



RESPONDING TO GOVERNMENT RFPs:
A Proponent Guide to the Revised
Request for Proposals (RFP) Corporate Template for
the Government of British Columbia

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Shared Services BC
Logistics and Business Services

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1 INTRODUCTION

What is the purpose of this guide?

This guide introduces the Request for Proposals corporate template (updated as of April, 2016) and provides information to individuals and businesses interested in competing on contract opportunities with the Government of British Columbia. It explains the competitive process followed by the Province to solicit proposals for contract opportunities using the revised RFP template.

Is one government office responsible for coordinating all RFPs in government?

No. Responsibility for the RFP process is decentralized in government, with each ministry having the authority to solicit proposals and enter into contracts for services in support of its own programs.

Ministry-specific legislation provides the authority for ministries to contract for services in support of their programs. In addition, the [Procurement Services Act](#) provides the authority for the Ministry of Technology, Innovation and Citizens' Services to compete and enter into contracts on behalf of ministries.

Does this guide apply to RFPs issued by all public sector organizations?

No. This guide reflects only the revised RFP corporate template used by core government ministries of the Province of British Columbia. Although other public agencies and the private sector may make use of a similar process to solicit proposals, their rules will be somewhat different and guidance should be obtained directly from those organizations.

What if an answer can't be found in this guide?

Questions related to a specific RFP or a ministry's RFP process should be directed to the government contact identified in the RFP. Information written for ministry buyers about the Province's procurement processes can be found at [BC Bid Resources](#). Questions about the RFP process in general can be directed to [Procurement Services Branch](#) (PSB). Questions about improvements to this template can be directed to [Strategic Business and Procurement Transformation](#).

Information about the Province's procurement policies can be found in [Core Policy](#). Questions about government policy should be directed to the [Procurement Governance Office](#).

2 THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS PROCESS

What steps does an RFP usually involve?

Each RFP will be unique. However, there are some common steps and decision points that are followed when moving from an identified need to the delivery of the required goods or services. These steps are as follows:

1. The ministry identifies a need.
2. The ministry may consult the [Procurement Services Branch](#) (PSB) to assist with identifying and assessing procurement options.
3. The ministry may use formal processes to gather information, such as the availability of a service, to be used in developing the RFP document, and/or the level of interest in a planned opportunity (see [Market Research and Notifications](#) for more information).
4. Some RFPs may be restricted to a pre-qualification list that was developed as part of a [Request for Qualifications](#) (RFQ).
5. Once the requirement is fully defined, the RFP document is drafted and evaluation criteria are determined.
6. The ministry, or PSB on behalf of the ministry, issues the RFP document.
7. A Proponents' Meeting may be held. This information session is open to all proponents and other interested parties.
8. The ministry receives the proposals, which are evaluated by the evaluation team.
9. The ministry selects and notifies the successful proponent and then notifies the unsuccessful proponents.
10. A contract is finalized and signed with the successful proponent.
11. Individual debriefing sessions may be held with proponents, upon request.
12. The service is performed or the goods are delivered.

More information on the full procurement life cycle can be found under [Procurement Process](#) in BC Bid Resources website.

How long will the RFP process to take?

The time it takes to complete an RFP—from the day it is issued until the successful proponent signs the contract—can be weeks or months. The length of time for the process can vary significantly, depending on factors such as the number of proposals submitted, the complexity of proposals received, the overall complexity of the project, and the ability to convene meetings with the evaluation team. The RFP may provide an outline of the anticipated time frame, although vendors should be aware that the outlines are estimates only and target dates are sometimes not met.

Any questions about the anticipated time frame should be directed to the government contact listed in the RFP document.

Can vendors be notified of government opportunities?

For a small annual fee, vendors can subscribe to [BC Bid](#) and create a custom commodity profile. BC Bid will automatically notify registered vendors, via e-mail, of any new opportunities that match their commodity profile. BC Bid will also automatically advise BC Bid subscribers, via e-mail, of amendments to previously issued opportunities that match their profile.

More information on the services available to vendors through BC Bid can be found at [Vendor User of BC Bid](#).

In addition, vendors may be interested in the [Contract Opportunities Advance Notice List](#), which identifies some potential opportunities over the upcoming three years.

3 THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS DOCUMENT

3.1 RFP Template

Is there a standard Request for Proposals document used by government?

