

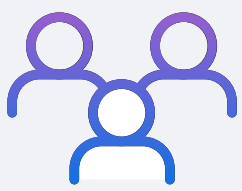
9 RFP Tips to Simplify CRE Vendor Procurement

Maintaining a solid roster of service vendors is crucial to keep buildings in top shape, budgets in check, and tenants satisfied. No tenant wants to work in an office with broken air conditioning in the summer, or navigate an icy walkway in in the winter.

But the typical vendor procurement process can be difficult. Property teams often spend hours creating RFPs and chasing down responses, only to end up with lackluster responses. Or in some cases, no response at all.

Why are so many RFPs so unsuccessful? Many property teams fail to include the right information in each request—and to present it in a clear, digestible way.

The following tips will help you write RFPs that consistently receive qualified responses.



1. Know Your Audience

It's tempting to cast a wide net when searching for vendors, but this can lead to wasted time sorting through responses that fall well short of your criteria.

Start any RFP process by defining your ideal respondent as clearly as possible. For example, "HVAC maintenance technicians" is too broad a category to target effectively. "Commercial HVAC Management companies with X years of experience" is a more useful target. After determining your intended audience, craft your RFP with this persona in mind.

By using a modern RFP automation solution, the Spinoso Real Estate Group reduced time spent on vendor procurement by 80 percent.

[Find out how.](#)

2. Update RFP Templates

RFP templates are a useful way to save time and avoid rewriting the same questions. (If you don't have one already, there are plenty of [free options](#) online.) But asking the same set of questions on each RFP for different classes of vendors invites irrelevant answers and lower response rates.

Obviously, a landscaper will need completely different qualifications from a boiler technician. And an RFP for a capital project will have more rigorous qualifications than an RFP for a one-time fix. To secure relevant candidates, each template should be carefully reviewed and modified before crafting an RFP to confirm it makes sense for the intended project and audience.



3. Don't Neglect Flow and Formatting

You don't have to be Shakespeare to create a great RFP. But you'll get better responses to RFPs that are clear and well-written.

After determining preliminary details such as project scope, budget, timeline, and ideal RFP respondent, create an outline of the RFP to keep from veering off track. Make the finished document easier to read by using bullet points and subheadings to break up dense blocks of text. Always proofread and revise your RFP to make it as clear and concise as possible.

4. Ask Open-Ended Questions

A golden rule of RFP writing is to avoid yes or no questions that leave no room for a vendor to display their expertise. However, you still need to make questions direct enough to prevent rambling, unfocused answers. This can take practice. If your firm doesn't have one, consider hiring a [vendor procurement consultant](#) to assist you



On average, organizations only respond to 65% of the RFPs they receive.

—Loopio

5. Request References

The CRE industry runs on existing relationships. But even if a vendor comes highly recommended, it’s still best practice to ask for references. Include a reference request in your RFP, along with your intent to contact these individuals promptly.

If speaking with a vendor’s prior customers isn’t an option, request a case study from a past project. In either case, specify that these references should be from jobs like your particular use case to ensure the insights are meaningful.

6. Include Clear Project Timelines

Providing detailed project timelines helps vendors assess their workloads and determine if they can reasonably pursue a contract. This also forces vendors to respond promptly and prevents your RFP from getting shuffled to the bottom of their to-do lists.



Include dates by which they need to submit initial bids, when you’ll award the contract, when you’d like to begin work, and when you expect the project to be completed. It can also be a good idea to leave room for ambitious vendors to suggest earlier completion dates for projects when applicable. The more detailed your bid requirements are, the more time you should allow vendors to respond.



7. Determine Evaluation Criteria

Rather than debating your options over a conference room table, your team should create a standard method for [evaluating RFPs](#). Some use weighted scoring, comparative matrixes, or their own unique methods.

In the finished RFP, include key evaluation criteria ranging from basic availability requirements to specific technical qualifications. Be sure to distinguish required licensing and qualifications from those that are merely preferred. Knowing how they’ll be evaluated gives vendors the opportunity to show how they’re a good match for your needs. Or to realize they don’t meet the requirements and not waste your time with a bid.

8. Request Licensing

Depending on the job, your ideal candidate will need industry-specific licensing and certifications, as well as more general certificates of insurance (COIs).

Requiring proof of this documentation in an RFP is an easy way to weed out underqualified options. And to shield your property from costly risk. For example, if a vendor gets injured on the job and doesn’t have a current COI, your property could be subject to a [costly lawsuit](#).

Solutions based on robotic process automation can help reduce the time it takes to draft RFPs by up to two-thirds and eliminate human error.

—McKinsey & Company



9. Demand Transparent Pricing

Including your overall project budget in an RFP is a no-brainer. But budgets get complicated when vendors charge for services in different formats: Some bill by the hour, others charge a lump sum including materials costs. These disparities make it difficult to compare proposals side-by-side and increase the likelihood of unexpected fees down the road.

Avoid budget stress by being crystal clear on pricing before vendors begin work. Determine which pricing structure is most helpful to your team and require that bids submit pricing in that format in order to be considered.

Finally Find Vendors You Trust

Given common RFP outcomes, it’s no surprise many property teams skip the RFP process in favor of familiar vendor options, even when they’re overpriced or do average work. Luckily, software solutions can now automate every step of the vendor procurement process.

Prism Bid Management, from Building Engines, is one market-leading option. With customizable RFP templates, a nationwide vendor network, and a side-by-side comparative matrix to evaluate responses, Prism makes it quick and easy to land the right vendor for every job.

[Request a Demo of Prism Bid Management](#)