**RFP Research and Development - Key Tasks and Considerations**

The research and development phase is the most crucial phase within the RFP process, as it is during this phase that the courts need will be outlined and defined. The information identified and contained in the completed RFP will serve as the building blocks for all remaining portions of the RFP process.

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| **Draft Procurement Plan** | |
|  | Once the procurement project team has been developed, a procurement plan should be developed. The goal in utilizing a procurement plan is to identify and document all key dates and milestones associated with the preparation, issuance, and administration of an RFP from beginning (e.g. project team identification) to end (e.g. contact execution). It is recommended that the plan be developed as a team, taking into consideration the time required to complete each task, other current projects or assignments, and planned time off for members of the project team. |
| **RFP Research Considerations** | |
|  | Identify what solutions are currently being used by other Ohio Courts. If looking to procure a new CMS, the SCO Office of Information and Technology can assist in providing a list of the current CMS solutions being utilized by Courts in Ohio. Once identified, contact the courts which are similar to yours in size and need to inquire about such topics as:     * What process did they use to secure their solution? * What worked well? * What didn’t work well? * Do they have any documents they would be willing to share? * What recommendations or guidance can they provide to a court just starting the process? |
|  | Identify and attend conferences and vendor trade shows, such as the annual OJC Tech Conference. Conferences of this type typically include a vendor fair, which may provide an opportunity to gain information about potential vendors and solutions currently available in the market. |
|  | Conduct internet research for RFP’s which have been completed. |
|  | Consult with both internal and external resources. |
| **RFP Development** | |
|  | Once research has been completed, the project team shall proceed in identifying what information and supporting documentation will be included in the RFP, and to develop the RFP itself. When drafting, keep in mind that RFP’s which contain vague or limited information will almost always result in insufficient or poor proposal responses. In contrast, RFP’s that provide a clear understanding of the court’s needs, expectations, and requirements typically result in the receipt of complete and comprehensive proposal responses. The development of the RFP itself is an output of the project team, including subject matter experts and internal and external resources as applicable.  Beginning on the next page is a list and description of the minimum RFP components that should be included in every RFP. Please note that this is not an all-inclusive list, and depending on the courts need and goal in issuing the RFP, additional components may be included.  **Project Overview**  The project overviewshould include a detailed summary of the project itself, including the goals the court is seeking to achieve in issuing the RFP. Example content includes a description of the current environment and system being utilized, why the court is seeking a new system, how many users currently utilize the system, and what types and volume of cases are managed by the current system.  **Minimum Vendor Qualifications/Requirements**  The identification of these qualifications and requirements is critical, as these will define the minimum standards all potential vendors must demonstrate in order to be considered for evaluation and award. In issuing an RFP for a new CMS, example minimum requirements may include the proposed solution is implemented and operational in an Ohio Court’s General and Domestic Relations Division, or that the successful vendor is able to provide ongoing maintenance and end user training once the solution has been implemented.  To best identify, start by considering responses to the questions below:   * What does the ideal vendor look like? * What type and level of knowledge and experience do they possess? * What items are mandatory to ensure success of the project goals? * What specific tasks/items/resources will the successful vendor be responsible for providing and/or completing to ensure project completion? * What specific tasks will the court responsible for completing and/or required to supply to ensure project completion?   **Minimum Technical Requirements**  Similar to identifying minimum qualifications/requirements for potential vendors, the minimum technical components required for the system itself must also be identified. These requirements should not dictate the functionality of said components, but ensure they exist as a portion of the proposed system. For example, in procuring a CMS, minimum technical components may include: caseflow management, management reporting, jury Management, etc.  To best identify, start by considering responses to the questions below:   * What does the ideal system look like? * What functionalities does it include? * What functionalities are required to ensure success in meeting the need hand, versus functionalities which are desired or preferred? * Are there any other systems or platforms that the successful system will need to integrate with, such as other courts, OCN, BMV, BCI, etc.   **Proposal Response Criteria**  Proposal response criteria is a key component to the vendors proposal response, as it includes the information, including any supplemental documentation, which demonstates the vendors ability to successfully achieve the goals and requirements defined in the RFP. Received responses should provide the evaluation team a thorough understanding of the vendors ability to meet the goals and requirements as identified. At a minimum, proposal response criteria should be framed in a manner which allows potential vendors to showcase their knowledge, experience and utilization of industry best practices.  When preparing proposal response criteria, consider approaching by category. In issuing an RFP for a CMS, it is recommended that proposal response criteria categories include questions/inquires which allow the potential vendors to demonstrate the following:   * Experience (Vendor and Project Team) * Core System (Technical) Requirements and Ongoing System Maintenance * Project Approach, Implementation, and Training * Proposed Costs   **Proposal Evaluation Criteria and Standards**  The manner and methodology of how the received proposal responses will be evaluated must be included in the RFP. The evaluation criteria, including the manner in how it will be evaluated, is driven by the proposal response criteria. There are numerous methodologies for conducting RFP evaluations, including assigning percentage weights to identified categories as demonstrated in the below example.   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Category** | **Weight** | | Experience (Vendor and Project Team) | 25% | | Core System Requirements and Ongoing System Maintenance | 40% | | Project Approach, Implementation, and Training | 25% | | Proposed Costs | 10% |   In addition to the evaluation, information obtained as a result of vendor presentations and demonstrations, clarifications and reference verifications should also be considered as a portion of the evaluation.  **Instructions for Vendors**  The purpose of these instructions is to provide potential vendors direction and guidance related to the logistics of the RFP. Examples include the date, format, and point of contact for questions and clarifications; the date, time, and location of the pre-proposal conference; and the date, time, location, and format in which proposal responses must be submitted. In addition, a schedule of key milestone events, including a listing of relevant dates should also be provided. Typically, if any these dates are changed following the release of the RFP, an addendum should be issued.  An example schedule of key milestone events has been included below:   |  |  | | --- | --- | | RFP Issuance | Date | | Pre-Proposal Conference | Date and Time | | Deadline for submitting Questions | Date and Time | | Final Addendum to be Issued | Date | | Proposal Responses Due | Date and Time | | Vendor Presentations (Tentative) | Dates | |
| **Identify Source List (Potential Vendor List)** | |
|  | The project team shall identify potential vendors in the market to send RFP to upon issuance. Options to identify such vendors include contacting external resources, such as the Supreme Court and internet searches. When identifying potential vendors, it is recommend obtaining a specific person’s name and e-mail address in which the RFP can be sent. |
| **Final Review and Approvals** | |
|  | Once the RFP draft has been finalized, it should be reviewed and approved by the Project Manager, Procurement Lead and Project Sponsor. Lastly, it is highly recommended that the RFP is reviewed by legal counsel prior to issuance. Depending on each courts internal policies and procedures, additional approvals may be required. |