: 3000013574 Attachments: RFP Document	08/30/2019	10/22/2019 10:00:00 AM CT	107001
	Addendum No. 1 - Schedule of Events Revised Date Issued: 9/20/19 Addendum 1: 3000013574-1 Attachments: Addendum No. 1	09/20/2019		

- RFP Addendum posted by an Agency

3000013606	Microgravimetric Weighing PM 2.5 Filters Original: 3000013606 Attachments: Notification Posting Request for Proposals	09/12/2019	10/15/2019 3:00:00 PM CT	855003
	Addendum 1 - RFP Questions and Answers DEQ did not receive any questi Addendum 1: 3000013606-1 Attachments: 3000013606.Q&A.NO.QUESTIONS.RECEIVED	09/30/2019		

RFP addenda will also be posted to LaPAC. If you received a notification about the RFP, you'll also receive a notification when the addendum is posted.

Just as with RFP postings, you may also see differences in how an agency posts an addendum to LaPAC



LaPAC Contact Information

3000013574	RFP Data Collection & Verification Svc. Original: 3000013574 Attachments: RFP Document	08/30/2019	10/22/2019 10:00:00 AM CT	107001
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- Clicking the link in the Help column will open a new window with contact information for the agency issuing the solicitation

Contact Information for Bid # 3000013574

Department	*** State Procurement ***
Section	Office of State Purchasing
Dept Code	107001
Contact	LaPAC Help Group
Address	P.O. Box 94095 Baton Rouge, LA 70804-9095
Phone	(225)342-8010 📞
Fax	(225)342-8686 📠
Email	dca-osp-helpdesk@la.gov
URL	http://www.dca.la.gov/osp

You can click on the help link in the far right column to identify which agency issued the RFP. Clicking the link opens a new window with contact information for the issuing agency. Keep in mind that the contact person listed in the Contact Information window may or may not be the designated contact person for the RFP. If the help has “107001”, the RFP was issued by OSP.

Original RFX Document

STATE OF LOUISIANA
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL

RESPONSES WILL BE PUBLICLY OPENED AT THE PHYSICAL ADDRESS BELOW
 10/09/2019
 10:00 AM CST

SUBMIT NON-ELECTRONIC RESPONSE
 TO: Office of State Procurement

Physical Address:
 1201 H. Third Street, Suite 2-160
 Baton Rouge, LA 70802

RFX Number: 3000013574
 Version: 1
 Buyer: JAMES ANDERSON
 Buyer Phone:
 E-Mail:
 Scheduled Begin Date:
 Scheduled End Date:
 T-Number: PSC04

Vendor No. _____
 Solicitation: 3000013574
 Opening Date: 10/09/2019

Vendor Name and Address: (to be completed by Vendor)

Ship To Address:
 PSC MANAGEMENT & FINANCE
 602 NORTH 5TH ST, 12TH FLOOR-GALVEZ BLDG
 BATON ROUGE, LA 70802

Name of Solicitation: RFP Data Collection & Verification Svc.

RFX text:
 This Request for Proposal form is an internal form only. Please refer to the attached Request for Proposal for all requirements to submit a proposal. Proposers are to complete the Fee Schedule in accordance with Section 1.8.G, Section 2.5.I, Section 3.2, and Appendix A of the RFP and submit with their proposals as directed in the Request for Proposal document.

The RFX document for an RFP looks very similar to the RFX document for an ITB.

However, on the RFX Document for an RFP the top of the page will say “Request for Proposal” and in the middle of the page it will contain RFX text indicating it is a request for proposal.

Occasionally an RFP will be posted incorrectly by an agency and the Original RFX document will display as an “invitation to bid”, but it should include RFX text explaining the solicitation is an RFP and to submit proposals in accordance with the RFP.

Remember – to have a proposal accepted for an RFP, you must follow the directions in the RFP itself, not what is on the RFX Document.

