

RFP Proposal Writing for Geniuses

# Crucial Steps to Craft Strategic Responses

Let's face it, writing government bid proposals is almost always harder than delivering the quality product or service you're proposing. It's easy to impress customers once you're on board and doing what you do best. Demonstrating your value on paper without prior performance records or a previous supplier relationship with the agency to back up your claims, now that's a different story. However, that doesn't disqualify you from competing, so don't give up before you get started.

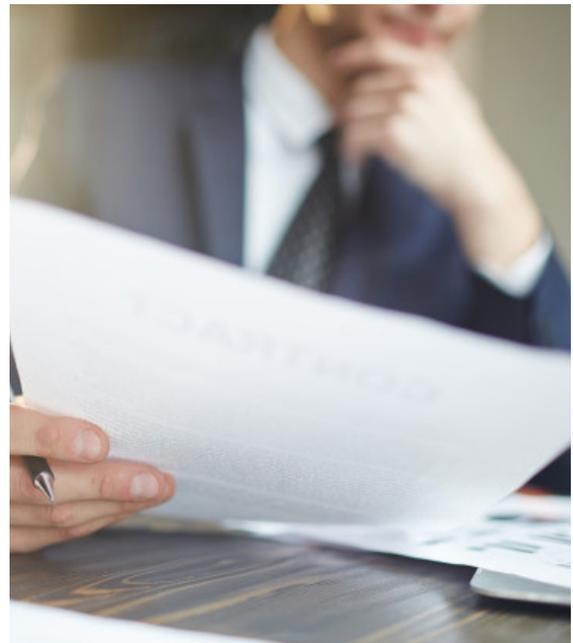
Invest the time now to fine-tune your proposal writing skills with our best practices below. **AFTER ALL, EVERY RFP RESPONSE IS A WIN-WIN.** If the bid is successful, your company will enjoy new income and growth. If you aren't selected this time, then at least you learned a thing or two in the process to strengthen your submission next time. But why wait until then to get things right? As Rick Page wrote, "Hope is Not a Strategy." Neither is cutting and pasting the same content in every bid response.

Follow these easy, but crucial, steps to start crafting your strategic response — and securing contract awards.



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**Do your homework...  
before you go to work.**

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## Understand how the bid will be evaluated

Public sector organizations want to get the most bang for their buck. That's why the Best Value method is most commonly used to evaluate bids. Instead of awarding contracts based on pricing alone, this supplier selection formula relies on a more holistic combination of factors to rate proposal value, such as price, deliverables, experience, and references. However, some agencies don't have the time or need to conduct a more thorough value-based review and will instead make a decision based on the Lowest Price Technically Acceptable (LPTA). This alternative selection method is gaining ground, mainly because it's simple: Confirm which proposals meet the minimum criteria and then award the contract to the supplier offering the lowest price.

### TIP

#### BE ON TIME:

Do not wait until the last minute to submit your response. Whether it is an electronic or in-person submission, as there could be technical issues or traffic that could cause a delay. The bid deadline is set in stone.

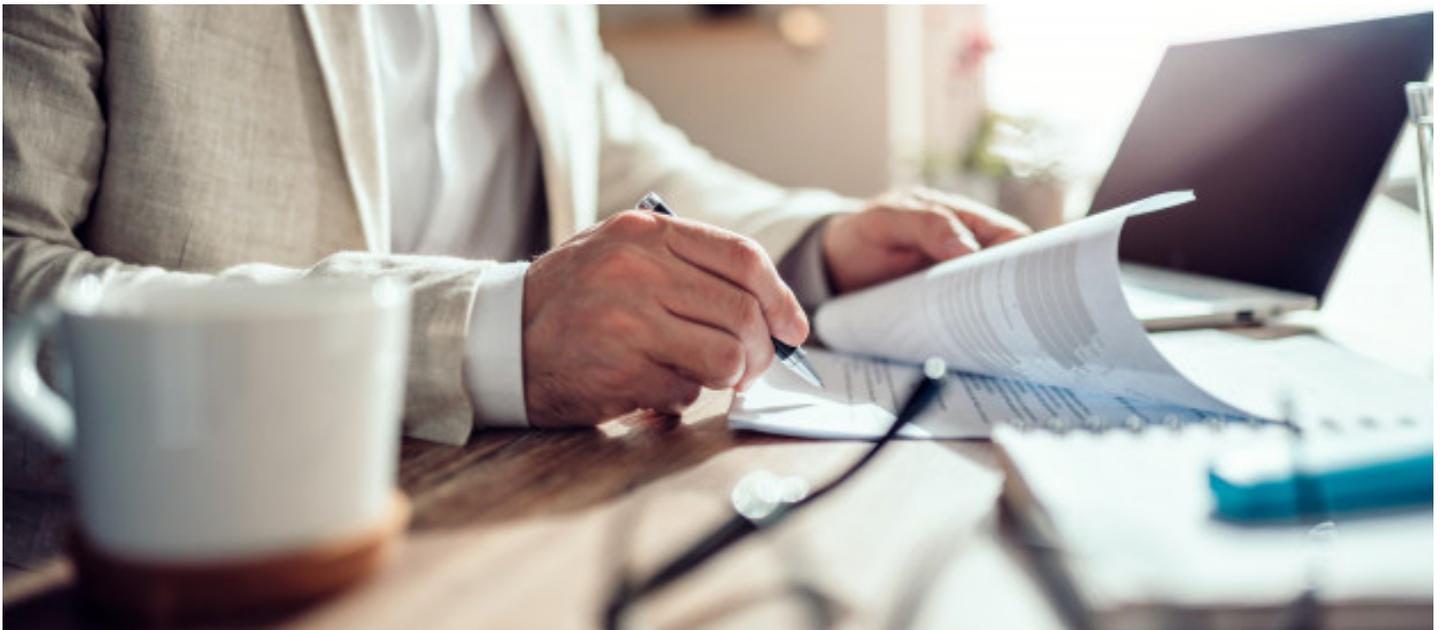
## Understand the mission and priorities of the requesting agency — then show them how you relate

Want your proposal to resonate with decision makers? Then you have to get to know your audience. It's a principle that's very basic and easily forgotten. Research the requesting agency. Understand their mission and values. Then ditch the "one size fits all" proposal template and commit to writing a more tailored response that speaks their language.

