



# RFP Response Strategy Toolkit

A roadmap to help small- and minority-owned businesses in the District of Columbia by providing best practices and strategies to competitively bid on requests for proposals.

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# Introduction

This RFP Response Strategy Toolkit is designed to help small- and minority-owned businesses in the District of Columbia by providing best practices and strategies to competitively bid on requests for proposals (RFPs). Developed in collaboration with Johnson Cooper Consulting, Inc., this toolkit reflects decades of experience from experts in private sector procurement. It outlines essential steps that small- and minority-owned businesses need to know to determine which RFPs to pursue, develop competitive RFP responses and market their brand. Applying the principles in this toolkit will help businesses build long-term relationships, notwithstanding the bid resulting in a win.

The Coalition for Nonprofit Housing and Economic Development (CNHED) developed this resource as a continuation of our long-standing commitment to supporting small- and minority-owned businesses in the District of Columbia (DC). We act on this commitment through our solutions-driven approach to advocacy, programming and access to resources and critical information. CNHED's strength is in its convening power and practitioner working groups. Through robust communications and information sharing from experts in the field, CNHED equips members, partners and lawmakers with the tools, resources and research to further community economic development solutions.

CNHED's focus on improving the environment for small- and minority-owned businesses began in 2010 with the launch of the DC Small Business Policy Project (SBPP) in partnership with the DC Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD). Composed of local public, private and non-profit stakeholders, the SBPP led to recommendations that would increase equal access to: contracting and procurement opportunities, stronger quality technical assistance, and capital resources. Over the years, CNHED has continued to build on SBPP findings by advocating for policies and programs that support the growth of small- and minority-owned businesses.

CNHED's understanding of the economic influence of DC's anchor institutions – placed based hospitals and universities – as some of the District's largest purchasers led us to later launch the DC Community Anchor Partnership (DCAP), in partnership with the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED). DCAP is a collaborative of anchor institutions that work to increase inclusive contracting and procurement with DC minority-owned businesses.

As CNHED continues to respond to practitioner feedback and on-the-ground experience, we're committed to developing ecosystem-wide resources and solutions to support small- and minority-owned business at every stage. Whether through the [DCSmallBizHelp](#) tool, the [CNHED Capacity Building Institute](#), or this RFP Response Strategy Toolkit, our intention remains: **to support local businesses in their pursuit of prosperity for themselves, their employees and our broader community.**

## Lindsey Poole

*Vice President, Strategic Partnerships, CNHED  
Director, DC Community Anchor Partnership*



# Overview & Glossary

## RFP Purpose

RFPs (Requests for Proposals) provide Purchasing Companies with a strategic and structured opportunity to specifically define the products, services or solutions they are seeking. Qualified providers are invited to propose the products, services or solutions they believe will be the best suited and most cost effective for the Purchasing Company's needs. RFPs also provide a competitive environment that encourages suppliers to produce and put forth cost-effective and innovative products, services or solutions.

## RFP Benefits for Vendors

RFPs provide suppliers with the opportunity to showcase their ability to design thoughtful and specific solutions to the needs that Purchasing Companies outline in the RFP. Suppliers should utilize their RFP responses as an occasion to market their company, brand and capabilities as a knowledgeable and practiced provider. Equally important, suppliers should highlight the differentiating aspects of their products, services or solutions and how they uniquely care for their clients.

## Glossary of Terms

### Request For Proposal (RFP):

A document that announces and outlines the need for a product, service or solution for which the Purchasing Company seeks to hire a Supplier.

### Potential Client or Purchasing Company:

The company looking to fulfill a particular need by requesting competitively priced products, services or solutions through the issuance of an RFP.

### Supply Chain/Procurement Department:

The department within the Purchasing Company that is responsible for the planning and management of sourcing opportunities, including RFPs, which are developed with the Internal Business Unit Client. This Department solicits RFP responses from qualified suppliers, establishes contractual agreements with the RFP awardees and supports the Internal Business Unit Client with procurement needs throughout the lifecycle of the contract.