Yes. Government uses a corporate Request for Proposals (RFP) template, which has been developed for use with approved government contracts, resulting in a set of standard contract terms and conditions being included in each RFP document. This guide is intended to be an introduction to the corporate [RFP template](#).

However, ministries may modify this template or create their own RFP templates so vendors are advised to carefully read the terms and conditions of the specific RFP to which they are responding.

In addition to the corporate RFP template, government also has a template for the Short-form Request for Proposal (SRFP). Information on the SRFP process, including a Proponents' Guide, can be found at [Vendor Information on the Short-Form Request for Proposals \(SRFP\)](#).

3.2 Mandatory Criteria

What are mandatory criteria?

Mandatory criteria are requirements that a proposal must meet in order for it to be considered in the evaluation process. Refer to [Mandatory and Weighted Criteria](#) for more information

Can a proposal miss a mandatory criterion and still be successful in the RFP process?

If a proposal clearly misses one or more mandatory criteria, the proposal will not receive any further consideration and cannot be awarded the contract. However, sometimes it is not clear whether or not the mandatory has been met, in which case the Province would seek legal advice. If in doubt as to how to demonstrate meeting a mandatory requirement, proponents should ask the Government Contact named in the RFP.

3.3 Weighted Criteria

What are weighted criteria?

Refer to [Mandatory and Weighted Criteria](#) for more information on weighted requirements in RFPs.

What do the percentages or points noted beside the weighted criteria mean?

An RFP will usually include information on the importance of each subsection of the weighted criteria relative to each other. These weightings, which may be indicated as available points for a subsection or as a percentage of total points available for the proposal, will be applied during the evaluation process. For example, if the *Experience* subsection is assigned 25 points and the total points available for the RFP is 100 points, this means that experience can receive up to a maximum of 25 points (or 25% of the total available points).

3.4 Minimum Scores

What are minimum scores?

Many RFPs include minimum scores, which are also called upset scores, for all or a subsection of the weighted criteria. If a proposal does not achieve any of the minimum scores defined in the RFP, the proposal will not receive any further consideration.

For example, if an RFP assigns 30 points for *proponent experience*, with 18 points as the “minimum score” for this criterion, this point allocation indicates that the ministry has decided that experience is of enough importance that it would be unwilling to consider any proposal that did not at least achieve a score of 60% (18 out of 30) of the available points.

Refer to [Mandatory and Weighted Criteria](#) for more information on how ministries should use minimum scores in RFPs.

Do all RFPs have minimum scores?

No, not all RFPs include minimum scores.

3.5 Changes to RFPs

Can RFPs change after they have been advertised?

Yes. The Province reserves the right to modify the terms of any RFP at any time prior to the closing date and time, including the right to cancel an RFP at any time prior to entering into a contract with a proponent.

Most RFP processes are completed without any changes to the terms and conditions of the RFP document. However, there are occasions where an RFP closing time may be extended or additional information related to the project may be added to the RFP.

Are proponents notified about any changes made to an RFP before it closes?

The RFP document will include information on the process for advising interested proponents of any changes made to the RFP prior to the closing date and time. Most RFPs will state that any changes will be posted to the [BC Bid](#) website exclusively. Proponents who have subscribed to BC Bid’s [e-notification service](#) and have expressed interest in the opportunity will receive an e-mail advising them of any updates to

the RFP. Proponents not registered for e-notification are advised to review the BC Bid website on a regular basis to check for updates.

If the RFP is not posted to BC Bid (i.e. it's directed to selected vendors only or is restricted to those on a pre-qualification list), it will describe an alternate method for advising proponents of updates.

3.6 Obtaining More Information about the RFP

What should proponents do if something in the RFP is unclear?

Proponents may forward any questions about the RFP to the government contact identified in the specific RFP. The questions asked and the ministry's response will be shared with all interested proponents if it includes new information that is relevant to the RFP. Usually, this is done by posting an addendum to the RFP on [BC Bid](#).

In addition to directing questions to the government contact identified in the RFP, proponents can ask questions during a [Proponents' Meeting](#) (if one is scheduled).

Proponents should direct questions as early as possible to the government contact person who will respond if time permits.

Can proponents ask questions without having the competition find out who asked?

