

Developing Data Capacity

Request for Proposals (RFP)



The RFP: Request for Proposals

A Request for Proposals (very commonly spoken of using only its acronym, RFP) is exactly that: a document outlining what you are looking for that you send to companies or individuals that could potentially fulfill your request. The ‘suppliers’ send you back a proposal responding to the questions and requirements you listed and outlining their ability to fulfill your request either within the budget you provided, or with an estimated cost. Based on the proposals you receive, your organization will need to evaluate your options, identify who you intend to contract, and work with them to establish a final contract.

Step 1: Preparing to Write an RFP

The RFP only requires you to provide an initial proposal of the work you are hoping to contract out, but the more specific you are able to be, the more the respondents will be able to provide you with detailed and useful information about what they can offer. Within your organization, you will need to identify what the proposed scope of work is, which may require conversations with several different stakeholders to understand what your needs are, what role you want the contractor to fulfill, and what resources (time and money) you are willing and able to dedicate.

Step 2: Writing an RFP

Your RFP should contain several components. On the following page, you will find an outline that will help you complete each section.

Requests for Proposals

RFP Section	Details
1. Project Overview	To the extent possible, be clear and specific about what kinds of data help you are seeking.
2. Background on Head Start	Include links to online supporting resources, such as the Head Start Program Performance Standards and the new monitoring protocol.
3. Background on Your Organization	Include links to your website or information from your annual report (if applicable).
4. Scope of Work	Details of the work you want done and the deliverables you expect at the end.
5. Response Guide	Deadline for proposals to be submitted, details on how proposals should be submitted, and contact information of who to contact with questions.
6. Technical Requirements	To the extent possible, be clear and specific about what kinds of data help you are seeking and which systems you want the contractor to be familiar with. If you need a contractor who can integrate data from your management system and your assessment system, indicate that you need this kind of integration. Any contractor working with your raw data should also have experience with HIPAA, FERPA, and any state privacy protection protocols.
7. Budget or Hourly Rate	Depending on the kind of help you need, you may prefer to set a total budget rather than an hourly rate. Hourly rates for some kinds of data help (such as data integration) can be very high. A total budget can limit the potential for costs to go beyond what you expected.
8. Criteria for Selection	What are the various categories you will use to score applicants?
9. Professional Background	Data contractors will have a wide range of possible backgrounds depending on the specifics of what you are looking for. If you are unsure of the specific qualifications that you should list, focus on the work you need them to do. As an example, you might request, "A demonstrated history of successful data integration projects."
10. Examples of Similar Work	If you have not done similar projects in the past to what you are describing in the RFP, you might not have anything to include here. If you've have something similar done in the past that can serve as a reference, it might help potential applicants.
11. References	
12. Contacts	Identify who in your organization will be the principle point of contact for the contractor once hired, as well as a description of any staff assigned to the project that they might be working with.
13. Subcontractors (if applicable)	List any subcontractors who provide key services related to the project. If subcontractors will have access to raw data, please ensure that all subcontractors will comply with HIPPA, FERPA, and any state requirements for data protection.

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Step 3: Posting an RFP

You can post your RFP on databases specifically designed for such work, such as RFPdb and BidSync.

Local colleges and universities often offer job boards where you can post your RFP.

You should always post your RFP on your organization's website.

You can also distribute your RFP directly to organizations you believe might be interested. You can source these interested parties from LinkedIn, from NHSA's online list of consultants and partners, from your state association website (if applicable), or through organizations like the American Evaluation Association. You can also do a simple online search for potential vendors or consultants who work in the industry. If you are distributing your RFP directly to potential contractors, you are most likely reaching out to them via e-mail.

Step 4: Evaluating Proposals

As part of writing your RFP, you should have established a list of criteria on which you will score each received proposal. Providing a clear list to applicants is important for maintaining a transparent selection process. Based on the criteria for selection, you can develop an evaluation rubric. Stakeholders who review proposals should be asked to rate each one on a given scale for each criteria, allowing you to compare the strength of each proposal against the others before making your final selection.



Mandatory Required Skills

- Examine current systems and workflows, identify areas for improvement, and create steps and processes defined by a clear and achievable timeline.
- Provide advanced, methodologically sound, and easy to understand analyses of existing program data from a variety of data sources and systems.
- Align those solutions with expectations and compliance components of the Head Start Program Performance Standards and Focus Area 1 or 2 Monitoring Protocols.
- Describe a data communication plan that ranges from aggregated big-picture evidence to local stakeholders to humanized data delivered through the lens of children and families for practitioners in the field.