VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Request for Proposals (RFP) Evaluation Process – Phase 1: Individual Reviews

Congratulations, you've been selected to be part of an evaluation team!

This means your expertise and opinions are highly valued for helping your department award contracts to the most qualified bidders at the best value for the State.

The purpose of this video is to give you a general overview of your responsibilities as part of an evaluation team.

There are 2 main phases in the proposal evaluation process:

- Phase 1 is when evaluators complete an individual review of each proposal
- Phase 2 is when evaluators meet as a group to complete team evaluations and determine a consensus score for each proposal.

This video focuses on Phase 1 – the individual reviews.

Before moving forward, it's important to mention some background about the proposal review process.

Up until fairly recently, most proposals were submitted in hard copy format, which meant paper copies were distributed to reviewers.

Today, proposals are submitted electronically and materials are sent to reviewers via email.

While the overall process isn't completely automated yet, this video focuses on using email and electronic processes as much as possible to streamline the proposal evaluation process.

Also, in making this video, the goal of the Division of Procurement Services is to share best practices and suggested guidelines for handling the proposal evaluation process.

Following these practices and guidelines will help ensure consistency for RFP evaluation teams throughout the State.

With that background in mind, let's move into the individual review process.

During Step 1, you'll need to become familiar with the solicitation documents. These include the Request for Proposals or RFP, the question and answer summary, and any other amendments and addendums issued for the RFP.

The RFP coordinator will send you copies of these documents, so be sure to read them carefully.

One important guideline for preserving the integrity of the proposal evaluation process is to make sure you do not discuss the RFP, while it is released, with anyone except the RFP coordinator.

This means that – after an RFP is posted -- if you receive any inquiry from an interested party, you should not respond yourself. Instead, direct all communication to the RFP coordinator.

After the solicitation period has closed and all the proposals have been received, the next step is to make sure you don't have a conflict of interest with any of the bidders.

This is important for demonstrating fairness, objectivity and transparency in the proposal review process.

To complete this step, the RFP coordinator will send you a proposal cover sheet for each qualified proposal along with an agreement and disclosure form.

The proposal cover sheet will identify the bidder's name, and you will be asked to sign the agreement and disclosure form certifying that you do not have a conflict of interest in the evaluation of the proposal.

There are a few specific circumstances in which you could have a potential conflict…
For example, if you:

- Have current or former ownership in the bidder's company;
- Are a voluntary or paid board member of the company;
- You or a family member are a former or current employee of the company;
- Or if you have a personal contractual relationship with the company or any relationship that could be construed by the public as personal, you may have a conflict.

If you believe you have a conflict or if you're unsure, contact the RFP coordinator immediately to discuss your concerns.

After you return the signed agreement and disclosure form, the next step is to begin reviewing the sections of each proposal sent to you electronically by the RFP coordinator.

Most often, this will include the bidder qualifications and experience, and scope of work sections, but you should review all sections of each proposal sent to you by the RFP coordinator.

There are a few best practices to keep in mind as you begin reviewing proposals…

For example, it's recommended that you set aside 1 to 2 hours for reviewing each proposal. This can vary based on the complexity of the RFP and the length of each proposal – but 1 to 2 hours is a good estimate.

And remember, you should only review one proposal at a time.

It's also important to understand that you will not be scoring any proposals at this time… You will only be reviewing the proposals and identifying your impressions about how well proposals meet the RFP requirements.

And because anything you write about a proposal will become part of the public record, it's important that you do not write on the proposal itself or on any of the RFP documents if you have printed any hard copies.

Moving on to Step 4 of the process, you will be completing Individual Evaluation Notes to record your impressions about each proposal.

The RFP coordinator will send you a blank form, which you will complete for each qualified proposal. The form is also available on the Forms page at the Division of Procurement Services website.

To ensure readability, you should type your notes directly into an electronic copy of the Individual Evaluation Notes form.

Also, avoid using acronyms or other jargon, and be sure to use a professional tone.

After you have reviewed each proposal and completed your Individual Evaluation Notes, you should email the forms to the RFP coordinator. *[Commission uses online form to gather notes.]*

In general, you should plan on completing your notes for all proposals within about one week and send them to the RFP coordinator BEFORE the first team evaluation meeting.

Now, let's do a final recap about your responsibilities during the individual review phase…

- Step 1 – Read the RFP and all related documents.
- Step 2 – Evaluate whether you have any conflicts of interest with bidders. Then sign an Agreement & Disclosure form and send the forms to the RFP coordinator.
- Step 3 – Review each proposal carefully, particularly the Scope of Work and Bidder Qualifications and Experience sections.
- Step 4 – Complete an Individual Evaluation Notes form for each proposal, making sure to type your notes, avoid jargon, and use a professional tone.
- And Step 5 – Submit your notes to the RFP coordinator prior to the RFP team evaluation meeting.

Finally, if you have any questions about the individual review process, contact the RFP coordinator or a staff member in the Division of Procurement Services.

On behalf of the State of Maine, thank you for being part of the RFP evaluation team!