### Internal Business Unit Client:

The department within the Purchasing Company that seeks to directly utilize the products, services or solutions being sought by Supply Chain (or Procurement) Department in the RFP. The Internal Business Unit Client will fund and oversee the purchase of the products, services or solutions selected through the RFP process and resulting contractual agreements.

### Supplier:

The competitive provider of products, services and solutions which may address the needs the Purchasing Company specifies in the RFP.

### RFP Response Manager:

A Supplier employee who is responsible for ensuring the timely development and submission of an RFP response. Typically, the RFP Response Manager will be the primary point of contact regarding the RFP response.





# Understand the Request and Scope of Services

A **Scope of Work** also known as a **Scope of Services** is a foundational part of the Request for Proposal (RFP) which outlines what the Purchasing Company aims to gain or obtain through the RFP process. **The Purchasing Company will use the Scope of Services to explain the particulars of its needs, the problems it seeks to solve, and the performance standards required to meet the project objectives.** The Scope of Services also defines the range of materials and services that will be governed by the contractual agreement which will result from the RFP.



## Key Takeaways

- 1. Upon receipt of the RFP, read and review the Scope of Services and any associated exhibits that may be included.** Be sure to review the Scope of Services in detail to obtain a clear and comprehensive understanding of the materials, services, tasks and or solutions being requested.
- 2. Further, independent research of the Purchasing Company,** the circumstances surrounding their needs and consideration of potential additional long or medium-term needs may be required.
- 3. A proper understanding of the Scope of Services is required** in order to estimate costs, budgets, timelines and prepare sound solutions that specifically address the needs, requirements and objectives outlined within the Scope of Services.





# Identify the Challenge *of the potential client*



The Purchasing Company will specify the needs, requirements, standards and objectives for their project in the Scope of Services, which will be included in the RFP. While understanding the details of the project requirements in the Scope of Services is a good foundation, it is wise for potential suppliers to go above and beyond in understanding the Purchasing Company on a deeper level.



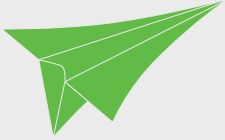
## Benefits to this Research

- 1.** Understanding **why** the Purchasing Company is seeking a particular material, service or solution will **aid in the development of a comprehensive packaged solution** tailored to meet the Purchasing Company's broader needs and requirements.
- 2.** In seeking to identify and further understand the challenges the Purchasing Company seeks to meet through the RFP, potential suppliers may seek additional information from the RFP's Point of Contact (POC).
- 3.** It is appropriate for suppliers to submit probing questions to gain additional insight into the root cause or tangential issues associated with the primary issue the Purchasing Company seeks to address through the RFP. **The answers to these questions can help suppliers develop a comprehensive and cost-effective RFP response** that addresses both the Scope of Services requirements and the broader needs of the Purchasing Company.

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# Decide to Respond (or not)

When determining whether to respond to an RFP, there are many factors to consider and stakeholders to consult. First, suppliers should develop and implement a consistent evaluation process for determining if they will respond to an RFP. Some items this evaluation should address are:

## Alignment

Does the Purchasing Company, the materials and/or services sought, or the objectives and requirements of the RFP fall into your (the supplier's) target market?

## Relevant Experience

Do you (the supplier) or your employees, subcontractors and/or partners possess the knowledge, expertise and experience in the associated disciplines involved in the requirements and objectives of the RFP?

## Employee Feedback

What thoughts and feedback do your (the supplier's) employees have in regards to responding or not responding to the RFP? Pay special attention to feedback from employees who will design, propose and implement the solution.

## Logistics & Timing

When do you (the supplier) have to submit a notice of intention to respond to the RFP, if at all? How soon is the RFP response due? Do you have the time required to get ample feedback from employees, subcontractors and/or partners as well as gather the necessary inputs, data and information to formulate a response to the RFP?