Usually, the identity of the proponent asking a question is not disclosed when answering proponent questions. However, proponents should be mindful that the wording of the question could identify the source of the question, so proponents should avoid using their name or describing a situation that is well known to apply only to one identifiable vendor.

Can proponents ask questions and receive answers privately?

Providing answers to just one proponent is usually not permitted in the RFP process. All proponents should have access to the same information at the same time, when such information may impact their proposals.

4 DECIDING WHETHER OR NOT TO RESPOND

Preparing a proposal is time consuming. How do proponents decide whether it is worth the time to submit a proposal?

An understanding of both the project requirements and the extent of interest from other vendors in the opportunity may help to answer this question.

Some RFPs include a Proponents' Meeting, which can be a good source of information about who is interested in the project, as well as the project itself. Even if an interested vendor does not attend the meeting, information from the meeting will usually be made available.

Can proponents be reimbursed for expenses incurred in preparing proposals?

No. Government does not reimburse the cost of preparing proposals.

Are there any consequences to future opportunities for vendors who do not submit a proposal?

In the majority of instances, a decision not to submit a proposal will not impact a vendor's eligibility to compete on future projects. However, if the Request for Proposals (RFP) is the first stage of a multi-stage project, a decision not to participate now may limit a vendor's ability to participate in subsequent stages of the project. If such a limitation applies, it will be disclosed in the RFP.

What if a proponent does not agree with all of the terms of the RFP document?

The terms and conditions in the RFP document represent the rules of the RFP process, which are applicable to all proponents. Consequently, non-compliant, conditional, or counter-offer responses may result in disqualification of the proposal.

Some RFPs may allow for alternative solutions to be presented. If this is not explicitly outlined in the document, then proponents should ensure their proposals meet the requirements outlined in the RFP document in order to be given full consideration.

While the RFP is open, vendors are encouraged to highlight problems or issues with the RFP – including those specific to the terms and conditions of the RFP or the contract format - through asking questions and suggesting changes to the government contact identified in the RFP. However, the Province reserves the right not to make any changes to the RFP.

What if the terms in the RFP document are not well understood?

If proponents do not understand all of the terms and conditions in the RFP document, they should request clarification from the named government contact as early as possible or seek advice from their own legal counsel.

Can a proponent back out from the contract if successful in the RFP?

No. Under the terms of the Province's corporate RFP, a proposal can be amended or withdrawn at any time up until the closing date and time, but at the stated closing time all proposals become irrevocable.

Is an RFP open to any number of proponents or is there a limit on the number of proponents who can respond to the RFP?

Most RFPs are posted on BC Bid allow any interested proponent the opportunity to submit a proposal. The Province does not limit how many proposals might be received, in these cases. Ministries may also choose to post a bid opportunity notice in a newspaper or trade publication to help ensure all interested vendors are provided notice of the opportunity.

However, if the RFP document states that the opportunity is restricted to pre-qualified suppliers, then only those pre-qualified suppliers will be eligible to submit a proposal. If the RFP is not restricted to pre-qualified suppliers, then any vendor expressing interest in the opportunity may submit a proposal.

5 PREPARING AND SUBMITTING THE PROPOSAL

Before preparing a proposal, proponents should read through the Request for Proposals document to ensure that they fully understand all instructions and information provided. Any questions or concerns should be directed, in writing, to the government contact named in the RFP document.

5.1 Proposal Format

What format should a proposal take?

RFP documents will usually provide direction on how to structure the proposal. In general, proposals should include:

- A title page displaying the RFP number; the RFP closing date and time; the proponent's name, address, telephone number, fax number, and e-mail address; and the name of a contact person for the proponent.
- Signed cover page;
- Table of contents including page numbers;
- A short (one or two page) summary of the key features of the proposal;
- A checklist identifying where in the proposal evidence of meeting each mandatory criterion can be found;
- The body of the proposal, including pricing (i.e. the "Proponent Response"); and
- Appendices, appropriately tabbed and referenced, if applicable.

RFPs often include specific instructions on what to include in proposals, which are sometimes called "Response Guidelines". Using these instructions as headings in a proposal can be very helpful to ensure that the proposal is complete, well-organized and responsive to the requirements.

5.2 Proposal Content

5.2.1 Level of Detail

How much detail should be included in proposals?

