

# So you think you might need to do an RFP?

## Considerations and Beginning Steps to a Successful Request for Proposal (RFP)

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### First, is it really an RFP?

Keep this question in mind as you **define the issue** you are trying to address. An RFP is an offer to present a solution to a problem or a need in which a subjective evaluation of the proposer's experience, qualifications and ability to successfully satisfy the need takes precedence over price. If the item or service needed can be defined with mandatory requirements and specifications, then it can be acquired through something other than an RFP – such as informal quotes, other contracts, or a bidding process – all of which can be conducted more quickly than a full RFP.

### Research and Collaboration

The key to generating an effective solicitation is to meet with stakeholders to discuss and clarify the need or problem you are trying to solve. This should occur before you begin filling in an RFP Development Worksheet.



Suggestions for research are:

- ✓ Other entities that may have addressed a similar issue
- ✓ Potential proposers
- ✓ An RFI (request for information) to help focus the problem and gather information to inform the RFP  
\*\*For more information on conducting an RFI, see the [Results for America RFI Guide](#). Contracts and Procurement is available to help develop an appropriate RFI
- ✓ It may also be appropriate to invite multiple vendors to demonstrate their systems prior to writing the RFP



If engaging vendors during your research phase, it's critical that you preserve the fair and competitive procurement process by researching more than one vendor and gathering info from multiple sources. Estimated costs may also be requested for budgetary and planning purposes, but it is critical that vendors know the pricing request is merely for an estimate.

Once you begin drafting the RFP development document, you must cease all communication with potential proposers to maintain the integrity of the process.

### Other recommendations prior to writing the RFP

#### ★ Gather Feedback and Focus on Outcomes

Agencies should engage service providers, service recipients and stakeholders to gather feedback, validate the need, align expectations, define desired results, and establish outcome goals for the contract.



#### ★ Breakdown Funding Silos

Agencies should proactively review which and how many resources to dedicate to the procurement in order to accomplish its stated objectives and outcomes. When appropriate, agencies should bring multiple funding sources together into one solicitation, which allows providers to focus on outcome-oriented services rather than recordkeeping for disparate contracts. By examining a wide range of potential funding sources and combining funding from separate programs and budgets, agencies can align disparate funding sources toward accomplishing shared outcomes.