

Chapter highlights

Purpose: This chapter presents guidance for planning, issuing, evaluating and negotiating information technology (IT) requests for proposals (RFPs) based on competitive negotiations. It also provides general information on solution-based and performance-based IT projects.

Key points:

- Competitive negotiation is VITA's recommended procurement method when an agency has a defined IT need and is requesting suppliers to propose the best solution to meet that need.
- Commit adequate time and resources to gather data for developing the RFP's business, functional and technical requirements.
- It is essential that IT procurement professionals understand the complete cost of a technology-based business solution.

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24.0 Introduction

Requests for proposals (RFPs) using competitive negotiation is the recommended procurement method when an agency has defined an information technology (IT) business need and is requesting suppliers to propose the best solution(s) to meet that need.

Competitive negotiation is the result of an RFP acquisition process rather than an invitation for bid (IFB). RFPs using competitive negotiations should always be the procurement method used when the following factors or circumstances exist regarding the business or technology problem—the acquisition need(s) is complex; the project specifications cannot

be clearly defined; factors other than cost need to be evaluated; or there is a need to negotiate.

All RFPs for IT-related goods and services shall be developed with “best value” methodology as the foundation for determining the best supplier.

24.1 Pros and Cons of RFPs and Competitive Negotiations

RFPs promote creative competition among suppliers and allow agencies to comprehensively consider and evaluate all proposed technical approaches and state-of-the-art solutions to fulfill their business need(s). RFP preparation promotes “needs definition” by the business owner, which enables suppliers to provide best-value solutions. The only “con” in the RFP lifecycle is the significant time commitment involved. The RFP process can take anywhere from 6 to 9 months to complete.

24.2 Solution-based RFPs and Performance-based Contracting

24.2.1 Solution-based RFPs

Solution-based RFPs ask suppliers to propose an IT business solution to solve an agency’s identified problems and goals. Solution-based RFPs briefly state the business need, describe the technology problem, and demand minimal specifications and requirements. Suppliers are allowed to use their broad-spectrum technology market expertise, creativity and resources to propose innovative, cost-effective solutions. Solution-based RFPs may request suppliers to provide a solution for only part of a business problem or to propose high-level concept-type solutions which are evaluated based on a detailed set of requirements.

Agencies should strive to minimize requirements and specifications to allow flexibility in the types of solutions being proposed. Specifications and requirements set limits and may eliminate or restrict the items or solutions available for the supplier to include in its proposal. Technology specifications should be written to encourage, not discourage, competition while also attempting to seek economy for the purpose and technology solution intended. An agency is then able to identify the technology solution, not a particular product or service, which will best meet its technology or business need.

Part of the decision-making process of when to use a solution-based RFP involves performing a risk analysis. As part of the risk analysis, the procurement project team resolves the following questions:

Does the technology business problem present an opportunity for mutually beneficial risk sharing between the agency and a supplier?

- What factors could significantly impact the probability of completing our project on time and within budget?
- Is it possible to evaluate the proposed solution equally?
- Can the solution(s) be evaluated based on a total cost of ownership analysis incorporating the anticipated cost of supporting the proposed solution and other financial options?

When preparing a solution-based RFP, some components of the RFP will be different than a non-solution-based RFP. A solution-based RFP should include:

- The agency’s organizational background and current business environment,
- A specific list of processes and procedures related to the project, legal or business mandates,
- Any project procedural or process documentation,
- A clear definition of the agency’s current technical environment including all current

hardware and software being used, that could be used or should be used to address the project requirements,

- A definition of the business or technology problem to be solved, but not a definition of the desired solution or the problem in terms of a desired solution,
- Specifications that describe the characteristics of a technology product, service, or solution being sought.

In a solutions-based RFP, agencies should use technology questions to drive specifications instead of including mandatory requirements in the RFP. The goal is to invite maximum reasonable competition, while procuring the best technology solution for the Commonwealth. VITA utilizes solution-based RFPs for establishing statewide contracts and procuring technology solutions to provide best-value for the Commonwealth. Pose questions to suppliers in the RFP to drive requirements, such as: "What is the industry standard for this product and does your product(s) meet or exceed such standard?"