The evaluation criteria, not length of proposal, are the key to success in an RFP process as they define how proposals will be evaluated. The instructions provided, and the weighted criteria and their relative weightings are the best indicators of how detailed a proposal should be.

Evaluating proposals involves more than checking boxes to indicate whether or not a criterion has been addressed. Therefore, it is not enough to state that a task will be completed or that the proponent has the appropriate expertise; the ministry wants to know *how* tasks will be completed or *why* the proponent’s expertise suits the opportunity.

Proposals should be specific and responsive to the information requested in the RFP and demonstrate the proponent understands the requirements and expertise through specific examples. It is important to avoid simply paraphrasing the ministry’s requirement or submitting generic marketing material, as these kinds of responses do not show that the proponent fully understands the requirements.

Can examples of responses that demonstrate how much detail to include in proposals be provided?

Following are two examples that detail both insufficient and recommended responses. Note that this is intended as guidance only to demonstrate the differences; proponents should carefully examine the specific RFP to which they are responding to determine the information and level of detail expected in proposals.

Example One: Approach

Statement in RFP	Proponents should have contingency plans to ensure that the project will be completed on time. Such plans should, at a minimum, address resource availability and unexpected incompatibilities with the Province’s technical system.
Response Guideline	Describe the proposed contingency plan to ensure that the project is completed on time.
Insufficient Response	We have standard practices that we use to ensure that all of our projects are completed on time.
Recommended Response	To ensure that the project is completed on time, our proposed contingency plan includes the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a project management methodology that includes weekly team lead meetings to track progress against planned activities in order to recognize any issues and develop remedies as early as possible; • a project manager who reports directly to our Projects Vice-President, who will ensure appropriate resources are assigned in a timely manner to this project; • a large pool of qualified employees (i.e. 50+), who

	<p>can be reassigned from other projects in the event that additional resources are needed;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • networks with 25+ independent qualified consultants who are interested in sub-contracting to us in the event that specific expertise is required that is not available in-house; • an information technology department with employees that are certified and experienced in the applicable operating systems, and who can be pulled into this project at any time to assist as needed; • a secure network that allows employees complete access to their systems in the event that weather or other issues prevent them from working from our offices; • immediate notification (within normal business hours) to the ministry of issues found that could impact time, budget or quality, and our planned response; and • monthly reporting to the ministry on progress made to date, any issues found, and remedies completed for those issues.
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Example Two: Experience

Statement in RFP	The proposed project manager should have 3 or more years' experience within the past 7 years (as of the closing date of this RFP) as a lead technical writer.
Response Guideline	Describe the proposed project manager's experience and role in technical writing.
Insufficient Response	The proposed project manager has experience as a lead technical writer.
Recommended Response	<p>The proposed project manager has been a technical writer for the past twenty-three years, fifteen of which have included leading technical writing teams. She began leading teams while working for the Canadian General Standards Board, and while there, was responsible for providing technical writing training and advice to staff and clients.</p> <p>For the past five years, she has been lecturing on Technical Writing at the University of British Columbia. A list of her recent publications (i.e. those published within three years of the closing date of this RFP) is attached as Appendix D.</p>

	<p>In addition to her lecturing, in the last three years the proposed project manager has completed the following contracts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-ordinating the writing and production of both on-line and hard copy user guides in Microsoft Excel Version 6.0. • Preparing technical documentation for maintenance of Vancouver’s SkyTrain. • Editing quality control manuals for three Lower Mainland manufacturers, all of whom subsequently became ISO 9000 certified.
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5.2.2 *Executive Summary*

What should be included in the executive summary?

The executive summary should explain the proposal in simple terms and be no more than two pages long. It should summarize both the anticipated results and the process the proponent intends to follow to achieve these results. The executive summary should contain all the basic elements of the proposal so that anyone not on the evaluation team can read the summary and understand what is being proposed. The summary should be written in plain English and be readily understood by a layperson. In addition, technical details should be avoided in an executive summary unless they are essential to providing an understanding of the proposal.

5.2.3 *Experience with the Ministry*

If a proponent has contracted with the ministry before, should their proposal describe this experience in detail?

Yes, if that experience is relevant to the services and expected experience described in the RFP. Each proposal must stand alone and be assessed on its own merit. Proponents are advised to write their proposal as though the evaluators had never heard of them. While evaluators may be familiar with the proponent’s past experience with the ministry or reputation generally, during the evaluation process, evaluators will only consider the information included in the proposal.

