



RFP Toolkit

Here's what's included in your Request For Proposal (RFP) Toolkit

RFP Guide: Gain vital insights with this detailed guide, which covers the fundamentals of the RFP process to ensure you don't miss out on any crucial elements during your procurement activities.

RFP Template: Save time and maintain quality with our stylish, easily editable template, which will help you quickly create precise and effective RFPs.

RFP Checklist: Keep track of important details with our interactive checklist, ensuring you remember every essential step in the RFP process.

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What is an RFP?

An RFP, or Request for Proposal, is a bid proposal document issued by a client/company to a list of marketing agency partners. The term RFP refers to both the proposal solicitation process and the RFP document.

RFPs present agencies with a list of questions about the services, methodology, and costs that will go into fulfilling the company's needs for this particular project. The process of drawing up an RFP document occurs early in the procurement cycle.

WHY USE A REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL?

RFPs signal that a brand is entering the procurement stage for a particular service - meaning that they're ready to buy. This encourages competition between agencies submitting proposals.

A well-written RFP gives agencies the necessary context to propose the best solution for the client, while offering a structured framework that helps brands (the issuer of the RFP) think through the details of a project, such as:

- project goals,
- project budget,
- project timeline,
- evaluation criteria,
- and the procurement process of an agency partner.

RFP TERMINOLOGY



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Master Services Agreement (MSA) An initial contract that spells out the terms between the signing parties at a broad level.

Statement of Work (SOW) A document that defines project-specific activities, deliverables, and timelines for a vendor providing services to the client.

Project Scope The goals, deliverables, features, functions, tasks, deadlines, and costs. Essentially, the boundaries of a project

Related Resource: [CTA - SEO - PPC - WTF?? 16 Marketing Agency Acronyms You Need to Know](#)

When should you issue an RFP?

COMMON CIRCUMSTANCES THAT TRIGGER AN RFP PROCESS:

- Projects that require an outside vendor to work alongside their internal team
- When the client's internal team is missing necessary capabilities (*i.e. little/no understanding of an emerging marketing trend or no experience targeting a specific cultural group or industry*)
- When the client's internal team does not have the bandwidth to execute on a particular project
- Projects that require technical expertise, research and development, or specialized capabilities. It can be email marketing, website development, social media marketing, or the overall digital strategy. The point is not what kind of project it is, rather that there's a project at all
- Initiatives driven by corporate policy (*i.e. the company requires the decision maker to conduct an RFP even though the choice has already been made*)

That said, many clients fail to understand the [Do's and Don'ts of the RFP process](#). Just because a project could go through the RFP process, does not mean that it should.

When companies **should** issue an RFP

Marketers who default to an RFP for any project/need rather than considering the kind of project requires an RFP will find themselves overwhelmed. There are specific instances where an RFP should be used, like:

- A high-stakes situation where the level of investment demands the best possible solution at an ideal price
- When the client issuing the RFP knows the end goal of a project but is not aware of what the best possible solution looks like
- When clients are unhappy with their current agency partner and regret not being more thorough during the agency vetting process
- For expensive projects
- For projects that require strict contractual obligations

When companies **should not** issue an RFP

Though the RFP process requires a lot of work on both sides of the agency-client relationship, every marketing agency wants new business... even if the path to that new business often leads to tedium, frustration, and confusion. Clients should NOT issue an RFP when:

- **Scenario:** Client already has all of the details and specifications of a project laid out and is just looking for a vendor to execute on them for the lowest possible price.
 - **Instead of an RFP:** Use an RFQ (request for quotation).
- **Scenario:** Client has no clue what it wants or what the project will require.
 - **Instead of an RFP:** Write a [marketing brief](#) to outline business goals and project scope. Or, explore [alternatives to the RFP process](#).
- **Scenario:** Client does not have the budget to move forward, but wants to start the procurement process anyway.
 - **Instead of an RFP:** Start planning your next [marketing budget](#) and make room in the budget for this project.
- **Scenario:** Client does not have approval or authority to move forward.
 - **Instead of an RFP:** Communicate with company decision makers and do not move forward until [B.A.N.T. \(budget, authority, need, timeline\)](#) is established.

What is the difference between an RFP and an RFI?

Sometimes, client-side marketers use the term “RFP” to apply to something called an RFI, or Request for Information. While RFPs and RFIs are similar in some ways, there are a few key differences.

WHAT IS A REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)?

An RFI is a broad, fact-finding document issued by clients at the very beginning of the procurement process. In an RFI, the client asks a fairly standard list of questions that are intended to gain an overview of the vendor and/or an unfamiliar subject area.