### TIP

#### CUSTOMIZATION IS KEY TO SUCCESS:

There is no "one size fits all" approach to RFP responses. You need to be adaptable and customize each response based on criteria of each agencies RFP.



## See what a winning proposal actually looks like

Working in a vacuum is never a good idea. Oracle once came under fire because they submitted a bid that was millions of dollars higher than any other company. Don't repeat their mistake. Review past contracts for the requesting agency. See which bids were successful, especially in the category in which you're currently competing, and pay close attention as to why certain suppliers were selected. Be sure your proposal is competitive in terms of price, quality of goods or services, and other noted evaluation factors.

### TIP

#### DO YOUR HOMEWORK:

Use 3rd party tools like Spend Analytics to easily search public records for past bid awards. This is a great way to gain a competitive advantage and bid appropriately.

## Register your business with the customer's supplier network(s)

Many agencies require vendors to complete a registration process at either the federal, state, or local levels prior to consideration for any contract. If this is your first time submitting a bid response, verify that your business is registered according to the rules and regulations that govern the requesting agency. The RFP should specify the types of insurance and licensing needed to compete. Make sure you have those administrative items in place before investing any time or expense into writing a proposal.

### TIP

#### GET CERTIFIED:

If your business is minority, woman or disabled veteran owned, get the proper certifications to validate this. Public sector contract awards to businesses that fall in these three categories are increasing.

## Meet with decision makers in person and become a stronger supplier candidate on paper

Meeting with representatives from the requesting agency, such as the purchasing officer, will give you important insight into their current operating structure, project plans, and/or supplier expectations. You'll be able to clarify vague RFP requirements and refine your response accordingly.



**Confirm that you are a qualified candidate.**

## Wow them in the first two lines

First impressions are everything, even if you are “meeting” on paper. If reviewers are not captivated by what you have to say in the first two lines of your proposal, they may stop reading right then and there and discard all your hard work — even if you really are the supplier offering the Best Value or LPTA.

## Read — and respond to — every single condition noted in the RFP

Make sure to read all the bid documents in their entirety. You don’t want to miss any important information such as mandatory site visits or any forms or documents that need to be included in your proposal. Also, you want to make sure you fill out your proposal correctly and include all requirements mentioned in the documents. You don’t want to be disqualified over a small technicality.

### TIP

#### GET OUTSIDE HELP:

If certain RFP requirements fall outside your company’s expertise, consider partnering with a business that can fulfill those aspects of the solicitation.

## Show them you are a team player — and the best partner/supplier for the mission at hand

If you want to rise to the top of the pack, articulate how — by choosing you as their “partner” — the requesting agency will boost their return on investment. Prove that you are focused on serving their best interest (not yours), and demonstrate the critical role you’ll play in achieving strategic agency goals. Tell them why it would be a mistake to select any other supplier for this opportunity.

### TIP

#### USE WHAT’S GIVEN TO YOU:

Make certain to closely follow the instructions within the bid documents. This includes using any kind of template that the government buyer has provided you to use for answers to questions or specific forms.

**Write to win.**



While there will always be lessons to learn from each proposal submission, there's no need to learn everything the hard way. Don't spend hours, or days, preparing a winning proposal only to find out that you weren't selected because you made a simple – and avoidable – mistake. Steer clear of the common pitfalls outlined below.

## A proposal that is:

- **TOO LONG.** There is a balancing act between properly addressing the criteriaset out in the RFP and including too much information. If your proposal isoverwhelming, it will be counted out early in the review process.
- **TOO TECHNICAL.** Don't assume that the people reviewing your bids have thesame technical expertise as you. Explain the technical aspects of the proposal asif you were talking to a neighbor at a backyard BBQ.
- **NOT STRUCTURED TO MATCH THE SOLICITATION.** Your proposal should followthe same format as the RFP. It makes it easier for reviewers to search for certainresponse components and confirm that you've met all criteria.
- **MISSING INFORMATION.** While you may get dinged for including too much info,you'll be disqualified automatically if you omit key information. Conduct an extrapre-submission audit to make sure that you've addressed every requirement.
- **RIFE WITH SPELLING AND GRAMMAR ERRORS.** Have a third party, either a colleague or other industry professional, review your proposal to ensurethat there are no spelling and grammatical errors. It doesn't matter what yourcompany does – there is no excuse for poor grammar and spelling.
- **LACKING AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE REQUESTING AGENCY'S PROBLEM/REQUESTED SOLUTION/PRIORITIES.** Don't get so caught up in demonstratingyour past performance value that you fail to communicate how you'll solve thecustomer's current problems. Take a step back and ensure you're speaking tohow you will support the priorities they value most right now.

**Stay clear of pitfalls.**

## Final Note

Pursuing government business opportunities can be a key contributor to the continued growth of your company. If you choose to cast a wide net in your solicitation search, that's okay. Just be sure that you're not setting yourself up for failure before you get started on the real work by spending extensive time and money on RFP responses that don't align well with your current capabilities. There's "go after everything" and then there's strategic growth.

Periscope S2G Premium is the largest bid notification service in the country. Our team will lead you to all of the current government opportunities that, with well-crafted bid submissions, will open new doors for you.



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