## Additional Resources & Considerations

What other details and additional components of the RFP will you (the supplier) need to consider (e.g. material costs, labor charges, subcontractor markups, partnership percentages, transportation costs, ancillary fees or charges, project management, equipment rentals, employee benefit costs, other overhead costs, profit, etc.)?

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## Client Compatibility

Do you (the supplier) have an existing relationship with the Purchasing Company? If so, is there an interest in growing or extending that relationship? It's also important to consider the behavior of the Purchasing Company: Have they been responsive to questions and have they been a good client to work with? Do they pay their invoices on time? Etc.

## Competitor Analysis

What is the level of competitor interest and how does it impact how your (the supplier's) bid is formulated and presented? What would be the impact of a competitor winning the RFP?



## Resources Needed

What resources (e.g. time, personnel, data and or equipment) are needed to evaluate the prospect of pursuing this RFP and should you (the supplier) win the bid, what resources are needed to actually develop and implement the solution supplier?



After evaluating the RFP's objectives and requirements, it is imperative that suppliers research and determine the most comprehensive and cost-effective solution for their RFP response. In determining the most appropriate solution, suppliers should evaluate the capability, stability and sustainability of materials, service providers as well as associated supply chains and subcontractors. Additionally, suppliers should obtain and evaluate related cost estimates, budgets, timelines and partnership agreements prior to participating in an RFP.







# Assemble the Response Team

Regardless of the type or size of RFP that you're evaluating, establishing a consistent RFP Response Team will help you organize and prepare for the highly collaborative process required to efficiently develop a competitive RFP response. The members of the RFP Response Team may vary, depending on the RFP in question. Yet, there are four roles that should be foundational elements to every RFP Response Team:



## 1. RFP Response Manager

- Oversees the development of the RFP response and should be the single POC for the RFP response
- Leads the RFP review and ensures a full understanding of the RFP questions
- Determines which team members are responsible for answering each question and assists with answering questions that do not have a clear owner
- Solicits input from multiple team members or internal departments to answer questions
- Ensures the plan and timeline for responding to the RFP is practical and that the RFP Response Team adheres to it
- Ensures that the writing style is consistent, the tone is appropriate, and that the RFP response is complete and submitted on or before the due date

Effective RFP Response Managers possess the following skills: **sales, marketing, writing, editing, project management and good communication.**

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## 2. Product or Service Subject Matter Expert (SME)

- Provides insight and product- or service-specific knowledge required in the RFP response to demonstrate comprehension and expertise on a specific product or subject outlined in the Scope of Services
- Assists with understanding, researching and responding to RFP questions in a way that is technically sound yet easy to understand
- Demonstrates the feasibility, practicality and innovativeness of the proposed solution from a technical standpoint
- Ensures accurate and comprehensive technological, product or service specific details are addressed, without ambiguity, with a significant focus on the benefits or advantages of the solution that support the Purchasing Company's primary and underlying needs outlined within the RFP



## 3. Budget and Cost Representative

- Is usually a member of the finance and/or accounting team who aids the RFP Response Team in determining the budget and cost impacts associated with the resources and services required to implement the solution
- Considers the fixed and variable costs; such as overhead, profit, employee benefits and contract or temporary
- Evaluates the attractiveness and sustainability of the product, service or solution's cost

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## 4. Executive-level Manager

- Conducts final review and approval of the RFP proposal, the solution and official RFP Response
- Provides a fresh and objective perspective on the proposed solution
- Reviews the dynamics of the RFP response through a broader lens that is inclusive of broader company and industry perspectives as they relate to the proposed solution



**In addition, the RFP Response Team should consult each department that may be impacted by the proposed solution; including, but not limited to **Legal, Human Resources, Marketing and Operations.****