WHEN IS AN RFI USED?

Most of the time, RFIs are used to create a pool of potential service providers. In this instance, the RFI will ask questions around the agency’s value proposition, company history, and key capabilities. Sometimes, RFIs are used before an RFP.

HOW DOES AN RFI DIFFER FROM AN RFP?

RFIs differ from RFPs in that the response to requests for information is more about the vendor/marketing agency than it is about the particular project.

RFIs are more surface-level than RFPs - RFPs are designed to narrow down a list of potential vendors, rather than build a pool of vendors.

RFI EXAMPLE

A brand wants to implement a new email automation software, but the procurement lead in charge of the agency selection process does not have any experience with email automation software - nor the digital infrastructure needed to execute the project. She submits an RFI to a few email marketing agencies to understand what this kind of project will entail and to get to know each of the marketing agencies’ capabilities around email strategy and technology implementation.

**Note: Outside of the marketing industry, the term RFQ, or request for quotation, is also used alongside RFPs. An RFQ is about how much materials will cost.*

What are the RFP process steps?

STEP 1 | PREPARATION FOR RFP

Before issuing an RFP, clients should understand what they are looking for on a basic level. In order to do this, they should conduct research online, through internal meetings, and/or meetings with experts/consultants in the field.

STEP 2 | ASSEMBLE AN RFP TEAM

When assembling an RFP team, it's best to involve both internal and external stakeholders who will be directly impacted by this initiative. This may include customers.

STEP 3 | DRAFT THE RFP DOCUMENT

Be sure to include:

- Information about your company
- The purpose of the RFP
- The nature of the project/initiative
- Information about how the RFP process will be managed
- Key dates/deadlines that vendors/marketing agencies need to be aware of
- The key points of contact within your organization
- A request for agency references/case studies

STEP 4 | ISSUE RFP DOCUMENT TO VENDORS / RFP QUESTION PERIOD

After a client issues the RFP, there is a period of time where potential agencies can come back with questions about the RFP. After the question period ends, agencies will submit responses to the RFP.

STEP 5 | CONDUCT AGENCY REVIEWS

After receiving agency responses, the client then reviews each agency's capabilities, case studies, proposed solutions, as well as call agency references. This is also the stage where clients compare bids.

STEP 6 | SELECT AN AGENCY PARTNER

Client determines which agency they would like to partner with.

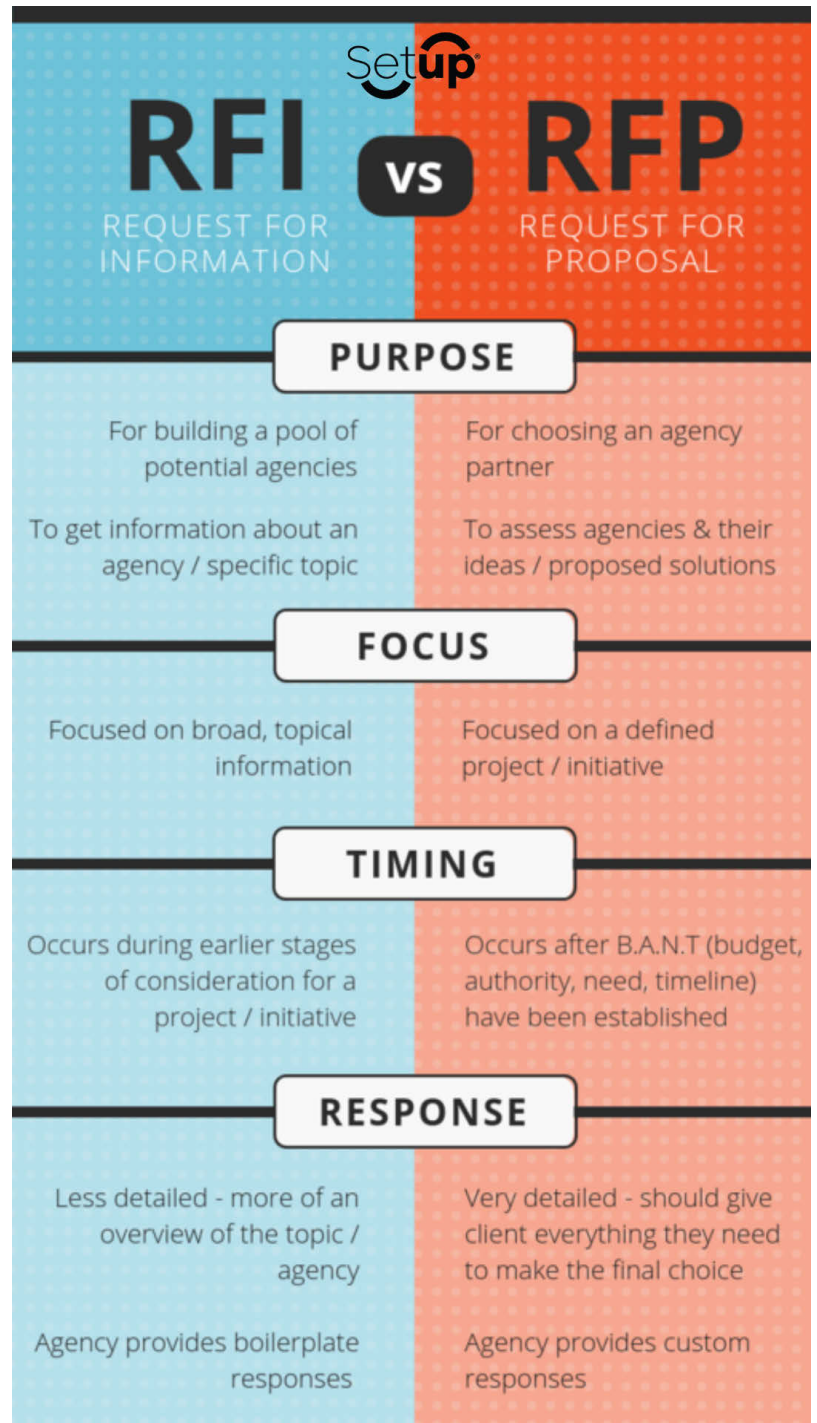
STEP 7 | ONBOARD SELECTED AGENCY PARTNER

