

JOC insights

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The RFP Process Offers Value When Procuring Job Order Contracts

Procuring JOC: Why RFP?

The most common solicitations that government agencies use to procure JOC services are RFPs (Requests for Proposal) and ITBs (Invitation to Bid, also called an IFB - Invitation for Bid). When it comes to deciding which type of solicitation best meets the needs of a Job Order Contracting program, it is up to the agency to determine which method is most comprehensive.

Why Agencies Choose the RFP

Agencies choose to issue a RFP when, after considering various criteria, they decide that a sealed bid process would not be practical because they require more information regarding processes, technical capabilities, and qualifications from vendors to determine the best solution.

Since a JOC program is a programmatic service, the buying agency needs to consider more than price. The RFP requires vendors to offer work plans on how the work should be completed - essentially, to provide consulting services in addition to the actual work outlined in the contract. RFPs prompt vendors to create customized proposals and encourages them to document approaches or improvements to the same program.

Agencies evaluate proposals based on a combination of factors including price, experience, the technology that will be used to do the work, and the quality of the product or service provided. These considerations cause RFP evaluations to be more complex and subjective than those for ITBs but in a complex JOC program it is important to conduct the evaluation. Requests for Proposal also allow vendors and agencies to negotiate terms, with the goal for the agency to get the "best and final offer."

Since Job Order Contracting is a Best Value solution then it only stands to reason that a buyer would advise their government to follow best practices and solicit via RFP and leave the ITBs to products that lend themselves to the low-bid environment. The goal of the RFP is not to get the lowest possible price, but the best possible price for the best solution for your agency. Through the process, it is discovered which vendors are able to meet the technical, service and support requirements for your program that best fits your needs.

When an ITB is Appropriate to Use

An agency may choose to issue an ITB when they already have the information they need about the specific product or service they require, know exactly what the contract entails and how the work will be completed, are confident that all requirements of the contract are clearly defined, and all vendors will have equal performance. In cases like these, agencies find that there is no substantive difference between vendors and that there are many providers who can meet the needs of the contract. Therefore, the award would automatically go to the lowest bidder that meets the minimum qualification requirements for the contract. And sometimes, more than one vendor will be awarded the contract to meet the needs of the agency.

Whether it's a RFP or an ITB, knowing the difference between the two, and the proper application of each, can help you prepare a winning solicitation document resulting in valuable proposals.



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Rami R. Natour, CJP, Facilities Management Bureau Chief, Arlington County, VA

Michael E. Bevis, JD, CPPO, CPSM, CPM, CJP, Assoc. DBIA, Purchasing Agent, City of Norfolk, VA

Rick Gehrke, CJP, OAC Vice Chair, Assistant Director of Capital Programs, North Kitsap Schools, Poulsbo, WA

Katrina Knight, CCP, LEED AP BD&C, Senior Estimator. Capital Programs Delivery, MARTA, Atlanta, GA

David L. Kruse, Cost Estimator Project Manager, University of Texas at Austin, Project Management & Construction Services, Austin, TX

Teenchee Le, PE, Job Order Contracting, San Francisco Public Works, San Francisco, California

Delois Moore, MPA, CJP, Senior Procurement Officer, City of Kansas City, MO

James Reddington, Division Manager, Task Order/Job Order Contract, Design and Construction Division, City of Houston GSD, Houston, Texas

Benjamin Sitzia, CEM, CJP, Sr. Project Manager, University of Texas at Austin, Austin, TX

Patricia Taylor, Chief of Operations, Illinois Tollway, Downers Grove, IL