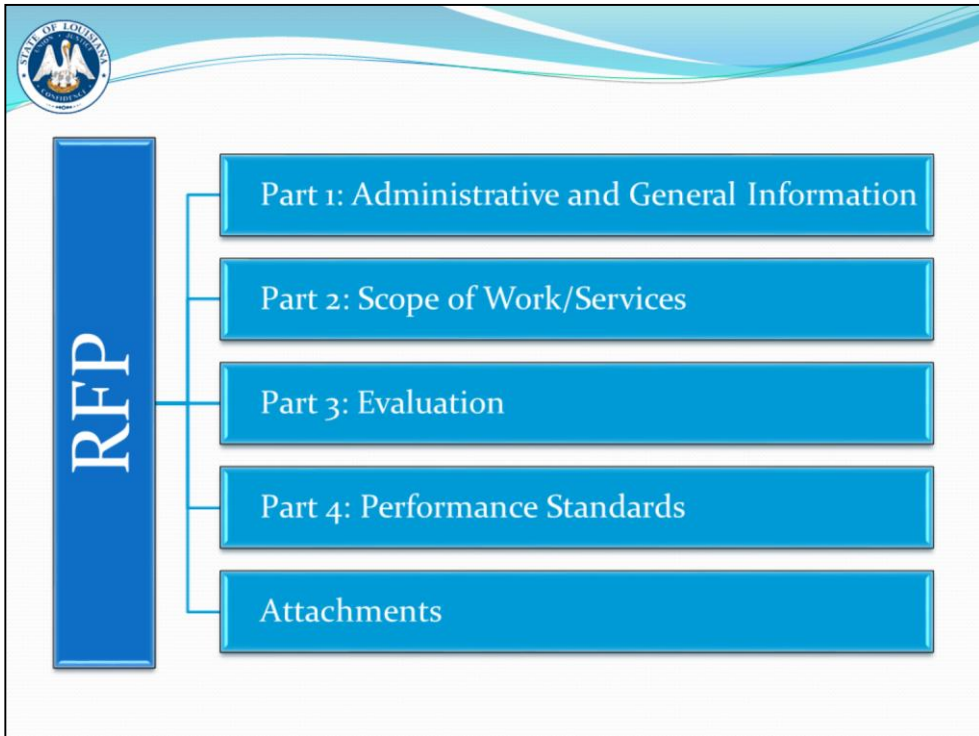


Original RFx Document

LINE	Description	Quantity	Unit	Unit Price	Extended Amount
1	Product Category:83112600 Data Collection & Verification DoNotCall To provide Data Collection & Verification Services for the Do Not Call Program for the Louisiana Public Service Commission in accordance with the attached RFP and specifications. DATA COLLECTION & VERIFICATION SERVICES FOR THE DO NOT CALL PROGRAM FOR THE LOUISIANA	1	MON		

LINE	Description	Quantity	Unit	Unit Price	Extended Amount
	PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION AS PER ATTACHED SPECIFICATIONS ADMINISTRATIVE COST PER MONTH				
2	Product Category:83112600 Data Collection & Verification DoNotCall ACCUMULATED COST PER MINUTE FOR CALL MANAGEMENT	2,000	MIN		

Here you can see the bottom of the first page and the second page of the RFx document. You can see that the RFP is referenced again in the text.



An RFP consists of 4 parts and a section for attachments. Sometimes an RFP will have more parts or the parts may be divided in a different manner.



Blackout Period

- Prohibits communication except with designated contact person
- Helps ensure integrity in the procurement process
- Ensures all proposers have access to the same information at the same time
- May result in disqualification
- May also result in suspension or debarment