While not technically part of the RFP process, this occurs immediately following the RFP process.

Summary

RFI vs RFP

The key differences between the intent, steps, and processes of a RFI vs RFP are shown to the right.



RFP Template Elements

The following section will give you a general overview of what a request for proposal (RFP) template should include. You will then find an actual RFP template within this document on page 11. To use the RFP Template as a standalone working file, please download a Word document version [here](#) or a Google Doc version [here](#).

Section I | General Information

CLIENT INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

- Description of organization
- Company overview
- Industry overview

PROJECT INFORMATION

- Project goals
- Role of the marketing agency partner / Desired agency relationship

CONTACT INFORMATION

- Primary liaison's email & phone number
- Email to which questions should be directed to
- Location for meetings / presentations
- Any other relevant communication guidelines / preferences

Section II | Project Overview / Statement of work

PURPOSE OF THE RFP

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- Scope of work / Elements of the proposal
- Goals & KPIs
- Section for alternative solutions
- Budget

PROJECT TIMELINE / KEY MILESTONES

- RFP issue date
- RFP question period end date
- RFP close date / Agency evaluation period start date
- Agency evaluation period end date
- Agency selection date

Note: Aim for concrete deadlines for each of these items and be sure to outline any contingencies / obstacles that could impact the timeline.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

- Minimum submission criteria / Maximum submission criteria
- Agency RFP reception statement
- Good faith statement
- Evaluation criteria
- Communications and proposal submission guidelines (include information about when and how the agencies who are chosen to move forward in the process will be notified)
- Term of service / Conflicts of interest clause

Section III | Agency Response

AGENCY OVERVIEW

- Name, # of Employees, etc.
- Products / Services offered
- Markets served
- Partners

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

- Client references
- Case studies

ESTIMATED BUDGET / RESOURCES REQUIRED

- Fixed & deliverable pricing
- Billable hours
- Estimated travel expenses
- Any other required resources

Request for Proposal - Template

[COMPANY NAME], a [DESCRIPTION OF BUSINESS], is in need of [DESCRIPTION OF NEED] and is accepting responses to this Request for Proposal in order to find a qualified agency.

[COMPANY NAME] wishes to engage an agency for a [CONTRACT TERM] with a [X AMOUNT OF DAYS] no-cause cancellation provision. Proposing agencies are asked to certify that they have no conflicts of interest in working with [COMPANY NAME].

Competitors List: [COMPANY, COMPANY, COMPANY, COMPANY]

*Additional companies may also be considered competitors, and we ask that you email [INSERT EMAIL] with any questions about competitors

All information provided by [YOUR COMPANY] is offered in good faith. Specific items are subject to change at any time based on business circumstances. [COMPANY NAME] does not guarantee that any particular item is without error. [COMPANY NAME] will not be held responsible or liable for use of this information or for any claims asserting therefrom.

