



PREPARING A REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)

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Over the years I have witnessed so many municipalities make the same basic mistakes over and over again. Whether they are buying a piece of equipment for DPW, an office machine (printer, copier, computer, etc.), or services (engineering, maintenance, or operations). That common mistake is most likely to go with someone they are familiar with, no matter what the cost. Those of us in this business see it over and over again, whether it is a multi-million-dollar public works project or a lawn mower, these contracts can be had for a \$10.00 lunch at someone's favorite diner. Familiarity is not always in the public's best interests, and that is why your municipality's best interests are served by a properly written and executed Request for Proposal or RFP. The definition of an RFP goes something like this:

A request for proposal (RFP) is a document that solicits proposal, often made through a bidding process, by an agency or company interested in procurement of a commodity, service, or valuable asset, to potential suppliers to submit business proposals.

More often than not, in municipal circles, RFP's are issued for solutions to ongoing problems with water, wastewater, and public works issues. So in smaller rural communities (but not exclusive to smaller rural communities) the water or wastewater operations specialist may bring to the attention of his/her village or town officials an ongoing problem for which they need a solution. There will be some discussion at the meeting and someone will say "Let's call (so and so), they did an adequate job for us last time....". As you can guess, this is probably not going to generate the desired result. We live in a complicated world and nowadays we need to be open to new technologies and solutions. The best way to accomplish this is to put out a Request for Proposals, distribute the request to several vendors, and make an informed decision based on the best solution submitted for the problem as described.

RFP's do not have to be complicated, but should include the following:

- Geographical information, population, customer base, MHI, water and wastewater metrics
- A brief description of the problem you seek a solution for

- Project description as defined by your operations specialists
- List desired features and requirements
- Deadlines, consent orders, etc.
- Preferential funding sources
- Project scheduling needs
- Contact information and deadline for submissions

Requests for Proposals will help insure that your community is getting the best solution for their needs. While the solutions may be similar, the RFP gives your board members an opportunity to examine what solutions are available and which solution they feel is in the best interests of the community. Selection of the best proposal by board resolution helps to eliminate special interests and insures that board members had an opportunity to make an informed decision.

The following websites have tips and ideas to help you create a Request for Proposal: www.rfp365.com, www.tenderspage.com and www.techsoup.org

Remembering as always that a well thought-out RFP will help you to deliver "Quality on Tap"! 💧💧