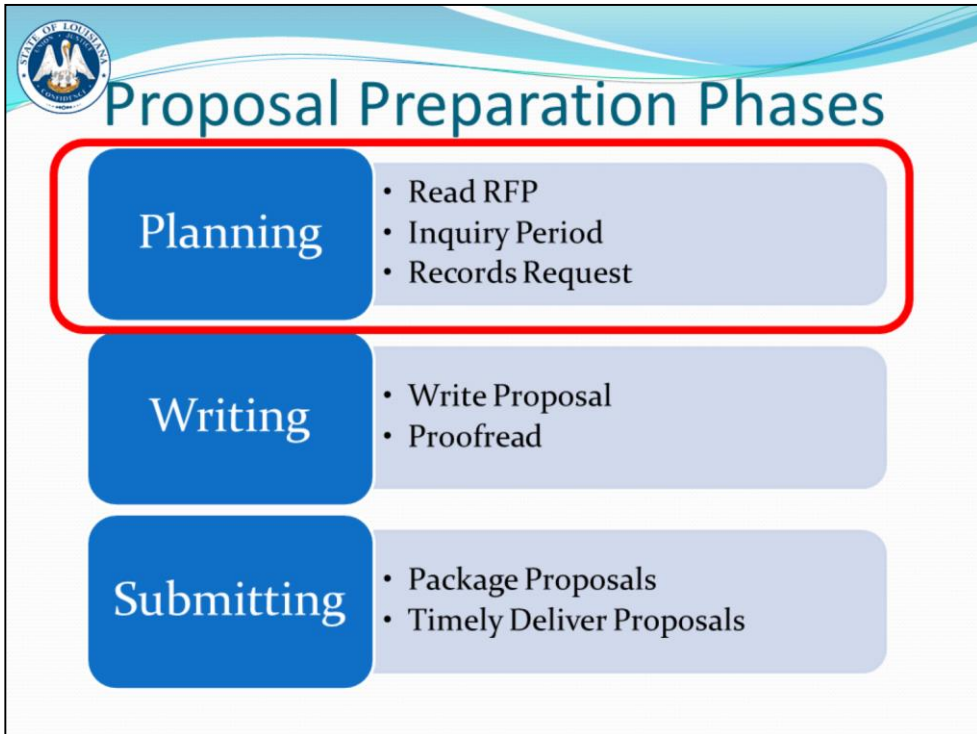


As soon an RFP is published, the blackout period begins. This limits communication between prospective proposers, current contractors, and the State. During the blackout period communications must be sent to the person designated by the proposal inquiries section of the RFP in Part 1.

The purpose of the blackout period is to ensure integrity in the procurement process and ensure all proposers have access to the same information at the same time.

Violations of the Blackout Period can result in disqualification of the proposal and may result in suspension or debarment.

If there is an incumbent contractor, the incumbent may contact the agency regarding their existing contract only.



There are 3 main proposal preparation phases: Planning, Writing, and Submitting. In the planning phase you'll read the RFP, submit questions during the inquiry period, and may make a public records request. You'll want to decide in this phase if your business can successfully meet the requirements of the RFP.



Read the RFP

- Pay attention to:
 - RFP Questions
 - **Mandatory** Requirements (**shall**)
 - **Desirable** Requirements (**should**)
 - **Permissible** Requirements (**may**)
 - Proposer and Contractor Requirements



When reading the RFP, which you'll hopefully do a few times. Be sure to pay attention to the RFP questions since these are things the agency wants to know from you. Note the mandatory requirements, which are the shalls, the desirable requirements, which are the shoulds and are things desired by the State and the permissible requirements, which are the may's and are optional.

We've color coded the different types of requirements here since it can be a good practice for you to also mark-up or highlight the requirements when reading through the RFP.

If the RFP says "the Proposer shall", then the requirement must be completed/answered by you in your Proposal. If the RFP says "the Contractor shall", then the requirement must be met by the successful Proposer(s) with whom a contract is executed.



Part 1: Administrative and General Information



- Purpose
- Background
- Goals and Objectives
- Contract Term
- Schedule of Events
- Proposal Response Format
- Non-negotiable Contract Terms

Part 1: Administrative and General Information has over 45 sections and is generally written for the Proposer. These are a few sections that you'll want to pay extra attention to.

The purpose section will give you an overview of why the agency is issuing the RFP. The background will usually provide a short history of the services or program and will usually tell you if the RFP is for recurring services. The goals and objectives section will explain in more detail what the Agency is seeking. Contract term will let you know how long the contract will be – anywhere from 1-10 years depending on the services, but usually it will be a 3 year term.

Make sure you pay attention to the schedule of events and note the deadlines for the events of the RFP including the deadline to submit inquiries and the deadline to submit proposals.

Proposal response format will lay out the expectations for how you should organize your proposal. Be sure to follow instructions in this section as failure to do so does not reflect well on your company.

