



A Request for Proposal (RFP) or a Request for Information (RFI) is a document issued by a client sponsor that offers an opportunity to the business community to provide either a specific proposal or more general company information for consideration by the client.



A good RFP will provide all required information to a potential respondent so that there's a full and complete understanding of what the client hopes to accomplish on the project.



A badly written RFP on the contrary will result in numerous questions from potential respondents as they attempt to determine specifically what the customer expectation is.



The quality of an RFP can easily be gauged by the number of questions generated by respondents to the RFP....few questions means that an appropriate level of detail has been provided as far as customer vision and expectations. On the other hand, an RFP resulting in lots of questions means the customer vision has not

been clearly defined and is open to interpretation. This can lead to severe scope creep and costly change orders as the project unfolds.

The authors of RFP documents should put themselves in the shoes of a potential respondent, and ask themselves:

“What would I need to know about this opportunity so that I could provide an accurate proposal that would deliver exactly what the customer expects?”

A well written RFP leaves no potential relevant questions unanswered. The basis for a well written RFP is an initial client meeting that asks and answers all possible questions as to what the client expects. In the areas of IT communications and electronic security design there are dozens of questions that need to be answered before an RFP can be issued. The process may vary slightly depending on whether the project is a “brownfield” project (renovation or expansion of an existing building) or a “greenfield” project (new building). A brownfield project RFI will need to describe existing systems if the intent is to tie into these systems. Legacy equipment or existing service agreements should be disclosed so that respondents can take these into

account as they develop their proposals.

Ultimately, a successful RFP begins with the end result in mind and provides all required information so that the vision for the final project result can be accomplished by the successful respondent to the RFP.



An RFI generally precedes a customer project and may also narrow the field to only a few qualified business service providers. As an example, and RFI may require that the potential respondent give examples of previous projects that are relevant to the customer specific requirements. A school board for example, may require that an architect has prior school board work. RFIs may require an explanation of company process, accreditations or affiliations with relevant organizations such as BICSI [www.bicsi.org](http://www.bicsi.org) , OAA [www.oaa.on.ca](http://www.oaa.on.ca) , PEO [www.peo.on.ca](http://www.peo.on.ca) or LEED® [www.cagbc.org](http://www.cagbc.org).

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