



Questions and Answers from *Evaluating POS and PSA RFP Responses Training*

December 14, 2021

Is there a recommended score card or particularly helpful list of questions to help with scoring/evaluating applicants?

Scoring criteria will vary depending on the service you are procuring. The [OPM RFP templates](#) include guidance on how to structure proposal questions that will allow a committee to score resulting proposals. You can find a list of example scoring criteria in Section III, Proposal Submission Overview. For more assistance with developing scoring criteria or drafting proposal questions, please reach out to the OPM/Finance and GPL teams.

Can the evaluation committee consist of employees from other agencies?

Evaluation committees can certainly include employees of other state agencies, and members from other agencies can often offer helpful external expertise on the committee.

We are going to run a large RFP process and know we will get many more qualified proposals than we have funding for. How do we establish a process for grievance that will come based on the lack of funding?

As long as your agency follows an ethical, fair, and transparent process for selecting a provider, your agency will be prepared to respond to any issues.

The [OPM Procurement Standards](#) provide guidelines for how to structure a debrief and appeals process after an RFP. An accessible, transparent debrief process allows unsuccessful proposers to learn more about why their proposal was unsuccessful, and gives agencies an opportunity to answer proposers' questions in an informal setting. The [RFP template](#) also includes a space where you can share details about that process with potential bidders. You might also choose to include your maximum budget amount in the RFP to make clear what bidders can expect in terms of contract amounts.

How do we ensure that individuals on the scoring committee with different backgrounds and expertise have the same understanding of what a certain score means for each criterion?

OPM's new [RFP Evaluation Workbook](#) tool provides guidance on defining scores and criteria so that all evaluators have a common understanding of the rubric. You can use the "Description of Requirements" column in the Evaluation Workbook to provide more detail on what evaluators should be looking for when assigning scores for each criterion. Before the scoring process begins, it is also helpful to hold an evaluator orientation for members of the scoring committee, where agency staff can explain the logic behind each scoring criterion and share examples of responses that would receive high marks for each criterion. OPM is happy to provide additional assistance as needed.

At what time does the review committee need to be selected? Prior to the RFP being posted or prior to the deadline for submissions/applications?

It is a best practice to select your evaluation committee prior to the RFP being posted. This avoids even the perception that evaluators were selected after the agency learned who would be submitting proposals. It can also be helpful to allow evaluation committee members to provide input on the



evaluation criteria and proposal questions that will be included in the RFP. It is required by statute and the OPM Standards that evaluation criteria are finalized prior to posting of an RFP.

What is the largest number of evaluators you recommend on an Evaluation Committee?

We recommend an evaluation committee with 3-5 evaluators. This allows for a diversity of opinions and perspectives while keeping discussion and administration manageable.

When publishing an RFP, how do you make sure to publish and broadcast in a way to reach all of the minority-owned organizations, and populations different than the regular Caucasian-managed organizations?

Please reach out to OPM/Finance for assistance with this. DAS also oversees a [supplier diversity program](#) that can help ensure you are reaching a broad array of potential bidders. OPM plans to hold a training on publicizing RFPs, engaging diverse organizations, and increasing the number of RFP responses in the near future.

Is past performance allowed to be considered as part of the evaluation process?

Yes, evaluation committees can take past performance of a vendor into account when evaluating a proposal, but it must be done in a structured and fair way.

Agencies are required to submit a contractor performance evaluation at the end of every POS or PSA contract. In an evaluation committee, evaluators can refer to these performance evaluations to determine whether a vendor has provided satisfactory service in the past, or whether there were serious, documented performance issues. However, an evaluation committee cannot make a determination about past performance based on anecdotal, subjective experiences shared by one committee member. If an agency wishes to use past performance as a criterion, it should disclose this as one of the criteria in the RFP and should determine how it will objectively score based on this criterion. Proposal questions may also ask vendors to acknowledge in writing any past performance issues on state contracts, including whether they have been on a corrective action plan.

Is there a question/answer sheet you can provide regarding confidentiality of evaluators?

OPM has a [sample confidentiality form](#) for evaluators to complete before engaging in any proposal review. The form is a sample that agencies can customize for their needs. It is important to remember that evaluators should not discuss the evaluation process with anyone outside the committee at any time during the RFP process.

Interested in learning more about the best practices of engaging out-of-agency technical advisors- is it possible to have a subject matter expert not part of the agency or organization to engage in the RFP development and evaluation process?

You can engage subject matter experts to assist with developing the RFP. These subject matter experts can be from another State agency or external organizations. Any external expert who participates in drafting an RFP cannot be considered as a bidder in response to the RFP and cannot provide assistance to another bidder in preparing their response. Any external expert must sign a confidentiality form



before learning any information about an RFP or participating in drafting. Agencies should consult with their legal counsel about the possibility of engaging an external expert in the evaluation process.

We are considering asking for proposal letters of intent and then asking those that meet the criteria to put in a full proposal. We feel this could be a way to reduce the number of full applications. What are your thoughts regarding this approach?

Letters of Intent are a great tool to get a sense of the pool of respondents to the RFP and to plan for the size/workload of your evaluation committee, but they are not meant to be used to eliminate or encourage any potential bidders.

After proposals are submitted, an agency can do an initial vetting round to disqualify proposals that do not meet the RFP minimum requirements, but this would not be done at the Letter of Intent stage of the process. Agencies should never discourage bidders from submitting proposals.

Our agency typically provides grants to municipalities. We have procurement guidelines for hiring professional services to oversee the process. The contractor prepares/releases the RFP and ultimately selects the grantees and holds the grant agreements. Does OPM have separate guidelines for this type of scenario?

OPM does not have specific guidance for this scenario. If an agency has a contract with a firm that requires additional expertise or the distribution of State funds, that firm can conduct its own fair and ethical RFP process to engage subcontractors or hold its own grant application process to select grantees.

Can staff that have participated in the development of the RFP participate as an evaluator of that RFP as well?

Yes. Staff who have participated in the development of an RFP will likely be well positioned to evaluate responses, as they will have a strong understanding of the requirements and scope of the RFP.

Can the Facilitator serve as the Official Contact?

Yes. The Official Contact is responsible for answering any questions from prospective bidders about the RFP, host pre-bid conferences if relevant, receiving proposals, and issuing award notifications. This role may be played by the Evaluation Committee Facilitator, or a different staff member.

How do you check references as part of the evaluation process? At what point in the process do you do this?

Reference checks involve reaching out to points of contact identified by proposers, assuming that your RFP asks for the submission of references. These may be other jurisdictions, agencies, or private businesses that proposers have worked with in the past, that can provide information on the quality of their services. Reference checks are a useful opportunity for agencies to confirm details of past work described in the proposal, and inquire about any concerns or areas of interest identified during the scoring process. Typically, references are checked once the rest of the scoring process has been



completed and finalists have been identified. Findings from reference checks may be included along with final scores.

Would you recommend agencies be strict or lenient about minimum requirements like formatting, or narrow misses on deadlines?

Agencies should use their discretion when determining how strictly to apply minimum requirements such as formatting. Minimum requirements are intended to make the evaluation process easier by standardizing certain elements of proposals, and ensuring consistency and legibility. Minimum requirements should generally not cause otherwise qualified proposals to be removed from consideration unless there are concerns about fairness (such as if a proposal is submitted late, or if requested documentation is missing).