SECTION I - Background

COMPANY OVERVIEW

Use this space to tell the agency a little bit about your organization. It can include company size, locations, environment, stakeholders, expansion plans, etc.

Also include company business goals, target audience, target industries, and products/services offered.

INDUSTRY OVERVIEW

Use this space to lay out information about the current industry.

If you're ready to start your own RFP, download and edit this template on [Microsoft Word](#) or your [Google Drive](#).

CONTACT INFORMATION

Who is the primary liaison for this particular project? What is the email to which questions should be directed? What are their communication preferences? Also, include information about how/when the agencies will be notified about whether or not they will be moving forward in the process.

Primary Contact
Contact First & Last Name
Contact Title
email@businessemail.com
404-555-9651 ext. 23

Secondary Contact
Contact First & Last Name
Contact Title
email@businessemail.com
404-555-9651 ext. 23

PROJECT TIMELINE

Outline milestones and/or deadlines. Include any contingencies/foreseeable obstacles that could affect the timeline.

Date	RFP Issued
Date	RFP Question Period Ends
Date	RFP Submission Deadline
Date	Conduct Agency Evaluations
Date	Evaluation Period Ends
Date	Contract Awarded to Agency

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SECTION II - Project Information

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Use this space to tell the agency about the project/initiative.

Include the company's current state vs. ideal state. Is the project more goal-oriented (tied to a KPI) or is it more purpose-driven (we need to rebrand)?

Focus on what you want to get out of the project rather than what you think the project will end up looking like. This approach ensures that you won't restrict the agency's creativity when they think about how to get to your ideal state.

PROJECT SCOPE

This section should include elements of the proposal - checklist of detailed requirements.

Include criteria that need to be met in order to achieve successful completion of the project.

PROJECT BUDGET

What is the budget range? Be honest, as this helps agencies estimate more accurately and prevents miscommunication down the road.

GOALS

Be as specific as possible and identify any KPIs involved.

Goal #1
List the goal here.

Goal #2
List the goal here.

DESIRED PARTNERSHIP

Use this space to detail the role you would like your agency partner to play. Do you want them to play a strategic role or an executional role? What does your ideal agency partner look like? Are you looking for an all-in-one agency, open to partnerships between different shops, or a group of specialists?

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SECTION III

Agency Information & Response

AGENCY OVERVIEW

Agency Name:

Ask for any details you feel are relevant (year of incorporation, number of employees, number of clients, list of relevant key clients, partners, etc.)

Agency Capabilities:

Markets Served:

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

List relevant experience here.

REFERENCES

Detail how many/what kind of client references you wish to have for agency respondents.

Reference #1

Contact First & Last Name

Company Name

email@businessemail.com

404-555-9651 ext. 23

Reference #2

Contact First & Last Name

Company Name

email@businessemail.com

404-555-9651 ext. 23

Reference #3

Contact First & Last Name

Company Name

email@businessemail.com

404-555-9651 ext. 23

ESTIMATED BUDGET / RESOURCES REQUIRED

Agency should outline the compensation model they expect that could include:

- Monthly retainer
- Fixed project pricing
- Time & materials
- Estimated travel expenses
- Any other resources required

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SECTION IV**Additional Notes**

Is there anything else you would like to include in this RFP? Do that here!

SECTION V**Other Resources**

GUIDE | [Everything You Need to Know about RFPs](#)

GUIDE | [The Complete Guide to Finding a Marketing Agency](#)

BLOG | [Alternatives to the RFP Process](#)

BLOG | [Do's and Don'ts of the RFP Process](#)

BLOG | [The Five Marketing Agency Compensation Models](#)

TEMPLATE | [Budgeting Template](#)

TEMPLATE | [Marketing Brief Template](#)

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Request for Proposal Checklist

The checklists below detail what brands should provide to agencies in an RFP. As you create the RFP, use this checklist to guide the process. You can download the Checklist separately [here](#).

1 RFP: COMPANY OVERVIEW

Check each line-item as you establish/define it in your RFP.

Project type	RFP schedule
Confidentiality terms	Decision criteria
Response deadline	Budget
Points-of-contact	Elevator pitch/boilerplate
Relevant recent events	Competitors

2 RFP: PROJECT SUMMARY

Check off each line-item as you establish/define it in your RFP.

Project goals	Stakeholders
Business Requirements	Target market/Audience
Creative Requirements	Timeline
Functional Requirements	Communication expectations
Must-haves vs. May-haves clearly defined	

NOTES