

**VIDEO TRANSCRIPT**

**Request for Proposals (RFP) Evaluation Process – Phase 1: Individual Reviews**

Congratulations, you’ve been selected to be part of an evaluation team!

This means your expertise and opinions are highly valued for helping your department award contracts to the most qualified bidders at the best value for the State.

The purpose of this video is to give you a general overview of your responsibilities as part of an evaluation team.

There are 2 main phases in the proposal evaluation process:

* Phase 1 is when evaluators complete an individual review of each proposal
* Phase 2 is when evaluators meet as a group to complete team evaluations and determine a consensus score for each proposal.

**This video focuses on Phase 1 – the individual reviews.**

Before moving forward, it’s important to mention some background about the proposal review process.

Up until fairly recently, most proposals were submitted in hard copy format, which meant paper copies were distributed to reviewers.

Today, proposals are mostly submitted electronically and materials are sent to reviewers via email.

While the overall process isn’t completely automated yet, this video focuses on using email and electronic processes as much as possible to streamline the proposal evaluation process.

Also, in making this video, the goal of the Division of Procurement Services is to share best practices and suggested guidelines for handling the proposal evaluation process.

Following these practices and guidelines will help ensure consistency for RFP evaluation teams throughout the State.

With that background in mind, let’s move into the individual review process.

During Step 1, you’ll need to become familiar with the solicitation documents. These include the Request for Proposals or RFP, the question and answer summary, and any other amendments and addendums issued for the RFP.

The RFP coordinator will send you copies of these documents, so be sure to read them carefully.

One important guideline for preserving the integrity of the proposal evaluation process is to make sure you do not discuss the RFP, while it is released, with anyone except the RFP coordinator.

This means that – after an RFP is posted -- if you receive any inquiry from an interested party, you should not respond yourself. Instead, direct all communication to the RFP coordinator.

After the solicitation period has closed and all the proposals have been received, the next step is to make sure you don’t have a conflict of interest with any of the bidders.

This is important for demonstrating fairness, objectivity and transparency in the proposal review process.

To complete this step, the RFP coordinator will send you a proposal cover sheet for each qualified proposal along with an agreement and disclosure form.

The proposal cover sheet will identify the bidder’s name, and you will be asked to sign the agreement and disclosure form certifying that you do not have a conflict of interest in the evaluation of the proposal.

There are a few specific circumstances in which you could have a potential conflict…

For example, if you:

* Have current or former ownership in the bidder’s company;
* Are a voluntary or paid board member of the company;
* You or a family member are a former or current employee of the company;
* Or if you have a personal contractual relationship with the company or any relationship that could be construed by the public as personal, you may have a conflict.

If you believe you have a conflict or if you’re unsure, contact the RFP coordinator immediately to discuss your concerns.

After you return the signed agreement and disclosure form, the next step is to begin reviewing the sections of each proposal sent to you electronically by the RFP coordinator.

Most often, this will include the bidder qualifications and experience, and scope of work sections, but you should review all sections of each proposal sent to you by the RFP coordinator.

There are a few best practices to keep in mind as you begin reviewing proposals…

For example, it’s recommended that you set aside 1 to 2 hours for reviewing each proposal. This can vary based on the complexity of the RFP and the length of each proposal – but 1 to 2 hours is a good estimate.

And remember, you should only review one proposal at a time.

It’s also important to understand that you will not be scoring any proposals at this time… You will only be reviewing the proposals and identifying your impressions about how well proposals meet the RFP requirements.

And because anything you write about a proposal will become part of the public record, it’s important that you do not write on the proposal itself or on any of the RFP documents if you have printed any hard copies.

Moving on to Step 4 of the process, you will be completing Individual Evaluation Notes to record your impressions about each proposal.

The RFP coordinator will send you a blank form, which you will complete for each qualified proposal. The form is also available on the Forms page at the Division of Procurement Services website.

To ensure readability, you should type your notes directly into an electronic copy of the Individual Evaluation Notes form.

Also, avoid using acronyms or other jargon, and be sure to use a professional tone.

Another tool that can help you organize your impressions about each proposal is called the P/N/Q/I method.

Using this method, you can categorize your impressions about specific sections of a proposal based on whether it is positive, meaning the bidder's response aligns well with the RFP requirements...

Negative, meaning the information does not align with the RFP requirements...

Questionable, meaning you have a question about the information or something is not clear...

Or Interesting, meaning you feel the information is interesting or innovative.

After you have reviewed each proposal and completed your Individual Evaluation Notes, you should email the forms to the RFP coordinator.

In general, you should plan on completing your notes for all proposals within about one week and send them to the RFP coordinator BEFORE the first team evaluation meeting.

Now, let’s do a final recap about your responsibilities during the individual review phase…

* Step 1 – Read the RFP and all related documents.
* Step 2 – Evaluate whether you have any conflicts of interest with bidders. Then sign an Agreement & Disclosure form and send the forms to the RFP coordinator.
* Step 3 – Review each proposal carefully, particularly the Scope of Work and Bidder Qualifications and Experience sections.
* Step 4 – Complete an Individual Evaluation Notes form for each proposal, making sure to type your notes, avoid jargon, and use a professional tone.
* And Step 5 – Submit your notes to the RFP coordinator prior to the RFP team evaluation meeting.

Finally, if you have any questions about the individual review process, contact the RFP coordinator or a staff member in the Division of Procurement Services.

On behalf of the State of Maine, thank you for being part of the RFP evaluation team!