5.2.4 *Sub-contracting and Joint Proposals*

Is sub-contracting acceptable?

Please refer to the terms and conditions of the specific RFP document for information as to whether or not subcontracting is acceptable for the particular opportunity. For most RFPs based on the corporate RFP template, sub-contracting is acceptable as

long as no potential or perceived conflict of interest is created. The proposal must clearly identify one proponent who will take overall responsibility for the work performed by any subcontractors and that is a legal entity that can enter into the contract with the Province.

The RFP usually asks proponents to identify all sub-contractors and state that the proponent will take responsibility for work performed by the sub-contractor(s) if successful in the RFP process. If a proponent is awarded the contract and later wants to change one of the sub-contractors, approval from the ministry is required.

Can 2 or more proponents submit a single joint proposal?

Most RFPs based on the corporate template will not allow for proposals from joint ventures. However, proponents should review the terms of the specific RFP to which they are responding to confirm what corporate structures will be permitted.

5.2.5 *Résumés*

Should résumés be included in the proposal?

Sometimes an RFP will specifically request résumés for the project team members be included in the proposal. If résumés are not mentioned, but the experience and skills of the project team are being evaluated, it is recommended that proponents include résumés. The rule of thumb is to ensure that the résumés are relevant to the evaluation criteria. Unless otherwise stated in the RFP, résumés should not exceed three pages.

Should résumés be customized for each proposal?

Yes. To the extent practical, résumés should be tailored to the requirements stated in the RFP, and should highlight skills and experience relevant to the project.

5.2.6 *Budgets and Pricing*

Does an RFP usually provide a budget?

On occasion, the RFP document will describe the project and provide proponents with a budget amount, in effect, saying, "How much of our wish list can you provide for this dollar value?" RFPs using this strategy often include a mandatory budget amount that proposals must not exceed.

If the budget amount is not stated in the RFP, ministries may provide an estimate of the available funds.

If no budget is disclosed and proponents are not clear on the scope of work, proponents should ask for scope clarification from the government contact named in the RFP.

Should proposals include the best price or will prices be negotiated later with the successful proponent?

Prices in a proposal are expected to be firm for the duration of the contract, unless the RFP otherwise provides. As price is usually evaluated along with all other aspects of the proposal, proponents should put forward their best price in the proposal.

5.3 Proposal Presentation

How should a proposal be formatted?

The RFP will indicate how a proposal should be structured and what components to include.

The following guidance is provided as considerations to complement a proponent's best judgment when preparing responses to a Request for Proposals (RFP). Some RFPs may provide specific instructions on how to structure proposals which differs from this general guidance; in this case, these specific instructions should be followed rather than the advice provided here.

- If submitting the proposal in hard copy, use a binding method that works, even if it is only a staple. The pages should not fall out when the proposal is read.
- Use short paragraphs and leave plenty of white space on each page.
- All attachments or appendices should be pertinent to the proposal. Keep in mind that too much material may detract from important aspects of the proposal.
- When referring to an attachment or appendix, be specific as to where additional information can be found.
- Related topics should be kept together and statements should not be repeated in the proposal (except, perhaps, statements used in the executive summary).
- Avoid cross-references to the extent possible, as it can be difficult for evaluators to evaluate the proposal if they have to frequently jump between sections to get the full picture.
- If colour is used to highlight points, it should be used sparingly for greater impact. Any photographs or drawings used to illustrate a point should be clear and captioned to explain their relevancy.

- Format the proposal in a simple and attractive manner. Limit the number of typefaces used and keep the font sizes consistent throughout the document. Avoid excessive use of formatting options (e.g., bold, italic, and underline).
- Always number the pages, preferably with one numbering series from the first page to the last page.
- Make sure each copy of the proposal submitted includes all pages.

How long should the proposal be?

The proposal should provide all of the information requested. Some RFP documents may state a maximum number of pages or words for response sections.

5.4 Submission Process

If a proponent has two good ideas, can both be submitted?

Yes, unless the RFP specifically states otherwise. However, if a proponent chooses to submit more than one idea, each idea must be submitted as a separate, stand-alone proposal.

Remember that all proposals will be evaluated against the benchmarks and requirements identified in the RFP. If submitting more than one proposal, each should be responsive to all benchmarks and requirements in the RFP.