# Assess the Competition

Assessing your competition is a crucial step in determining an RFP response strategy. It is necessary to evaluate the competitors in your marketplace to better understand how to position your products or services in your RFP response. It's also wise to compile competitor information in order to formulate strategic directives for your company as a whole and for your RFP response. Relative to RFP responses and beyond, understanding your competitors' business is one way to ensure your business will not only survive, but thrive. In developing your competitor analysis, gather the following key pieces of information:

## Get to know your competitors

Identify competitors and research specifics such as their business description, the demographics they service, the size of their company, their locations; and whether they are direct or primary competitors, secondary or indirect competitors or disruptor or alternative competitors.

## Analyze competitors

After determining your primary or direct competitors, further analyze their specific products and services, pricing structure, marketing and branding strategy, and reputation within the marketplace.

## Evaluate competitors' products & services

Evaluate the quality, features and consumer responsiveness to competitors' products and services and how they compare to your products and services. This product or service evaluation may also consider the suppliers, distributors, wholesalers or subcontractors used by the competitors.

## Evaluate competitors' pricing

Seek to understand how competitors' products are priced, whether they offer different pricing in different channels or marketplaces, what type of discount structure they offer and, if possible, estimate the cost basis of their products or services.

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## Evaluate competitors' communications

Take note of competitors' marketing and branding to understand how they are positioning their products or services in the marketplace. Review competitors' websites, product or service specifications, brochures, social media ads and posts. In reviewing this publicly available information, observe how competitors differentiate their products or services, which customers they target, and what methods of outreach they use to communicate.

## Evaluate perception of competitors

Find out how competitors are viewed in the marketplace by talking with consumers, suppliers, other direct or indirect competitors, and disruptors who provide alternative products and services. Learning if competitors' products, services, sales tactics, customer service, technical support, marketing practices and prices are viewed favorably may prove valuable.

## Identify competitors' strengths & weaknesses

Learn competitors' strengths & weaknesses by reviewing their public statements, investor statements, annual reports and public company filings. Look into how they are funded/capitalized and what strengths they have in terms of differentiation or competitive advantages, such as expert staff, white-glove customer service, high-visibility, desirable locations and higher quality products or services.

## Compare yourself to competitors

Evaluate competitors' strengths in relation to your company's market position, products and services. Be mindful of how competitors' strengths may represent a threat to your company, products or services (e.g. is there a gap in your product's feature set that is being filled by a competitor?). Determine whether there is a strategic opportunity to turn a competitor's weakness into your competitive advantage (e.g. offering a competitive pricing structure for a particular segment of the target market that is underserved by competitors like medium-sized businesses).

## Identify & cultivate competitive advantage

Identify your competitive advantage and take steps to defend or strengthen it by recognizing how competitors could duplicate, impede or impact it and strategizing how to maneuver beyond any potential obstacles. Use your competitive advantage in marketing and branding strategies to highlight and distinctively note your unique differentiators. Additionally, use your knowledge of competitors' weaknesses, in relation to your advantage, to inform your approach to future strategic planning. After all, the goal is not just to compete, but to win.







# Understand your Cost and competitive pricing

It is important to understand your cost and competitive pricing in order to deliver the most cost competitive RFP response possible. The first step is to ensure a clear understanding of your costs. To start, there are three main categories of costs: **fixed, variable and capital costs.**

## **Fixed Costs**

Fixed costs are costs that do not fluctuate with the amount of product or service that is produced or sold. This includes, but isn't limited to, rent, utilities, salaries, advertising and insurance.

## **Variable Costs**

Variable costs are costs that change in proportion to production and output. This includes, but isn't limited to, raw materials for product production, labor costs for employees directly involved with product production or delivery, subcontractors or consultants delivering services, and product packaging.

## **Capital Costs**

Capital costs are fixed, one-time expenses. This includes, but isn't limited to, production facilities, equipment and company vehicles.