The goal of a competitively negotiated RFP acquisition is to invite maximum and reasonable competition among the supplier community while procuring the best-value technology solution for the Commonwealth.

24.2.2 Performance-based contracts

Solution-based RFPs and performance-based contracts go hand in hand. Solution-based RFPs lead to the formation of performance-based contracts and allow suppliers to propose solutions that provide tangible benefits to both the agency and themselves such as:

- Offering a risk-sharing partnership to achieve the optimum solution.
- Suggesting clear, tangible and fair metrics to gauge when the supplier has achieved success and trigger the agency's obligation to pay for performance.
- Offering procedures for price and/or fee reductions when requirements or performance milestones are not met.

24.3 Pre-RFP Activities

24.3.1 Putting together the procurement project team (PPT) and evaluation team (ET)

It is important to create PPTs and ETs of various stakeholders and perspectives when working on a complex IT procurement. These individuals bring input and guidance for developing a sound RFP; participate in the proposal evaluations and/or subsequent negotiation strategy planning. The table below sets forth VITA's recommendations for the "key" PPT and ET members and their roles during the RFP process. There may be a need to have other participants (e.g., technical, functional, contractual, legal, financial subject matter experts) involved in the evaluation who may not be included in the actual procurement project team and vice versa. Depending on the type and complexity of the project, the Single Point of Contact for the procurement (SPOC) and business owner may choose not to include some procurement project team members in the evaluation process and/or negotiation. It is recommended, however, that these four corners of expertise be represented on the evaluation team: business area, technical area, legal area and financial area.

Key Procurement Project Team (PPT) and Evaluation Team

Business owner (agency/customer)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for the “why” justification for the project. • Identifies the business or functional need(s) for products or services. • Ensures compliance with VITA’s (Procurement Governance Review (PGR), project management and/or project governance processes and procedures, as applicable to the project’s complexity and dollar value. Refer to: https://www.vita.virginia.gov/it-governance/project-management/ • As applicable, contacts VITA Supply Chain Management Division sourcing staff to discuss engagement in project at: SCMinfo@vita.virginia.gov • Documents background, scope and information related to the business need(s). • Identifies contact names and potential resources available for the project. • Identifies and documents overall objectives, significant events and time frames. • Obtains sourcing project commitment, sponsorship and funding. • Provides input and project accountability. • Assists team with developing the functional and technical requirements and evaluation scorecard. • Coordinates with VITA Enterprise Architecture, Data Standards, Security, Enterprise Cloud Oversight Services (ECOS), as applicable, and Project Management groups and their own information security officer (ISO) to include applicable IT standards and policies into the project/procurement’s mandatory requirements or facilitate any waiver or exception process. • Participates as part of the evaluation team. • Identifies negotiation objectives and participates in negotiations. • Collaborates with the assigned procurement lead to ensure compliance with the Virginia Public Procurement Act, with VITA procurement policies and guidelines and any VITA review processes.
Subject matter expert(s) (SMEs)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible for the “what” aspect of the sourcing decision. • Develops and documents the RFP’s technical requirements and specifications. • Assists sourcing staff in developing the evaluation criteria and determining the must have or mandatory requirements. May participate in proposal evaluation and determining the short list of suppliers. • SMEs who are Commonwealth employees may participate in the evaluation and supplier selection. Non-Commonwealth employee SMEs may provide information to the ET, but cannot score. • May assist business owner/customer in conducting evaluation-phase tests/pilot programs.

Assigned agency procurement lead or sourcing specialist single-point-of- contact (SPOC)