Pay special attention to the non-negotiable contract terms section. Any RFP sections included in the non-negotiable contract terms section are truly non-negotiable. Non-negotiable clauses include: taxes, assignment of contract, audit of records, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, record retention, content of contract/order of precedence, contract changes, governing law, claims or controversies, and termination for non-appropriation of funds.



Part 2: Scope of Work/Services

- Scope of Work/Services
- Deliverables



In Part 2, you'll find the Scope of Work/Services and Deliverables sections. These sections are written for the contractor and will be in the every RFP. Some RFPs will have additional sections in Part 2 – you might see Project, Technical, or Operational Requirements or even sections Location or Hours of Operation.



Part 3: Evaluation

- Technical
 - 50% minimum to proceed to further evaluation
- Financial
- Hudson and Veterans Initiative
 - Subcontractor's name
 - Detailed description of the work to be performed
 - Anticipated dollar value (or percent value) of the subcontract for the entire contract term



Part 3: Evaluation discusses how the proposal will be evaluated. This section is written for the proposer. There are three overall subsections: Technical, Financial, and Hudson and Veterans Initiative.

The technical evaluation section will tell you about what the agency wants to see as the distribution of points will indicate the importance of each evaluation criteria. If 15 points are assigned to the proposed staff and 30 points are assigned to approach and methodology, that indicates that approach and methodology is twice as important to the agency than the proposed staff.

When writing your proposal – be as clear as possible in your technical section as it is a subjective evaluation. Do not make assumptions on what the evaluation committee may know about your company's experience and qualifications.

The technical evaluation includes a requirement on proposers to achieve a minimum technical score of at least 50% of the total technical evaluation points in order to move forward in the evaluation process. If the proposal receives less than 50% of the total technical evaluation points, then the proposal is ineligible to move forward to the financial evaluation and Hudson and Veterans Initiative evaluation.

The financial evaluation is typically worth between 25-50% of the total evaluation points depending on the RFP. It may be conducted through a sealed cost model, 1 year, 3 year, or 5 year total cost.

Hudson and Veterans Initiative is always worth 12% of the total evaluation points. You may come across an RFP without a Hudson and Veterans Initiative section as there are some exemptions allowed when the inclusion of the initiatives jeopardizes funding or violates a provision of any other law. If your company Hudson Initiative certified, you will receive points worth 10% of the total evaluation points for the RFP. If your company is Veterans Initiative certified or Hudson and Veterans Initiative certified, you will points worth 12% of the total evaluation points in the RFP. If your company is not Hudson or Veterans Initiative certified and you intend to subcontract with a certified small entrepreneurship, you must include the

subcontractor's name, a detailed description of the work to be performed by the subcontract, and the anticipated dollar value (or percent value) of the subcontract for the entire contract term to receive any Hudson and Veterans Initiative points. You should also include your or the subcontractor's certification number.

Financial and Hudson/Veterans initiatives are calculated by formulas and are mostly objective.



Part 4: Performance Standards

- Performance Requirements
- Performance Measurement



Part 4 is Performance Standards. This section is written for the Contractor and contains the Performance Requirements and Performance Measurements. These sections indicate what the contract will measure. These may not be detailed in every RFP especially if the agency intends to negotiate them with the successful proposer.



Attachments


- Sample contract
- Price Schedule
- Electronic Vendor Payment
- Insurance Requirements
- Certification Statement



These are some of the standard attachments you'll see in almost every RFP including the sample contract, Price Schedule (which may have a different name such as Cost Sheet), electronic vendor payment form which indicates the method of payment the proposer accepts or will accept, insurance requirements, and certification statement.


The certification statement contains various elements which the proposer must certify, including that the information in the proposal is accurate; that the proposer will comply with all mandatory requirements in the RFP and meet or exceed the functional and technical requirements; and that the price proposed is valid for a specified number of days.

Depending on the services requested in the RFP, you may see additional attachments such as a program budget, applicable department regulations, or current databases and reports.



Inquiry Period

- Reference the RFP section and page number in the questions
- Don't be afraid to seek clarity
- Inquiries must be received by the deadline



The inquiry period allows communication between the State and prospective proposers. It provides an opportunity to seek clarity about RFP requirements or indicate to the State that they may want to re-think some portion of the SOW.