Suppliers should outline and account for the fixed, variable and capital costs (and anticipated profits) associated with the proposed solution. It is important that the revenue produced by the pricing structure established in your RFP response covers these costs. Suppliers should assess these costs, as well as any contingency allocations, over the anticipated term of the RFP award.

Knowing and fully understanding your competitors' pricing strategies and the Purchasing Company's needs may aid in determining which pricing strategy would be best to employ in your RFP response. The Lowest Cost and Competitive Based Pricing strategies may be viewed as viable for an RFP response as consumer's price sensitivity, product features and capabilities may weigh heavily in the Purchasing Company's decision-making process.

*Developing a pricing strategy doesn't just ensure that costs are covered, it also aims to maximize actualized revenue and profit. There are several pricing strategies that suppliers may consider for their RFP response. The pricing strategies listed below are just a few of the pricing strategies that may prove useful in developing your RFP response:*

## **Cost Plus Pricing**

*Adding a pre-determined markup percentage, typically to account for profit, to the unit cost of a product or service. The unit cost and the pre-determined markup percentage are combined to determine the selling price of the product or service.*

## **Demand Pricing**

*Allows for price changes dependent upon changes in perceived value that are rooted in fluctuations in customer demand. Demand Pricing may also be known as "Customer-based Pricing."*

## **Lowest Cost Pricing**

*Pricing methodology in which a product or service is offered at a relatively low price in order to increase demand for the product or service. The increase in demand is expected to lead to an increase in sales which may, ultimately, lead to an increase in market share.*

## **Competitive Based Pricing**

*A pricing strategy that involves setting product and/or service pricing relative to a competitor's pricing.*





# Focus on Structure & Responses

Strict adherence to the Purchasing Company's requested style and structure for RFP responses is fundamental to a successful RFP submission. Typically, the RFP will specify how the RFP responses should be structured.



## Formatting

Often times, the RFP responses will need to be provided in a particular format. Some RFPs will include a form that the supplier will need to complete in order to specify the details of their RFP solution. If suppliers are required to submit their RFP response using a specific form or format, it is vital that the proposed RFP solution is designed and written to fit within that specific format. Do not deviate from the requested form or format. Deviation from the required RFP response format will, undoubtedly, adversely affect the perception and reception of the supplier's RFP response. Deviation from the required format may also lead to additional negative consequences, such as the Purchasing Company marking a supplier's RFP response as noncompliant or disqualifying a supplier.

## Response Prompts

In other cases, the RFP may simply request particular pieces of information, but not require that suppliers submit the information in a certain format. In these instances, organize formal, direct, concise responses to the prompts and clearly outline the elements of the proposed solution in a logical and easy-to-follow format. The RFP response should clearly denote, at a minimum, the who, what, where, when, why, and how, as well as exceptions and notable points of interest.

## Implementation Details

The RFP may also require the inclusion of specific aspects related to the implementation of the proposed solution. Proactively address anticipated questions or concerns the Purchasing Company may raise by providing an implementation timeline. More information about the timeline is available in the 'Timeline' section of this document.

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## Supplier Profile & Background

In the RFP, the Purchasing Company will include questions related to:

- 1. The supplier's profile** – description of business, number of years in business, locations, total number of employees, summary of products and services provided, etc.
- 2. The supplier's financials** – annual reports, audited financials, any pending merger activity etc.
- 3. The supplier's product information and capabilities** – an outline of the RFP solution's components (either provided directly by the supplier or indirectly through subordinate arrangements) and how the products and/or services proposed within the RFP solution address the needs outlined in the RFP's Scope of Services
- 4. The supplier's pricing structure** – hourly labor rates, lump-sum project pricing, not-to-exceed pricing, retail pricing, discounts or multipliers, overhead and profit percentages, etc.

Suppliers should address each question with clear, targeted responses that highlight their strengths and product or service differentiations. Some of the RFP questions may be challenging or require suppliers to provide information they deem confidential or proprietary. Regardless of the obstacles, it is imperative that the RFP response includes thorough, thoughtful responses to each required question.