- Responsible for the “who and how” aspect of the sourcing decision
- Leads the sourcing process.
- Facilitates required confidentiality, conflict of interest and/or non-disclosure compliance and documentation.
Coordinates equal access to PPT and ET and gate-keeps data and information needed by suppliers prior to proposal submission. All suppliers communicate all information associated with RFP and all questions associated with RFP through SPOC. Executive steering committee communicates all information through SPOC.
- Provides pre-established tools and processes (i.e., RFI, RFP, contract, etc.) through the provision of templates, etc.
- Develops the Procurement Project Plan assisted by the business owner and the SMEs.
- Facilitates RFP development, assists with documenting requirements and evaluation criteria, ensures all statutory contract terms are included, and for agencies other than VITA, ensures completion of the SCM Minimum Requirements Matrix for Major and Delegated procurements.
- Completes the RFP package and issues/posts RFP in [eVA](#).
- Updates the executive steering committee and/or PPT and ET on progress
- Facilitates the pre-proposal conference, if held.
- Facilitates the evaluation process to determine the short list of suppliers.
- Leads the negotiation process.
- Ensures compliance with ECOS policies, if applicable.
- Provides financial analysis and performance management support.
- Confirms and documents supplier pre-award compliance with pertinent statutory requirements, etc.
- The Supplier's responsibility to satisfactorily meet requirements of the Supplier Procurement and Subcontracting Plan, including Supplier's variance from planned spend in the Supplier Procurement and Subcontracting Plan, Supplier's inability or refusal to certify compliance with the Plan – or for VITA statewide contracts, failure to report monthly spend information to VITA through the [Supplier Reporting System \(SRS\)](#) – during performance of the Contract.
- Maintains contract form agreements and, for VITA, coordinates contract issues with VITA's SCM policy and governance and executive managers.
- Prepares contract for execution and updates contracts database.
- Conducts contract kick-off/orientation meeting.
- For VITA statewide contracts, VITA SPOC facilitates creation of [eVA](#) catalog.

SCM contracts and governance management

- Provides RFP review/approval and guidance on contractual issues.
- Responsible for compliance with Virginia law and VITA policy requirements.
- Responsible, as applicable to cloud procurements, for compliance with ECOS policy and processes.
- Responsible for the “compliance” aspect of the RFP process and related documents.

24.3.2 Is an executive steering committee needed?

An executive steering committee may be created in support of any project as determined by the business owner; however, for major IT projects and large enterprise procurements, an executive steering committee may be required. The executive steering committee is usually comprised of business owners and executives who serve in an advisory role and may assist in developing business needs and requirements. The executive steering committee will not be involved in the evaluation process. This committee provides management oversight to the PPT while also validating the project's business objectives, funding, requirements and supplier selection.

If an executive steering committee is used to oversee the IT procurement, the committee will interact with the PPT & ET at several stages during the procurement process. Prior to issuing the RFP, the SPOC and/or others on the PPT will prepare and present the final RFP package, other required information and an executive summary to the executive steering committee. The SPOC and other PPT participants are responsible for ensuring and documenting that the executive steering committee reviews and approves the RFP prior to its formal posting and release.

The PPT and ET determine which negotiation issues are important to the executive steering committee and ensure they are included in the negotiation plan. The business owner should obtain preliminary funding approval before issuing an RFP for any project that does not have approved funding. This practice will send the message to the supplier community that the sourcing agency is serious about the project and is respectful of the supplier's time and money.

24.3.3 Develop the RFP time table

The RFP time table is the project plan for completing the sourcing phase of the project. This timeline is often a subset of a larger project initiative. The SPOC will work with the project's SMEs to formally establish deliverable dates for the PPT. This will take into consideration the time and availability of resources required to:

- Develop, review and finalize the RFP package and evaluation matrix
- issue the RFP
- Evaluate the responses
- Test the product and/or conduct site visits
- negotiate
- Have an ECOS assessment conducted, if applicable
- Obtain approval of final contract from Office of Attorney General (OAG), if applicable
- Review and obtain final CIO approval to award, if applicable

The SMEs and other team resources will provide input into the sourcing process timeline which meets the business owner's expectations. This time table acts as a completed Procurement Project Timeline available for internal distribution to the PPT. The overall project documentation should be updated to reflect this time table. The availability of the business owner, SMEs, SPOC and other resources should be verified and scheduled as appropriate. It is important to manage the resource risk factor by identifying all team members and documenting their roles and responsibilities before going any further. See Appendix F, VITA SCM RFP Timeline Template (provided as an example).

