

THE BIDDERS' GUIDE TO BUYING

March 2024





If you work in procurement, how effectively do you engage potential suppliers when they're bidding to you for work?

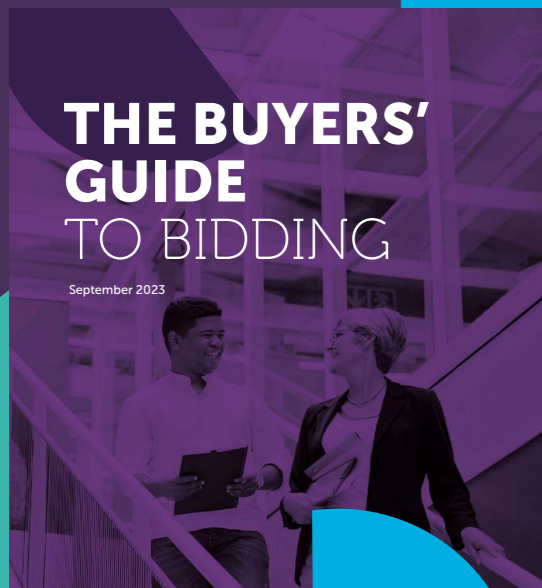
This new research answers that question, showing the views of hundreds of vendors on the buying process. What do they think of your RFPs and ITTs, and of the way you engage them more generally? As leading consultants in the bid and proposal arena, we've tapped into our networks to bring some fascinating perspectives – which may surprise and challenge you.

This is the latest iteration of a research project that we've run several times over the past decade. It's a companion piece to our **Buyers' guide to bidding** white paper, published late last year, in which we gave procurement people the chance to air their views on bidders. And now it's their turn to feed back to you.

So, read on if you're hungry to sharpen your procurement approach, and get the best out of your supply markets.



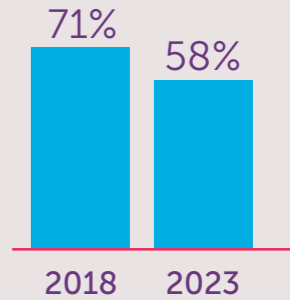
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Poor RFPs are costing buyers money

When the data was last collected in 2018 it made for hard reading for any procurement professional - RFPs weren't considered well-written or well-structured. Nearly 60% say this is still true. Therefore, more work needs to be done to make RFPs what they should be.

Respondents that think RFPs aren't well-written or well-structured:



56% report that RFPs include too many generic questions that aren't relevant to the opportunity/contract. Undoubtedly this will mean that buyers are missing out on getting the most out of the bidding process and getting the boilerplate generic information that they so dislike (identified as something to avoid in our buyers survey).



75%

of respondents agree that a poor RFP results in a poorer solution at a higher price.

Further damning evidence is that 74% of respondents would give the average quality of the RFPs that they receive a

5.7



Advice for buyers from bidders

Be clear...

... about what is important to you and structure the process to achieve that

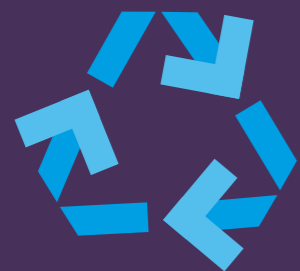
... about your objectives and your selection and evaluation criteria

.... and concise about your requirements [rather than burying them deep in a document or including instructions in multiple attachments]

...(and quick) with your responses to clarification questions

... in the questions - don't repeat the same demand multiple times within the same question

... about how many firms you have invited



Be mindful of reuse from prior RFPs

"Don't recycle (for once!) - if you do, it often introduces misinformation and confusion."

"Create and use a clean template for RFPs, rather than recycling previous ones, to avoid references to dates, projects and scopes that are not applicable to the current project."

Buyers, give us more time!

Only

21%

think there is sufficient advance notice from the customer about the RFPs they send.



Procurement teams: please give us more notice. The more notice we have, the better we can prepare, the higher the quality of our response and the more likely you are to get exactly what you need, at the right price.

It might seem obvious, but

90%



agree that the more time we're given to respond, the better the solution we're able to offer.

Yet

70%



of respondents believe buyers are giving us less time to respond to RFPs than they used to!

Advice for buyers from bidders

Allow time... before, during and after the "proposal". (There were LOADS of comments about this – and a plea for a Christmas hiatus!)



Be fair, be honest

Are you sure you're creating a level playing field for bidders? Have you given each of them enough advance notice before you issue the RFP, and spoken with them about your requirements? Because if you just drop it on them out of the blue a potentially good bidder may choose not to bid.



Buyers need to shop around to make sure they've found the right vendor and to bring some competitive pressure through an RFP process. "Don't waste time if you have already decided who you want. Do a direct award and save us all time and money."



Only **30%**

think that customers always base their final decision on evaluation criteria clearly listed in their RFP.



We're not sure what's scarier: that some buyers haven't actually worked out their evaluation criteria before issuing an RFP, or that they won't be honest with bidders. Tell us what good looks like for you, and we'll work to give you what you need. This shouldn't be a guessing game...

Advice for buyers from bidders

"Make sure that evaluation criteria is included"

Engage...

... well before the RFP is released.

.... with the market beforehand to test your proposal procurement approach and understand potential pitfalls.

...earlier - don't keep us at arms' length. You'll get better proposals.

... with vendors to solicit their support - what are key areas that should be considered?



We all need people who will give us feedback. That's how we improve.

Bill Gates

Only **8%** of buyers regularly ask for feedback on their RFPs.

Compared to **58%** of bidders, who request feedback on their responses.



Buyers - ask for feedback on your RFPs - it's in your interests, right?

Details about the survey



The majority of respondents were from the UK but also includes the USA, Canada, India, Nepal, Italy, Netherlands, South Africa and UAE.



Three quarters of responses were from bid and proposal roles but also included consultants, designers, directors, sales and business development.



Responses were wide-ranging across multiple sectors including:

Business administration and support services; construction; education; finance and insurance; health; information and communication; manufacturing; motor trades; professional; scientific and technical; public administration and defence; transport and storage (including postal).

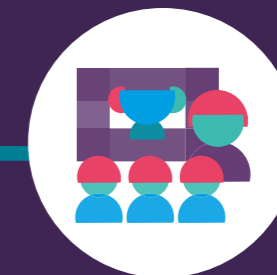
If you're a buyer running a bid process, your job is to make sure you can choose between excellence in the evaluation, not to have to pick the best of a bad bunch. We'd love to share more insights into how you can make that happen, drawing on our experience working with hundreds of sales teams worldwide. Some options of how we could provide that include:



Reviewing samples of your RFPs and offering feedback



Capturing feedback and learning from recent bidders to your organisation



Training in bidder behaviour and processes, to help you to engage better



Sales-savvy support for your evaluation teams



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Offices in North America, the UK and the Netherlands. Trusted partner organisations worldwide.