



State Financial Services Division

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REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

EVALUATION PROCESS – INSTRUCTIONS

Please refer to your copy of the RFP as a guide to the scoring process for each proposal.

NON-CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION: While the RFP is open and prior to receipt of proposals, the procurement officer will distribute and collect the Non-Disclosure and Conflict of Interest Disclosure from each member of the evaluation committee. Once the proposals have been received and it is clear which individuals and/or companies have responded to the RFP, the procurement officer will inform the evaluation committee of those companies that responded and request a written statement from each member of the evaluation committee confirming that no conflict of interest has arisen. In the event that a conflict has arisen, the procurement officer will request a substitute evaluation committee member be identified.

The Non-Disclosure and Conflict of Interest Disclosure form contains information explaining what would constitute a potential conflict of interest and that certain documents received as part of an RFP may be protected from public view under the provisions of section 18-4-304, MCA. The procurement officer will inform evaluation committee members which documents, if any, received are protected from public view under the statute. If such documents are present, the Declaration Form will explain the responsibility of the evaluation committee members to maintain the confidentiality of these documents during and after the RFP evaluation process. The procurement officer will collect the signed Declaration Forms for inclusion in the official procurement file.

INDIVIDUAL SCORING: The procurement officer will distribute copies of each RFP response to the evaluation committee members to begin their individual review of the proposals. Please refrain from downloading or accessing RFP responses prior to the procurement officer distributing the RFP responses. This step ensures the correct handling of confidential information if/when a response is received and labeled as confidential. Following is the progression for each committee member to follow when scoring proposals:

Step One: *Review all proposals.* Take notes, make comments or prepare questions for discussion. Do not score at this point.

Step Two: *Determine status.* Make an initial determination as to whether each proposal is “responsive” or “non-responsive.” A “responsive” proposal conforms in all material respects to the RFP. A proposal may be deemed “non-responsive” if any of the required information is not provided, the submitted price is found to

be excessive or inadequate as measured by criteria stated in the RFP, or the proposal is clearly not within the scope of the project described and required in the RFP. *Extreme care should be used when making this decision because of the time and cost that an offeror has put into submitting a proposal.* If a proposal is determined to be “non-responsive,” it will not be considered further. The procurement officer will make the final determination of responsiveness. If a determination of non-responsiveness is made, written justification must be provided for this conclusion.

Step Three: *Score proposals.* Committee members should INDIVIDUALLY score the proposals based on the criteria established in the RFP. Proposals must be evaluated solely on the stated criteria listed in the RFP. Only material presented in the written proposals, clarifications, and vendor demonstrations can be considered in the evaluation. *Prior documented experience and past performance history with the product and/or offeror may be considered as part of the reference checking process if it is available to the entire evaluation committee.* Include a written justification for each scoring category. An approved scoring sheet/evaluation matrix will be provided to assist you in the process of awarding and totaling points. Evaluation committee members MAY NOT individually meet to discuss the proposals or their scores. If the evaluation committee wishes to meet to discuss the responses, and/or to arrive at a final score, the meeting must be adequately noticed pursuant to the paragraph below.

SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS (SME): Advice may be sought from experts in the field when necessary. The committee and/or chair should decide if such advice is necessary and from whom it should be sought. SMEs will be required to sign a Declaration Form. SMEs should be given adequate time to read the pertinent sections of all the proposals and formulate an opinion. If an evaluation meeting is scheduled, the SME may be asked to present a written report to all committee members prior to the meeting (which will become part of the permanent procurement file), or to give an oral report and/or answer questions during the meeting. Please note that while the SME opinion is valuable, each committee member must take responsibility for their own score.

EVALUATION COMMITTEE MEETINGS: Once the proposals have been evaluated and scored by individual committee members, the entire committee may meet to discuss the proposals and arrive at the final scoring. The evaluation committee meeting must be recorded and retained for 6 months following the notice of intent to award. Before awarding a contract, the department must provide notice of intent to award a contract and allow seven days for written public comment regarding the proposed award. Before releasing the proposals and other information received from offerors the Contracts Officer will evaluate whether public disclosure must be limited as required by 18-4-303 and 18-4-304 (8). Pursuant to state law, 2-3-212, MCA, the procurement officer, or assigned designee, must take minutes of each meeting. These minutes must include the date, time, location of meeting; a list of the evaluation committee members in attendance; substance of all matters discussed or decided; and at the request of any evaluation committee member, a record by individual members of any votes taken. *These minutes will become part of the permanent procurement file.* A quorum of the committee must be present to take any official action.

Step Four: *Discuss proposals.* During the committee evaluation meeting, the full evaluation committee should discuss all aspects of the proposals so that there is a “unified understanding” of the criteria and corresponding responses. Individual scores may be adjusted based upon the discussion. No discussions or comments among committee members may take place outside of this meeting (including social media, private text messages or phone calls).

The committee may tally the final point assignments by the following methods: (1) consensus score, (2) a total of all of the points given by individual committee members, or (3) an average of the individual scores. Any of these methods or combination thereof is acceptable.

Step Five: Interview. This step is optional. If interviews are deemed necessary, the procurement officer will issue a letter asking the offeror to attend an interview or give a presentation. This is an opportunity for both sides to explain their viewpoints. If an oral interview is pursued as an option, it must be so stated in the RFP and scored according to stated criteria.

If multiple offerors are invited to give a demonstration or interview, the date/time assignments should be a random selection. The procurement officer will send individual notice letters to *all* offerors when the invitation(s) is sent. Scoring sheets marked "Draft" should accompany the notices.

Step Six: Discussion/Negotiation. This step is optional. If the committee is unsure of certain items or issues included in an RFP response, it may request further clarification from the offeror. The procurement officer will distribute clarification questions. Responses will be returned to the procurement officer and submitted to the evaluation committee.

Step Seven: Recommendation. The full evaluation committee makes a written recommendation as to whom the contract should be awarded. This written recommendation should contain scores, justification and rationale for the decision, along with any other variables that may have been considered. If scoring methods (2) or (3) are used, as noted in above in Step 4, individual scoring sheets must be provided to the procurement officer at the end of the evaluation process. If consensus scoring is used, the consensus score sheets and any other material relating to the evaluation process must be turned in to the procurement officer.

Step Eight: Review. The procurement officer will review the committee's scoring and justification. If in agreement with the committee decision, the procurement officer will: (1) issue a Request for Documents Notice to the highest scoring offeror and notify other offerors of the tentative contract award, (2) obtain the required insurance documents and contract security, and (3) assist the agency with issuing a purchase order or contract, as appropriate. If a formal contract is required by the agency, the order of signing should be: 1) legal counsel for legal content (if required by the agency); 2) the procurement officer; 3) State CIO for all IT related contracts (per requirements of 2-17-5, MCA); 4) the contractor; and finally, 5) the State. A copy of the fully executed contract will be returned to the agency and one copy will be retained for the procurement officer's RFP file.

This completes the RFP process.