How important are the noted closing date and time?

The closing date and time are extremely important, as the Province's corporate RFP template includes a mandatory requirement that a proposal be submitted before the closing date and time, and proposals received on or after the closing time will not be evaluated. Refer to section 3.2 Mandatory Criteria of this guide for more information.

Proponents should review the language regarding the closing time in the specific RFP.

Is it important to sign the proposal?

Yes. The corporate RFP template includes a mandatory requirement to either:

- (1) include a copy of the cover page that is signed by an authorized representative of the Proponent;
- (2) otherwise identify the RFP and the Proponent and include the signature that confirms the Proponent's intent to be bound; or
- (3) submit the proposal using the e-Bidding key on BC Bid (if applicable).

The cover page refers to the Confirmation of a Proponent's Intent to be Bound; if not submitting via BC Bid's e-Bidding key, proponents should use this format to ensure that all required information is included.

Refer to [e-Bid Service Registration](#) or the [BC Bid help desk](#) for more information on e-Bidding.

Can proposals be submitted electronically?

The RFP will identify how proposals are to be submitted, which may include hard copy delivery and electronic submissions. Ministries now have two options if they decide to allow electronic submissions of proposals: e-Bidding through BC Bid and emailed submissions. Not all RFPs will allow electronic submissions, and even those that do may not include both options. Refer to the specific RFP document for instructions on the applicable submission requirements.

Why isn't email delivery allowed for all RFPs?

Although email is a commonly used form of communication, and some RFPs now allow for email submissions, proponents should be aware that submitting proposals via email can be risky. The corporate RFP template includes a mandatory requirement that proposals be submitted at the closing location before the closing date and time. Emails can be delayed – and sometimes significantly delayed – for numerous reasons which may result in a late or undeliverable proposal.

If considering emailing a proposal for an RFP that expressly allows for emailed submissions, first refer to the [Guidelines for Vendors for Submissions via Email](#) to better understand the risks involved.

Unless the RFP expressly allows for e-mailed proposals, any submission that is emailed will be rejected.

How does e-Bidding work?

On selected competitions, proponents may be able to submit a proposal electronically through [BC Bid](#) (called an *e-Bid*). An e-Bid submission is less risky than emailing, as submissions are sent through a secure website (BC Bid) and an email is sent to the proponent confirming that the e-Bid has been successfully received.

In order to submit an e-Bid, proponents must first be registered for this service. The registration process may take more than one business day to complete and costs \$150 per year. If considering e-Bidding for submission of a proposal, be sure to register for e-Bidding well in advance of the closing date and time of the RFP.

Refer to [e-Bid Service Registration](#) for more information on e-Bidding. e-Bidding is not the same as submitting proposals by e-mail or fax.

Can multiple files be submitted electronically?

Yes, multiple files can be submitted electronically for those RFPs that allow electronic submission (either through e-Bidding or email). If the submission includes multiple electronic files, name each file alphabetically or numerically so that the order of the proposal is clear. Remember that when the files are saved by the evaluators, they will default to an alphabetical or numerical order, regardless of whether this was the proponent's intent.

Usually if electronic submission is permitted, only one copy of the entire proposal is required (either as a single or multiple files).

Can proposals be submitted by fax?

Usually not, as most RFPs explicitly exclude faxed proposals as fax machines are no longer in common use. However, if the RFP does not make reference to faxed proposals, proponents can ask the government contact if faxing is an acceptable delivery method.

Should proposals be submitted in electronic or printed format?

All RFPs identify how proposals are to be submitted, and some will give options (e.g. hard copy delivery, e-Bidding, and emailed). Proponents should read the RFP carefully for instructions on how to submit a proposal for the specific opportunity.

Unless the RFP states otherwise, ministries usually do not have a preference if more than one submission method is allowed. Options for submissions are intended for the convenience of the proponents.

5.5 Time Commitments

How soon after the closing date will a decision be made?

The timing of the award decision is dependent on the time it takes for the Province to evaluate all of the proposals received.

All proponents, both successful and unsuccessful, will usually be notified of the outcome within two weeks of the award decision, provided that the ministry has all the necessary approvals to proceed.

How can work schedules with accurate timelines be proposed when so much depends on when the ministry makes decisions?