24.3.4 Determination to utilize a request for information (RFI) or request for qualifications (RFQ) prior to the RFP

There may be instances when many unknowns exist regarding the project—the types of solutions or software available in the market, industry data, market pricing or critical information and so forth. Likewise, there may be desired solutions or software for the project for which suppliers that can provide such needs cannot be located. In these cases, it may be in the project's best interest to issue an RFI or RFQ as a preliminary data gathering step, rather than beginning with RFP issuance. Read [Chapter 18](#), "Requests for Information", Prequalification of Suppliers, Unsolicited Proposals, for more instruction on this preliminary procurement method.

24.3.5 Determination if the procurement should be set aside for DSBSD-certified small businesses.

All procurements under \$100,000 shall be set-aside for award to small businesses, including those owned by women, minorities, service-disabled veterans and may include micro businesses when the price quoted is fair and reasonable and does not exceed 5% of the lowest responsive and responsible bidder. While it is unlikely that an RFP would be developed for a procurement under \$10,000, if that is the case, the RFP shall be set aside for micro businesses. (See Executive Order 35).

24.3.6 Determining if the RFP can be prepared in a manner to enhance small business participation.

The following should be considered in order to remove any potential barriers or limitations that could discourage a DSBSD-certified small business to submit proposals:

- Unbundling requirements
- Relaxing the requirement for mandatory attendance at pre-proposal meetings
- Expanding response time for proposal submission
- Relaxing any requirements for on-site demonstrations
- Streamlining required paperwork and/or documentation

24.4 Confidentiality

24.4.1 Communications with potential suppliers prior to RFP posting/release

It might be useful to exchange information with potential suppliers prior to posting the RFP to improve the supplier community's understanding of the project's requirements. Pre-solicitation exchange of information between the procuring agency and the supplier community can identify and resolve concerns regarding the project's acquisition strategy (Is it appropriate for the type of solution or product being procured?) or the proposed contract type. Suppliers can also provide input regarding the feasibility of the requirements anticipated for inclusion in the RFP, including performance requirements, statements of work and data requirements.

Section [2.2-4373](#) of the *Code of Virginia* (Participation in bid preparation; limitation on submitting bid for same procurement) provides that: "No person who, for compensation, prepares an invitation to bid or request for proposal for or on behalf of a public body shall

(i) submit a bid or proposal for that procurement or any portion thereof or (ii) disclose to any bidder or offeror information concerning the procurement that is not available to the public. However, a public body may permit such person to submit a bid or proposal for that procurement or any portion thereof if the public body determines that the exclusion of the person would limit the number of potential qualified bidders or offerors in a manner contrary to the best interests of the public body."

24.4.2 Confidentiality during RFP development

During RFP document development and prior to RFP posting, the specific content and requirements shall remain confidential. The SPOC shall coordinate the execution of formal confidentiality/non-disclosure agreements with all PPT and ET members and SMEs. The SPOC will maintain the executed confidentiality agreements in the procurement file. A VITA-approved confidentiality agreement template, called the Procurement Project/Evaluation Team Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Statement, is available in Appendix A of this chapter.

24.4.3 Confidentiality of RFP and proposals prior to proposal opening

All PPT and ET members, SMEs and any others participating in proposal evaluations will execute a Procurement Project/Evaluation Team Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Statement prior to receiving proposals. A template of this Agreement is available in Appendix A. The SPOC will maintain the executed agreements in the procurement file.

24.4.4 Confidentiality during the evaluation of proposals

The SPOC should instruct PPT and ET members to take all precautions to prevent unauthorized access to supplier proposals. Team members should not discuss proposal content with anyone, except for other ET members during team evaluation time or with SMEs who have signed a confidentiality agreement for the procurement. All clarifications submitted by any supplier during the proposal evaluation phase are also held as confidential as the original proposal.

If, during the proposal evaluation process, the contents of any proposal become intentionally or unintentionally exposed to a third party outside of the ET, the affected supplier must be notified of such exposure. If the contents of any proposal become intentionally or unintentionally exposed to an internal third party who is internal to the agency but not a member of the ET, the third party must execute a Procurement Project/Evaluation Team Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Statement (Appendix A) and must be instructed on the importance of proposal confidentiality.