Enough cannot be said about the importance of strictly following the RFP structure and purposefully providing responses to each required question.





# Offer Multiple Solutions and alternatives



When formulating an RFP response, suppliers should consider the Purchasing Company's anticipated short- and long-term needs and goals. While it is important to ensure your RFP response specifically addresses the products and/or services requested within the RFP, it would be wise to take a longer-range strategic view of the Purchasing Company's request, and include multiple solutions, or variations thereof, in your RFP response that specifically address any known needs, wants or desires of the Purchasing Company without veering beyond the Scope of Services outlined within the RFP.



## Benefits of Offering Alternatives

- 1.** Providing the Purchasing Company with multiple solutions allows them to view their needs and goals through a different lens. If multiple solutions aren't feasible, research alternative products or services that may supplement, enhance, or in some circumstances, replace your primary RFP solution.
- 2.** Suppliers may open up an additional revenue stream for their company by knowing, and potentially partnering with, providers of alternative or substitute products or services while simultaneously meeting the needs of the Purchasing Company.
- 3.** Proposing an alternative solution, even one that may adversely impact your sales or profit margin initially, may prove to be the wise choice in the long run. The Purchasing Company may also arrange to purchase those alternative products or services through your company.
- 4.** Suppliers will generate goodwill with the Purchasing Company, as providing multiple and alternative solutions shows their innovative, extended efforts to provide the most cost-effective solution that meets the Purchasing Company's needs.







# Develop Implementation Plan and timeline

When formulating an RFP response, suppliers should consider the Purchasing Company's anticipated short- and long-term needs and goals. While it is important to ensure your RFP response specifically addresses the products and/or services requested within the RFP, it would be wise to take a longer-range strategic view of the Purchasing Company's request, and include multiple solutions, or variations thereof, in your RFP response that specifically address any known needs, wants or desires of the Purchasing Company without veering beyond the Scope of Services outlined within the RFP.



## Implementation Plan: What's Included

- 1.** Indicate the sub-tasks needed to complete each deliverable. Include the estimated dates for arrival of materials, equipment, personnel and the completion dates for any prerequisite deliverables. Additionally, note the estimated costs and establish contingency plans to fulfill the deliverable in the event there is a delay.
- 2.** Identify the work within each task delineated under each deliverable. Make note of the associated costs and how that work may be dependent upon preceding or adjacent deliverables or tasks.
- 3.** Under each task's description, include the steps required for completion, the anticipated completion dates, the resources required, the estimated time of arrival for resources, the projected costs, and alternative resources in the event the originals are impacted by a supply chain issue.
- 4.** Once the deliverables and tasks are comprehensive and itemized, state the project milestones associated with each. This highlights the project's status and completion checkpoints throughout the implementation plan.
- 5.** Each deliverable, task and milestone of the project should include the name of the primary and/or associated team member(s), consultant(s) and/or subcontractor(s) responsible for completion.







# Present Team Members

The RFP may request that suppliers provide details regarding the team they've selected to provide or implement the proposed RFP solution. Anticipate that the Purchasing Company will request the names, titles, resumes and specific project experience or qualifications for each of the supplier's team members as a part of the RFP response.



## Supplier Interviews

In evaluation of RFP responses, the Purchasing Company may request that suppliers participate in an interview process or provide a presentation of their proposed RFP solution. Suppliers should do their due diligence and meticulously prepare their teams as a whole, as well as each individual team member, for the interview or presentation. The interview and/or presentation will provide the Purchasing Company an opportunity to question and evaluate the professionalism, competence and capability of the supplier's team members.

Suppliers should also note that their team's performance during the interview or presentation may impact the score or rating of their overall RFP response. Every effort should be made to not only make a persuasive argument that assures the Purchasing Company of the supplier's ability to successfully deliver their proposed solution, in full, and address any concerns while also making a positive impression on the Purchasing Company.