First, read the RFP. It is very frustrating to receive questions that are answered in the RFP. Draft your questions and include the RFP section number in your questions.

Seek clarity on anything you do not completely understand – it may be regarding a requirement of the future contractor or a question on how proposals should be packaged and delivered.

Be sure to submit your questions by the deadline stated in the RFP schedule of events. Questions received after the deadline are not answered.



Public Records Request

- Request documents from Agency Custodian of Records
- Can request previous:
 - Contracts
 - Proposals
 - Evaluation summaries



If you decide to make a public records request, you'll do so to the Custodian of Records at the agency issuing the RFP.

You can request contracts, proposals for past RFPs, and evaluation summaries for past RFPs.



In the writing phase, you'll write your proposal. Be sure to proofread it as well.



Drafting Your Proposal

- Do follow the format prescribed in the RFP
- Do use logical structure
- Do respond to every question and “shall” requirement in the RFP
- Do ensure your approach shows a complete understanding of the RFP
- Do proofread
- Do know your audience
- Do include contact information

When drafting your proposal, be sure to follow the format prescribed in the RFP. Failure to follow the format and directions specified in the RFP will result in the State and the evaluation committee questioning your qualifications.

Use a logical structure – a hard to follow proposal also does not reflect well on your qualifications.

Answer all questions in the RFP and ensure your approach shows a complete understanding of the RFP and the services requested in the RFP.

Proofread – this seems to often be overlooked, but don’t discount the important of it. It also doesn’t reflect well on your company when you send us a cover letter that is verbatim from another state – including the name of the other state and the individuals in that state.

Know your audience

And include contact information for individuals who can speak to technical requirements and those that can contractually bind the company to a contract.



Drafting Your Proposal

- Don't "fill the page"
- Don't attempt to hide deficiencies
- Don't propose an unrealistic price

Some quick Don'ts on drafting your proposal:

Don't try to fill the page – If you've said everything that needs to be said then stop.

Don't attempt to hide deficiencies – these will shine through. If you have a deficiency in something that is requested in the RFP, state what it is and how you can overcome it or what you are doing to remedy it.

Don't propose an unrealistic price. Your price won't be negotiated up, but it may be negotiated down.

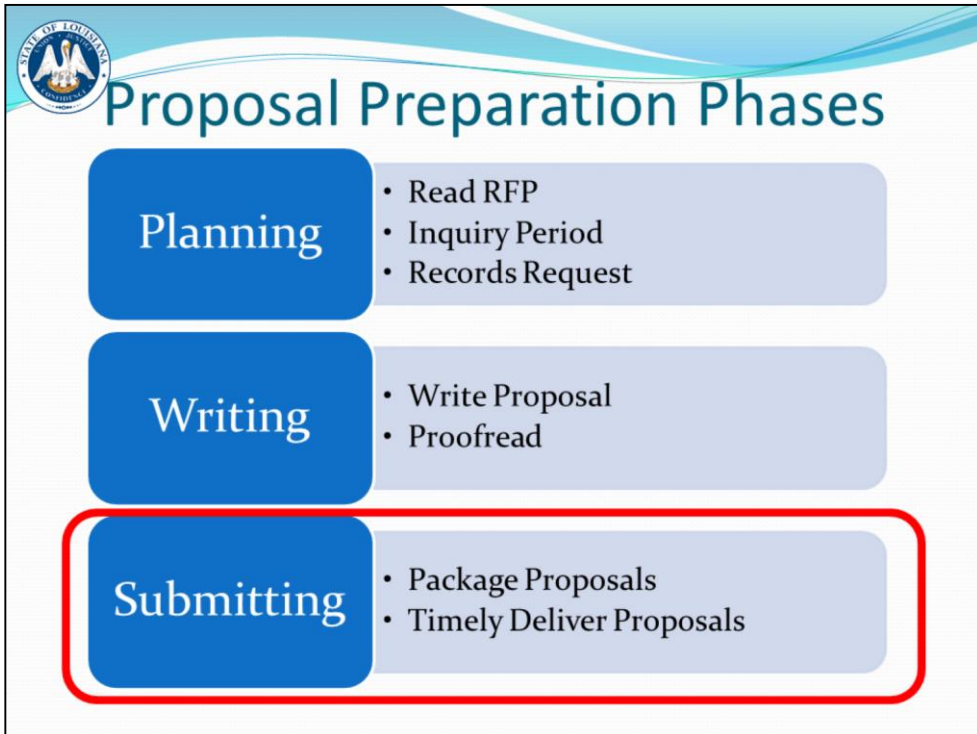


Evaluation Committee

- Usually 3+ subject matter experts
- Evaluate proposals based on evaluation criteria in RFP and the content between the 1st and last page of the proposals
- Selects most advantageous proposal