24.5 Preparing an RFP

When preparing an RFP, resolve the issues and questions in Appendix B, Checklist of Issues to Resolve Before and During RFP Preparation, and follow these best practice recommendations:

- The RFP planning and the RFP document should be comprehensive. The RFP should be written in plain, straight-forward language avoiding ambiguous, conflicting and undefined terms. All acronyms and other critical terms should be defined.
- VITA SCM Only: Use the technology sourcing process (TSP) model for preparing and evaluating an RFP.
- Use a standard and/or authorized RFP template. This helps ensure all project needs are identified and clearly communicated to suppliers. The RFP template includes a “laundry list” of typical issues that need to be addressed to trigger productive thought processes and ensure that no requirements are overlooked. VITA has developed an RFP template for use by VITA sourcing specialists. Training for customer agencies on the use of this template will become available from VITASCM at a future date and should be undertaken prior to first-time use.
- Provide all information needed for any outside party to understand the current situation or business need, the desired solution and the terms and conditions of the future relationship.

- Use extra diligence in preparing questions for suppliers which shape technical and functional requirements. These are the “meat” of the RFP.
- Address quality assurance, performance standards and measures, service level expectations, etc.
- Address upgrades, enhancements, expansions, modifications, disaster recovery, business assurance, training as well as environmental, confidentiality and federal, state and local security and data privacy standards.
- Include appropriate requirements, the proposed IT contract template (see [Chapter 25](#), IT Contract Formation.) (Other agencies: see box text below.) This places the burden of understanding on the suppliers to have a handle on the project’s requirements and prepare fully responsive proposals. Include distinct and measurable performance metrics and clear enforcement provisions, including penalties or incentives in the draft contract that is prepared with the RFP.

VITA has developed and approved IT contract templates that are customized for the specific type of IT acquisition: Services, Software, Solution, Hardware, Hardware Maintenance, Cloud, and EULA license addendum. Other agencies should be trained in using these prior to use. Until that occurs, agencies should use their own templates and ensure the Minimum VITA Requirements for Agency Delegated RFPs/Contracts provisions are included in the RFP. This can be found on SCM’s website at this location under the Forms section: <https://www.vita.virginia.gov/supply-chain/scm-policies-forms/>

Refer to [Chapter 28](#) for more information on required security and cloud related terms and conditions.

Once the requirements are completed, in addition to the agency’s general contract terms, appropriate IT terms should be included, as well as any special terms to cover any extraordinary risk(s) associated with the project. VITA sourcing specialists will use the approved template or master definitions and terms that match the procurement type, while agencies should include all necessary provisions that relate to the IT procurement such as necessary terms related to services, hardware, or software that may include: Ownership of Intellectual Property, Third Party Acquisition of Software, Software Upgrades, Software Disposition, Source Code, Term of Software License, special warranties, etc. Agencies who have received delegated authority to conduct their own IT procurements may request assistance for complex solution, application service provider, and/or software as a service type IT procurements by contacting SCM at the following address: scminfo@vita.virginia.gov.

If an agency is planning to publish an RFP for a procurement that is anticipated to result in a “high risk contract”, as defined by [§ 2.2-4303.01](#) of the *Code of Virginia*, VITA and the OAG must review the RFP prior to publication. Such reviews will be conducted within 30 business days, and include an evaluation of the extent to which the RFP complies with applicable state law, as well as an evaluation of the appropriateness of the RFP’s terms and conditions.

Agencies are required to contact VITA’s Supply Chain Management (SCM) at: scminfo@vita.virginia.gov during the procurement planning stage prior to the issuance of a solicitation. SCM will provide assistance to the agency in preparing and evaluating the RFP and identifying and preparing the required performance measures and enforcement provisions.

A project that is part of a larger federal initiative or one funded with federal money may require including specific terms that must be flowed down from the funding sponsor or from federal statute. Examples are: the HITECH and HIPAA Acts for health records related

projects. Obviously, this type of project or a project related to data within any Commonwealth agency that processes private health, confidential or sensitive citizen information; i.e., Department of Health, Department of Motor Vehicles, or Department of Social Services, may have special security or data protection needs as well. Procurement officials should seek, ask, research available internal sources, OAG and VITA to determine the requirements for such special terms and conditions.

