



August 2026





Evolving Trends When Utilizing Request for Proposals (RFPs)

As I review Requests for Proposals (RFPs) issued by government entities and discuss the RFP process with students, I continue to see changes in how RFPs are being developed and evaluated. While some of these practices are not new, they appear to be used more frequently and more effectively than in the past. Here are a few of the trends I am seeing:

- **Outcome-Based RFPs** - Government entities are placing greater emphasis on desired outcomes rather than prescribing exactly how the work must be performed. Outcome-based RFPs describe the results the entity wants to achieve and allow vendors to propose their own approaches and innovative solutions. Although outcome-based RFPs are not a new concept, procurement professionals appear to be more comfortable using this approach than in the past.

CONTRACT ADMINISTRATION

November 5, 2026

ESSENTIALS OF CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

October 7-8, 2026

ETHICS AND FRAUD IN CONTRACTING

October 21, 2026

FUNDAMENTALS OF PUBLIC PURCHASING

December 9-10, 2026

NEGOTIATION SKILLS

October 14, 2026

PROCUREMENT MANAGEMENT ACADEMY

November 18, 2026

- **Greater Emphasis on Demonstrated Experience** - Rather than relying on general marketing pitches, entities are now asking vendors to provide objective evidence of their qualifications. Examples include:
 - Relevant project experience
 - Past performance results or metrics
 - Sample deliverables
 - Customer references
 - Performance reports or case studies
- **More Meaningful Evaluation Criteria** - Evaluation criteria are becoming more focused on distinguishing between competing proposals. Instead of relying on broad, generic, or overlapping factors, entities are developing criteria that clearly measure the factors that are most important to the project's success. Well-designed evaluation criteria make the evaluation process more objective, transparent, and defensible.
- **Increased Use of Oral Presentations and Demonstrations** - Many government entities are incorporating vendor presentations, interviews, or product demonstrations into the evaluation process. These interactions can often reveal strengths, weaknesses, and team dynamics that are difficult to identify from a written proposal alone. They also allow evaluators to ask follow-up questions and clarify important aspects of the proposal.

PURCHASING 101

FOR EVERYONE

September 15, 2026

November 9, 2026

SPECIFICATION WRITING

December 11, 2026

UNDERSTANDING SMALL PURCHASES

October 29, 2026

USING REQUEST

FOR PROPOSALS

September 9, 2026

October 13, 2026

WRITING STATEMENTS OF WORK

September 10, 2026

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- **Greater Focus on Vendor Risk** - Government entities are often looking beyond price and technical capability and considering the risk associated with doing business with a particular vendor. Vendors may be asked to address topics such as:
- Cybersecurity practices and data protection
- Disaster recovery and business continuity planning
- Supply chain resilience
- Financial stability
- Staffing capacity and key-person dependencies
- Subcontractor management

RFPs continue to evolve as government entities seek better value, innovative solutions, and reduced contract risk. Understanding these evolving trends can help both procurement professionals and vendors develop more effective solicitations and proposals.

The strongest RFPs are not necessarily the longest or most complicated. They clearly communicate the entity's needs, encourage meaningful competition, and establish an evaluation process that helps identify the proposal offering the best overall value.

Procurement professionals should periodically review their RFP processes and ask: Are we simply following the same process we have always used, or are our RFPs designed to help us identify the best solution for this particular procurement?

[Visit our Website](#)

If you would like to learn more about developing and evaluating RFPs, consider taking the [Using Request for Proposals class](#) available in both virtual and in-person formats.

Question of the Month

Question: *Our Procurement Department requires that they review every purchase before issuing a purchase order. Is this a normal practice?*



Answer: Yes. In fact, requiring Procurement to review purchases before issuing a purchase order is considered a best practice whenever practical. This review helps ensure that:

- The procurement method is appropriate.
- Funding has been identified and is available.
- The correct payment method is being used.
- Specifications or statements of work are clear and complete.
- Required competition has been obtained, when applicable.
- The purchase complies with applicable laws, regulations, and internal policies.
- Required approvals have been obtained.

A procurement review can also identify potential issues before they become costly or difficult to correct. It is much easier to address an incomplete specification, missing approval, or other compliance

issue before a purchase order is issued or a contract is executed.

This does not mean that Procurement must handle every step of every purchase. For example, many government entities allow user departments to obtain informal quotes or manage portions of the solicitation process. Procurement then performs a final review to verify compliance and completeness before award.

Of course, every government entity is different. A small municipality may have only one person handling Procurement—or no dedicated Procurement Department at all—while larger organizations often have specialized procurement staff and multiple levels of review.

The key is to establish a procurement review process appropriate to your organization's size, staffing, purchase complexity, and procurement expertise. Regardless of the process used, an independent Procurement review can improve compliance, reduce risk, and help ensure public funds are spent responsibly.



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