## Consultants & Contractors

It would be sensible for suppliers to preemptively establish partnerships or consulting arrangements with companies or subcontractors who would be able to step-in and fulfill the role of proposed key team members, consultants or subcontractors in the event they become unavailable. Showing the Purchasing Company these contingency agreements, ready to step into the project if needed, demonstrates astute planning and gives the Purchasing Company the opportunity to proactively approve, decline or suggest alternative individuals or groups that may be considered for contingencies.





# Provide References

Suppliers should anticipate that Purchasing Companies will request references along with RFP responses. Purchasing Companies will use these references to help scrutinize the previous and current capabilities, quality and performance of suppliers. Moreover, the RFP may require that suppliers' references include specific information or responses.

## Project Details

In addition to providing the names and contact information for current and/or former clients as references, suppliers may also need to provide specific information about the size, Scope of Service, and outcome of projects the supplier completed for these clients.

## Types of References

Purchasing Companies may also ask suppliers to provide client references of a particular type. For example, RFPs conducted by higher education institutions may request that suppliers provide references that include other higher education institutions, or other similarly-situated clients.

## Terminated Projects

It's important to note, and prepare for, Purchasing Companies to request references, project descriptions, and client contact information for projects where suppliers were terminated or otherwise disengaged within a particularly recent period.

## Related Scopes of Service

Separate and apart from specific client references, the RFP may require that suppliers provide specific information on projects that are related to, or closely align with, the RFP's Scope of Services. For example, suppliers may need to provide examples of prior or current projects that have a Scope of Services similar to the RFP. Additionally, suppliers may be explicitly asked to outline the Scope of Services for that project, associated costs, location, and the client's name and contact information. When providing this information, it's also important to include any changes to the Scope of Services or costs that may have occurred or any amendments to the project agreement.

## Legal Disclosures

RFP responses will often require suppliers to disclose any previous or pending litigation, arbitration, claims, liability, etc. filed by the supplier against the project owner. Any claims filed by the project owner against the supplier would need to be disclosed, as well.

Some of the questions required in the RFP may prove to be challenging or require permission from current or former clients to disclose some aspects of their projects as reference material. It would be advantageous for suppliers to preemptively gather and organize their references and project descriptions in order to minimize the time required to gather this information when preparing an RFP response.



# Conclusion

Crafting an RFP Response Strategy is essential to ensuring the development and submission of a thoughtful and well-planned RFP response. Understanding the Scope of Services and the challenge the potential client aims to solve are essential to determining whether or not to respond to the RFP. After the decision to submit an RFP response is made, assembling a knowledgeable and well-qualified RFP Response Team, led by a proactive and well-organized RFP Response Manager, will aid in the process of assessing the competition and understanding your cost and competitive pricing.

Once the particulars of cost and competitive pricing have been determined, pay close attention to precisely adhering to the required structure and formatting of the RFP response while also ensuring the response demonstrates a comprehensive, anticipatory and, if appropriate, cutting-edge approach to the potential client's goals and challenges. Highlight the effectiveness of the proposed solutions while also showcasing their attainability by including a projected timeline for the implementation of the solutions encompassed within your RFP response.

Lastly, emphasize the experience and capabilities of the implementation team and individual team members who will implement the proposed solutions and reinforce the credibility of your business by providing references that exactly address the reference requirements outlined within the RFP.

The practicalities of reality necessitate preparation for the possibility of not being selected as an awardee under the RFP. **In the event the RFP response is not selected as an awardee, it is important to follow up with the RFP's POC to request a debrief.** The debrief will provide an opportunity to understand which portions of the RFP response need to be strengthened in preparation for the next RFP.

Your business' expertise combined with the clear and definite direction contained in the steps outlined herein will result in the development of a focused, impressive and well-suited RFP response strategy.