It is important to perform a quality review of the solicitation to remove redundant, ambiguous and conflicting terms.

24.5.1 Contents of an RFP

A basic IT RFP consists of certain minimum sections. Refer to Appendix D, Contents of a Quality IT RFP, to view them.

24.5.2 Preparing and writing RFP requirements

The requirements document is the official statement of what is necessary for the project, solution, system or IT software and/or hardware. It is not a design document. It shall set forth what the project, system, solution, software and/or hardware should do, rather than how it should do it. RFPs shall include both a definition and a specification of requirements as well as functional and technical data relating to those requirements. Refer to [Chapter 8](#) and [Chapter 12](#) of this manual for detailed instruction on developing successful requirements, specifications and statements of work. For the purpose of this chapter, a Requirements Verification Checklist is provided in Appendix E, as a quick reference only.

24.5.3 Commonwealth security and cloud requirements for IT solicitations and contracts

Section [2.2-2009](#) of the *Code of Virginia* mandates that the Chief Information Officer (CIO) is responsible for the development of policies, standards, and guidelines for assessing security risks, determining the appropriate security measures and performing security audits of government electronic information. Such policies, standards, and guidelines shall apply to the Commonwealth's executive, legislative, and judicial branches and independent agencies.

Further, it requires that any contract for information technology entered into by the Commonwealth's executive, legislative, and judicial branches and independent agencies require compliance with applicable federal laws and regulations pertaining to information security and privacy. While agencies are required to comply with all security policies, standards and guidelines (PSGs), Security Standard SEC525-02 provides agency compliance requirements for non-CESC hosted cloud solutions. These PSGs are located at this URL: <https://www.vita.virginia.gov/it-governance/itrm-policies-standards/>

In addition to Security Standard SEC525-02, for any procurements for third-party (supplier- hosted) cloud services (i.e., Software as a Service), since agencies have \$0 delegated authority to procure these types of solutions, there is a distinct process for obtaining VITA approval to procure. Refer to the "Third Party Use Policy" in the link above. Your agency's Information Security Officer or AITR can assist you in understanding this process and in obtaining the required documentation to include in your solicitation or contract. There are specially required Cloud Services terms and conditions that must be included in your solicitation and contract, and a questionnaire that must be included in the solicitation for offerors to complete and submit with their proposals. In addition, if a procurement is a cloud-based procurement (i.e., off-premise hosting), following VITA's selection of the best proposal(s) representing best value to the commonwealth, Supplier's failure to successfully answer, negotiate and/or comply with any resulting security exceptions that may arise in order to approve Supplier's cloud application, may result in

removal from further consideration. Refer to Chapter 28 for more information. You may also contact: enterpriseservices@vita.virginia.gov

24.5.4 Preparation instructions for presentations/demonstrations/site visits VITA highly recommends that demonstrations, presentations, testing or pilot programs and/or site visits be used in the evaluation process. If they will be evaluated, below are guidelines or instructions which may be included in the RFP, but are not required:

- Description of the topics the supplier must address and the technical and management factors that must be covered in the demonstration and/or presentation.
- Statement covering the total amount of time that will be available to each supplier to give their demonstration and/or presentation.
- Description of limitations on agency and supplier interaction before, during and after the scheduled demonstration, presentation, testing and/or site visit.
- Statement that the presentation or demonstration will constitute clarifications only.
- Description and characteristics of the demonstration and/or presentation site.
- Rules governing the use of presentation media.
- Anticipated number of participants.
- Description of the format and content of presentation documentation and their delivery.
- Testing and/or pilot program requirements including time limits, materials, auditing, etc.
- Site visit requirements including location, costs, availability, etc.

24.5.5 Preparing the evaluation criteria and evaluation process

The PPT and/or ET creates the evaluation criteria used to review and evaluate proposal responses with the purpose of collecting the data needed to agree on a selection in a fair and competitive environment. The evaluation criteria used to assess proposals consists of the factors that reflect the areas of importance to an agency in its selection decision.

Through the evaluation factors, the ET is able to assess similarities, differences, strengths and weaknesses of competing proposals and, ultimately, use that assessment in making a sound source selection decision. A well-integrated evaluation scheme provides consistency, discipline, and rationality to the source selection process. Evaluation shall be based on the evaluation factors set forth in the RFP. Factors not specified in the RFP shall not be considered in determining supplier selection.

