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| **Procurement Method** | **Use When** | **Advantages** | **Disadvantages** |
| Request for Bids (RFB) | Products and services are standardized or uniform. | Award process is simpler.In determining best value, price and whether the goods or services meet specifications are the most important considerations. Suppliers must be responsive and responsible. | Defined specifications may be difficult to develop.Does not encourage innovative solutions.Negotiations are not allowed if there is more than one responsive bidder. |
| Request for Proposals (RFP) | When negotiations are desired.Supplier is expected to provide innovative ideas or solutions. | Allows for customized proposals suggesting different approaches to the same business need.Allows for negotiations.Considerations in addition to price are used to determine best value. | Lead time for procurement is much greater.Evaluations tend to be more complex. |
| Request for Qualifications (RFQL) (*This method is usually required by statue, e.g., Professional Services)* | Selection is made solely on the skills and qualifications of the supplier.Price is not a factor until a supplier is selected. | Emphasizes the competency and experience of the suppliers. | Supplier is selected before price is negotiated. Two-step process. |
| Request for Information (RFI) | When other information is required and needed to create an RFB/RFP/RFQL.When various industry suppliers are contacted to submit information. | Allows an agency to receive information that will assist them with issuing a future RFP, RFB, or RFQL.The information received from industry suppliers greatly benefit the agency in scope of work/specifications creation. | No public advertisement needed.Two Step Process. A contract cannot be awarded from this process. |

**Determining Types of Solicitation**

* **A Request for Bid (RFB)** is appropriate for competitive procurement of goods, and in general, a purchase order may be used to finalize the purchase.
* **A Request for Proposal (RFP)** is used when you know you have a problem but don’t know how you want to solve it. This is the most formal of the “Request for” processes and has strict procurement rules for content, timeline and supplier responses.

For competitive procurement of services, an RFP is more appropriate, and a purchase order is generally not sufficient to serve as the written contract for the services.

* **A Request for Information (RFI)** is used when you think you know what you want but need more information from the suppliers. It will typically be followed by an RFQL or RFP.
* **A Request for Quote (RFQ)** is commonly used when you know what you want but need information on how suppliers would meet your requirements and/or how much it will cost.
* **A Request for Qualifications (RFQL)** is appropriate for procurement of services which will be based on qualifications, and the Standard RFQL Format shall be used.

**Request for Information (RFI) .**

An RFI is a formal research method used by an agency to gather information directly from the industry about a particular type of product or service. One of the benefits of the RFI process is that information, pertinent to an agency’s business need, is obtained in real-time directly from the vendor community regarding applicable industry standards, best practices, potential performance measures, cost structures or pricing method ologies, and feedback on innovative items.

A common practice is to submit the RFI to an appropriate professional or trade organization. This practice has the benefit of not only utilizing a venue that optimizes access by the vendor community, but also serves to control vendor communications so that they only occur with designated agency contacts. By establishing a prescribed communication protocol at the beginning of the RFI process, the agency is ensuring that a “level playing field” is maintained within the vendor community.

It is important to note that an RFI is not a procurement opportunity; a contract cannot be developed from a response to an RFI. Responses to an RFI are strictly voluntary and there is no downside for vendors who choose not to participate; consequently, an RFI cannot be used to establish a pre-qualified vendor list as voluntary participation in the RFI process cannot disadvantage vendors that choose not to participate. Vendors may choose not to participate in RFIs for a variety of reasons. For instance, a vendor may have a company policy of not responding to RFIs. Vendors may also decide, on a case-by-case basis, not to respond to RFIs seeking information readily available on the internet.

The number of responses to an RFI, therefore, should not be used to gauge industry interest in any subsequent procurement initiative. An agency may choose to use information received from RFI responses to develop specifications for a solicitation. Responses to RFIs, therefore, are public information. Public procurement professionals must be mindful not to provide any information during the RFI process that would give a vendor an advantage in a later procurement or could be construed as preliminary negotiations. If RFI respondents are requested to deliver oral presentations, the same agency staff should attend all presentations and the respondents should be offered the same amount of time to conduct their presentations. It is best practice for RFI activities to conclude prior to commencement of specifications drafting.