Proponents may need to make certain assumptions in order to develop a work schedule that highlights the various ministry decision points relevant to their proposal. Whenever assumptions are made, the proposal should include a clear explanation of the assumptions and explain how different decisions or circumstances might affect the work schedule.

However, if the ministry defines when the work must be done (i.e. as a mandatory requirement or a term of the contract), each proposal must clearly illustrate how these timelines will be met.

5.6 Other Helpful Hints

Are there any other tips on how to enhance proposals?

The following points are provided as suggestions to consider when developing proposals in response to an RFP.

1. Proposals that contain a lot of gloss or marketing material but little substance or response to the actual requirements cannot expect to score well.
2. Follow the format suggested in the RFP, using the same section headings, instructions or Response Guidelines to ensure that all requirements are covered.
3. Define any acronyms used and refrain from using technical jargon.
4. Clearly state any assumptions that are made in preparing a proposal.
5. Ensure the proposal is submitted before the closing date and time.

Does a proposal checklist exist?

Each RFP is unique so proponents should carefully read the requirements of the specific RFP. The corporate RFP template does not include a checklist, although some RFPs may include one.

The following may be helpful guidance for proponents when developing their proposals if a checklist is not provided, but do not rely solely on it as it may not address everything in the RFP. Proponents should carefully read the requirements of the specific RFP when developing their proposals.

- Everyone involved in creating the proposal has read and understood the requirements.
- The proposal addresses everything requested.
- The proposal meets all the mandatory requirements.
- The requested number of copies of the proposal have been made, if applicable.
- An e-Bidding account has been established for the proponent, if applicable.
- The proposal clearly identifies the proponent, the project, and the RFP number.
- The proponent's name and the RFP number appear on the proposal envelope, if applicable.
- The proposal will definitely arrive at the closing location before the closing time stated in the RFP.

- ❑ The proposal is being delivered using a method consistent with the terms of the RFP.
- ❑ The proposal has been signed in accordance with the instructions provided in the RFP.
- ❑ If the proposal is being submitted through BC Bid's e-Bidding functionality, all file attachments have been uploaded and the company e-Bidding key has been entered. If multiple files apply, they have been named alphabetically and/or numerically to ensure the intended order.
- ❑ If the proposal is being submitted via e-mail, ample time remains to confirm its receipt and to resubmit if a problem occurs with delivery. If multiple files apply, they have been named alphabetically and/or numerically to ensure the intended order.

6 THE PROPONENTS' MEETING

What is a Proponents' Meeting?

A Proponents' Meeting is intended to provide an opportunity for all interested vendors to access the information they need to develop a sound proposal. The meeting provides vendors with an opportunity to ask questions, gather additional information, and express concerns. For example, vendors may:

- seek clarification on anything that is unclear in the Request for Proposals (RFP) document;
- ask whether the service was previously contracted or performed in-house;
- ask about the ministry's anticipated time frame for awarding the contract, as well as the anticipated time frame for completing the project; or
- network with other vendors attending the Proponents' Meeting in order to determine who else is interested in the opportunity, and/or to investigate the possibility of submitting a joint proposal.

The Proponents' Meeting is hosted by government, usually in the place where the work is to be performed. Minutes or a transcript of the meeting are taken and are made available to all interested proponents, including those who were unable to attend the meeting. This information is often shared via an amendment to the RFP posting on [BC Bid](#).

More information on Proponent's Meetings can be found under Answering Vendor Questions section of [Strategies to Receive Quality Submissions](#).

Is attendance at a Proponents' Meeting mandatory?

Attendance at a Proponents' Meeting is usually optional. However, where an RFP states that attendance at a Proponents' Meeting is mandatory, proponents must attend or have a representative attend in order for their proposal to receive consideration.

Can proponents ask questions at the Proponents' Meeting without having the competition find out who asked?

Proponents are usually offered the opportunity to submit questions in writing in advance of the meeting in order to allow for some anonymity. These questions will be presented and answered at the meeting without identifying the enquirer.

7 EVALUATION OF PROPOSALS

How are proposals evaluated?

Information on the Province's evaluation process can be found at [Step-by-Step Guide on How to Evaluate Submissions](#).

Once a successful proponent is selected, all proponents are notified and a date is set with the successful proponent to commence discussions relating to the contract. Refer to [Announcing Results](#) for more information.

What is the evaluation team looking for?