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT

Request for Proposals (RFP) Evaluation Process – Phase 2: Team Meeting & Consensus Scoring

Welcome back to the proposal evaluation process!

After you and the other members of your RFP evaluation team have completed the individual reviews, it's time to meet as a team and determine a consensus score for each proposal. This is Phase 2 of the process.

This video is intended to give you a high-level overview of what to expect during the team meeting... You will also receive additional guidance from the RFP coordinator or facilitator during the meeting.

First, the RFP coordinator will work with all the evaluation team members to schedule the team meeting.

In general, the team meeting may take several hours, so it's typically scheduled for a full day. And in some cases, depending on the number and length of the proposals, it may take more than one meeting to score all proposals.

On the day of the team meeting, you should arrive prepared with:

- copies of each proposal;
- your individual review notes;
- and the solicitation documents, including the RFP, Q&A Summary and all the amendments.

Most reviewers find it easier to store these documents electronically and review them on their laptops during these meetings.

At the beginning of the team meeting, a facilitator will be assigned to help run the meeting.

In some cases, the RFP coordinator may serve as the facilitator. Or, it could be someone else if the RFP coordinator is also an evaluator.

What is important to remember is that no evaluator should also be designated as the meeting facilitator. This will help ensure the facilitator is free to focus on moving the team through the meeting agenda.

The facilitator most often will use a laptop and projector to display the RFP documents and the proposal under discussion.

Now, let's review some guidelines when it comes to consensus scoring…

Your team can decide to review proposals in any order, such as alphabetically, by random selection, or by some other method.

Regardless of the order, the team should review and assign points to just one proposal at a time.

Moving on to Rule #2, your team should evaluate each proposal against the evaluation criteria outlined in the RFP.

The team should not evaluate or compare one proposal to another except when evaluating the cost.

This means your team will proceed through each of the RFP evaluation criteria in numerical order and assign points to the corresponding section of the proposal that's being reviewed.

Throughout this process, you will be able to refer to your individual evaluation notes to recall your impressions about the proposal, and your team will discuss each section to arrive at a consensus score.

Under Rule #3, in determining how to score a proposal, your team should consider how many points a proposal earned for the section being evaluated.

Under this approach, all proposals start off with zero points and are awarded points based on how well they responded to each RFP criterion.

Your team can also set a minimum threshold amount, such as awarding half the available points in a particular section to proposals that only meet the minimum requirements. Proposals that exceed the requirements would receive higher scores.

Your team will score the cost proposal according to the criteria specified in the RFP…

In most cases, this means the lowest price proposal will receive the maximum cost points.

If two or more proposals have the exact same lowest price, then those proposals receive the maximum cost points available.

Proposals that don't have the lowest price will be assigned points based on a specific formula, which the facilitator will go over with the team during the meeting.

Once the team has reviewed and scored a proposal, the facilitator will record the score on the master score sheet. Then, the team will proceed to the next proposal.

Now that you have a general overview of the team meeting and consensus scoring process, let's do a recap about some of the key rules…

- For Rule #1 – The team should review and score one proposal at a time.

- Rule #2 – Evaluate each proposal against the RFP criteria, NOT against other proposals.
- And Rule #3 – Determine the number of points a proposal has earned for each RFP criterion.

If you have any questions about the consensus scoring process, be sure to discuss them during the team meeting. You can also contact a staff member in the Division of Procurement Services.

Once again, on behalf of the State of Maine, thank you for being part of the RFP evaluation team!

Division of Procurement Services
RFP and Evaluation Planning Form

4. Assistance from Outside Expertise with Requirements

a. Did the requesting Department utilize a consultant/outside expert in the drafting of this RFP?

b. If yes, identify the consultant/outside expert.

4a.

4b.

5. RFP Evaluation Team

a. Identify the members of the evaluation team by name, title and role. Roles should include: lead, financial expert, business expert (preferably from outside the division or program area) and subject matter expert(s).

b. Is the evaluation team familiar with the State's standard evaluation process?
Note: Guidelines for the evaluation process can be found on the Division of Procurement Services' FORMS page: https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/forms or further training on the evaluation process can be provided by the Division of Procurement Services (upon request).

c. Does the Department understand that evaluation documentation must be retained by the Department and that each individual evaluator must take individual notes, in accordance with the State's purchasing rules: https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/Policies-Procedures

5a.

Name/Title	Role
	Financial Expert
	Business Expert
	Subject Matter Expert
	Subject Matter Expert (if applicable)
	Subject Matter Expert (if applicable)
	(add rows as needed)

5b.

5c.

Division of Procurement Services
RFP and Evaluation Planning Form

Only RFPs where the resulting contract is expected to meet or exceed $1,000,000 in value require #6 and "Reviewer Signatures" to be completed.
6. Executive Summary for the State Procurement Review Committee (SPRC) Please address the following as they relate to this RFP: a. What is the funding source? b. Is there performance bond language in the RFP? c. Provide an explanation of performance standards/requirements/deliverables.
6a.
6b.
6c.

Reviewer Signatures	
Departmental Legal Counsel:	
Date:	
Commissioner or Departmental Executive:	
Date:	