We mentioned knowing your audience earlier – the main member of your audience is the evaluation committee. The extent to which you can know the evaluation committee is limited, but know they are usually 3-7 subject matter experts who have a good understanding of the services being requested and are usually state employees. They evaluate proposals based on the content included between the covers of the proposal and the evaluation criteria listed in the RFP. Ultimately, they select the proposal most advantageous to the State.



In the submitting phase, you'll package your proposal in accordance with the requirements set in the RFP and ensure your proposal is delivered by the deadline set in the RFP schedule of events.



Finalizing Your Proposal

- Ensure all required attachments are included
- Proofread
- Ensure proposal is signed by an authorized signatory
- Clearly label the proposal package including:
 - Solicitation number
 - RFP Title
 - Due Date and Time
 - Proposer Name
- Deliver proposals to agency by the deadline



When finalizing your proposal, make sure you include all required attachments, proofread your proposal again, and ensure it is signed by an authorized signatory. When packaging the proposals, be sure you've made the appropriate number of copies of the technical and financial proposals, that you've included digital copies and redacted copies as required by the RFP, and that everything is packaged correctly. Some RFPs require the financial proposal to be sealed separately from the technical proposals. On the outside of each box or package, include the solicitation number, RFP Title, due date and time, and the name of the proposing company.

Finally, deliver the proposals by the deadline.

If you are hand or courier delivering proposals to the agency, ensure you allow enough time before the deadline to check in and go through security. If you are mailing the proposals, plan to have the proposals be delivered a day or two before the proposal is due. You don't want your proposal to be rejected because the delivery company had a delay.



Electronic Signature

- OSP accepts electronic signatures interchangeably and consistently with acceptance of traditional ink signatures
 - See Memorandum OSP 20-03 for more information:
<https://www.doa.la.gov/osp/agencycenter/memos/OSP20-03.pdf>
- Some agencies may not accept electronic signatures. If you are unsure, Ask!



OSP and many state agencies now accept electronic signatures. For OSP, electronic signatures may take the form of a scanned ink signature, a signature captured using a digital pen or pad, an image of a prior signature applied by software, an encrypted certificate with a signature and additional information, or a signature applied by a third-party web platform (such as VeriSign). Navigate to Memorandum 20-03 for details by going to procurement.la.gov, clicking on Agency Center, then Memos and finding the correct memorandum under Fiscal Year 2020. Please note, not all agencies accept electronic signatures. If it is unclear from the RFP if an electronic signature is acceptable, use the inquiry period to gather that information.



Electronic Proposal Submission

- OSP allows electronic proposal submission for some RFPs
- Allowable submission methods are included in the RFP
- Email is not an acceptable method of electronic submission

OSP and many state agencies also now accept proposals submitted electronically. Appropriate submission methods are listed in the RFP. Electronic submission may be either through LaGov, similar to the procedures detailed in the Responding to an Invitation to Bid course or through a third party website such as Box. E-mail submission is not acceptable.



After Submittal

- Request names of other proposers (if desired)
- Respond to clarification requests (if any)
- Prepare and perform oral presentations or demonstrations (if invited)
- Respond to Best and Final Offer (BAFO) (if invited)
- Wait patiently