Refer to the specific RFP for requirements and criteria.

Will proponents be given the opportunity to make a presentation or demonstration to explain their proposal?

If presentations or demonstrations are planned, the process is generally described in the RFP. Refer to [Shortlist Processes](#) for more information.

8 FINALIZATION OF THE CONTRACT

What if the Province and the successful proponent cannot agree on finalization of the contract?

Most RFPs include a provision stating that if agreement cannot be reached with the successful proponent within thirty days, the Province reserves the right to stop the contract finalization process and move on, either by attempting to reach an agreement with the proponent who ranked second or by cancelling the RFP process.

Where can a proponent find out more about contract finalization? For example, can changes be made to the insurance requirements?

Refer to [Contract Finalization](#) for information.

For additional information on insurance options for a particular RFP, contact the government contact identified in the RFP. Additional information on government's insurance requirements can be found on Schedule D of the [General Services Agreement](#).

Refer to [Insurance](#) for more information.

9 FEEDBACK

Can proponents get feedback afterwards to find out how to do better next time?

Yes. Refer to [Debriefs](#) for more information.

What is the purpose of a debrief?

The debriefing gives a proponent an opportunity to learn about their proposal's strengths and weaknesses. This feedback may identify areas where the proposal could have been stronger and it may identify situations where experience is lacking. Overall, the proponent gains an awareness of actions to take to improve their chances of success on future contract opportunities with government.

What information is available to proponents at the end of the process?

During a debrief, proponents can learn about virtually anything related to the evaluation of their own proposal. Other information is also available, upon request. Refer to the [Release of Information &/or Documents Related to Competitive Procurement Opportunities](#) for more information.

How can concerns be raised with the fairness of the process?

If a proponent has concerns with the process after a debriefing, they should raise their concerns with the government contact identified in the RFP document.

Proponents also have the option of initiating a formal vendor complaint about the decision made in the RFP. Vendor complaints are not intended to alter the decision made, but may be useful for the proponent to understand the reasons for the decision and for the Province to improve its future procurement practices. Refer to [Vendor Complaints](#) for more information.

10 CONTACTS

The Procurement Services Branch is responsible to support government procurement activity, and can be contacted as needed for advice and assistance related to the procurement process generally. The Procurement Governance Office is available to provide advice on the expectations of government procurement policy. The Strategic Business and Procurement Transformation Branch provides guidance on the procurement process, and ensures that corporate tools and templates are updated to meet the needs of users.

For questions specific to a single RFP, contact the named government contact for that RFP.

Procurement Services Branch

Phone: 250 387-7300 (Victoria)

Fax: 250 387- 7309 (Victoria)

E-mail: procurement@gov.bc.ca

Website: <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/services-for-government/bc-bid-resources/support-services/procurement-services>

Procurement Governance Office, Office of the Comptroller General

E-mail: procurementgovernance@gov.bc.ca

Website: <http://www.fin.gov.bc.ca/ocg/pgo/pgo.htm>

Strategic Business and Procurement Transformation Branch

E-mail: Procurement.Transformation@gov.bc.ca

Website: <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/services-for-government/bc-bid-resources/support-services/procurement-transformation>

11 GLOSSARY AND DEFINITIONS

Refer to [Procurement and Contract Management Terminology and Definitions](#) for definitions of terms used in this guide.

12 QUICK LINKS

Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT)

<http://strategis.ic.gc.ca/epic/internet/inait-aci.nsf/en/Home>

BC Bid website

<http://www.bcbid.gov.bc.ca/open.dll/welcome>

BC Bid Resources

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/services-for-government/bc-bid-resources>

Core Policy and Procedures Manual, Chapter 6 Procurement

http://www.fin.gov.bc.ca/ocg/fmb/manuals/CPM/06_Procurement.htm

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/F/96165_01.htm

Procurement Governance Office (PGO), Office of the Comptroller General, website

<http://www.fin.gov.bc.ca/ocg/pgo/pgo.htm>

Procurement Services Act

http://www.qp.gov.bc.ca/statreg/stat/P/03022_01.htm

Procurement Services Branch (PSB) website

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/services-for-government/bc-bid-resources/support-services/procurement-services>

Vendor Complaint Review Process (VCRP)

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/services-for-government/bc-bid-resources/reference-resources/vendor-relationships/vendor-complaints>