

GETTING A GREAT PROPOSAL

TIPS FOR HOW TO HELP YOUR CONTRACTOR GET YOU THE RIGHT BID

The first thing to know is that the only correct way to provide an answer is to understand the question. Of paramount importance is for you, the client, to know exactly what **result** you want to achieve – what problem you want solved. There is a fundamental difference between asking a contractor for a lighting retrofit in your parking garage and asking for the lighting in your garage to increase visibility of walkways and signage. The former is asking for a product; the latter is asking for a result. Focus on performance. Focus on results.



When you develop your Request for Proposal, state very clearly what results you want to achieve. In your RFP, you should also require that the contractor must restate your desired results and state clearly that the proposal will achieve these results. This assures both parties that the intent of the project is clearly understood and provides both parties with an agreed performance standard. When proven, this assures payment is now warranted. The statement, “that’s not what I was expecting” is not as justifiable as, “that’s not what we agreed to.”

Typical Example:

- RFP states, “Client desires a new widget be installed at this property.”
 - The contractor states, “We will install a new model XR9 widget controller and RDF109 communication module. Work includes all hardware and will be performed after hours.”
- You think you’re getting a good bid because you can see what’s going to be installed. But there’s nothing stating that it will actually work for what you want to achieve.

Preferred Example of a “Performance Spec”:

- You state, “Client desires installation of a widget that will control existing HVAC system providing access to X and programmed to achieve Y and Z.”
 - The contractor states, “Understanding that client needs a widget controller to provide access to X and can achieve Y and Z, we propose the following solution which will achieve these results.” They continue to state all the parts and labor required for a clear bid.
- Now you know that in addition to the parts that will be installed, the contractor will set them up to achieve your goals or risk being in breach of contract.

SUMMARY

1. Know and ask for what you actually want to achieve – state your desired results.
2. Require that all bidders restate and acknowledge their understanding of your desired results.
3. Require the bidders affirm the proposal they are submitting WILL achieve your desired results.
4. Require the bidders provide a material and labor breakdown to the fullest extent possible including make, model, and quantity of materials. This prevents substitutions in the field.



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