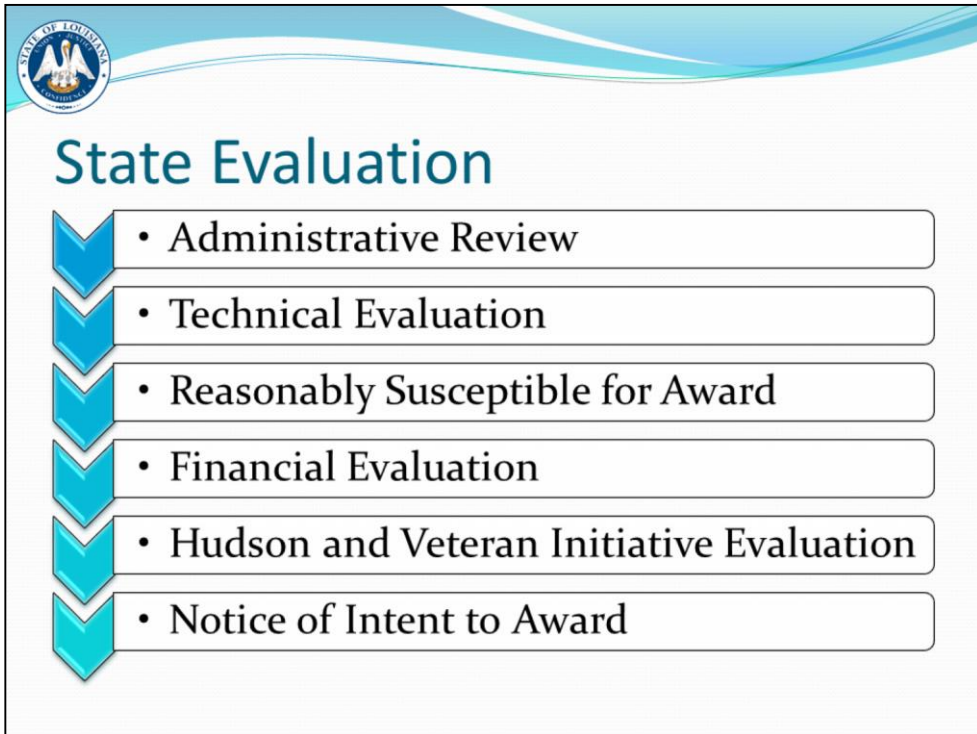
Once the RFP opens, you may request names of other proposers, if desired.

You'll have to respond to any requests for clarification.

You may have to prepare and perform oral presentations or demonstrations, if invited.

You may have to respond to a Best and Final Offer (BAFO), if invited.

And you'll need to wait patiently – the timeframe from proposal submission to award announcement may be as short as 1 month, but it could also be longer than a year; typically it will be around 3-5 months.



A quick word on the State's procedures following proposal opening. First, the State will perform an Administrative review – did you provide the correct number of copies? Does your business meet the mandatory qualifications to propose? Is your proposal signed by someone who is able to legally bind your business to a contract?

Next, the technical evaluation will be conducted. The technical evaluation is generally conducted by an evaluation committee composed of end users and others familiar with the program. The evaluation is not the primary duty of the evaluation committee and there are time constraints. The evaluation committee members have an individual evaluation period and then meet for consensus scoring. Your proposal must receive at least 50% of the points assigned to the technical evaluation in order to be further evaluated.

After the technical evaluation is completed, the evaluation committee may hold presentations/demonstrations with those proposers deemed reasonably susceptible for award.

From there, proposals receiving at least 50% of total technical evaluation points will move on to financial evaluation and Hudson and veteran initiative evaluation.

The agency will then award to the proposer(s) with the highest score and issue the Notice of Intent to Award and Regret letters. After these letters are issued, you can make a public records request for information pertaining to the RFP.



Reminders

- Read the RFP before the inquiry period
- Keep track of the Schedule of Events
- Proofread your proposal
- Ensure mandatory requirements are met
- Submit your proposal before the deadline

We leave you today with a few reminders: Read the RFP before the inquiry period lapses.

Keep track of the Schedule of Events, you do not want to miss an important deadline.

Proofread your proposal, then proofread again.

Ensure you meet the mandatory requirements and that you have detailed how they are met in the proposal.

Perhaps most importantly, submit your proposal before the deadline.



Questions?





DOA Professional Contracts Helpdesk:

DOA-PCHelpdesk@la.gov

DOA Purchasing Helpdesk:

DOA-OSPHelpdesk@la.gov

Main Phone Number:

(225) 342-8010