Written evaluation criteria that are measurable and objective shall be used as the standard for assessing proposals. Convert “feel good” objectives into observable, measurable criteria. Identifying the evaluation criteria prior to developing the RFP and tailoring the RFP around the evaluation criteria will ensure an expedited review of proposals. All PPT and/or ET members must agree with the weighting assigned in the evaluation matrix.

The evaluation criteria should be completed before the RFP is posted. In the event a numerical scoring system will be used in the evaluation of proposals, the point values assigned to each of the evaluation criteria shall be included in the RFP or posted at the location designated for public posting of procurement notices prior to the due date and time for receiving proposals. See Section [2.2- 4302.2\(A\)\(3\)](#) of the *Code of Virginia*. Procurement personnel need to be mindful of the number of evaluation criteria and ensure that key criteria, such as supplier experience, receive an appropriate weight.

Evaluation criteria should be tailored to each acquisition and include only factors which have a direct impact on source selection. The nature and types of evaluation criteria to be used for an acquisition are within the broad discretion of the procuring agency. In supporting the best-value concept, price or cost must be an evaluation factor in every

source selection.

Contracts can only be awarded at costs or prices that have been determined to be fair and reasonable. The evaluation of cost or price may include not only consideration of the cost or price to be paid to the supplier, but other costs that a project may incur as a result of awarding the contract (i.e., total project life-cycle cost). Examples of these costs include re-training costs, system or software conversion costs, power consumption, life cycle costs including out-year maintenance and support, and transportation costs. In these cases, the RFP should clearly identify these other costs that will be considered in the evaluation.

Non-cost factors address the evaluation areas associated with technical and business management aspects of the proposal. Examples of non-cost factors include technical and business management related areas, such as technical approach and understanding, capabilities and key personnel, transition plans, management plan, management risk, and resources. The level of quality needed or required in performance of the contract is an important consideration in structuring non-cost factors. Past performance, supplier business maturity and service quality should be included in the evaluation criteria but may be included as non-cost factors.

Another example of non-cost evaluation criteria is whether the proposer employs people with disabilities that will perform the specifications of the contract. [Per § 2.2-4302.2\(A\)\(3\)](#) of the *Code of Virginia*, a public body may include a proposer's employment of disabilities to perform the specifications of the contract as a factor in evaluating the proposal. See Chapter 7 for more information on how VITA supports the Commonwealth's socioeconomic initiatives.

The business owner, working with the PPT and/or ET, must determine the evaluation criteria and address how the pricing model (if applicable) will be applied. The evaluation shall be based on best-value methodology, but broad discretion is allowed when selecting evaluation criteria as long as the criteria are relevant to the project. It is strongly recommended that most RFP procurements be solution-based (i.e., define the problem and allow suppliers to submit proposed solutions). Carefully consider the necessity of including mandatory (must-have) requirements which may limit the number of qualified suppliers who can respond to the RFP. Each criteria used shall be defined in the RFP with enough information for the supplier to understand how the successful supplier(s) will be determined. It is recommended that the ET establish rules for how to deal with a situation when the team cannot reach a consensus at any point in the evaluation process.

The agreed-upon evaluation criteria are confidential to the procuring agency, members of the executive steering committee (if one is used), and the procurement project team and/or the evaluation team at all times.

24.5.6 Types of evaluation criteria

Evaluation criteria for IT procurements can usually be divided into these primary categories:

- Technical capability, including the supplier's understanding of the procurement requirements, the supplier's management plan, the quality of the proposed solution, the quality of the goods and services being proposed, the experience and qualifications of supplier's key personnel and vendor resources.
- Management capability, including the supplier's experience on similar projects; the supplier's past performance on similar projects; the supplier's available facilities and resources for the project; and the supplier's plan and business maturity level of processes for management and control of the project.
- Cost reasonableness and competitiveness, including the supplier's proposed price

(for fixed-price contracts); the realistic expected cost of performance, plus any other costs, such as that of ownership, including transportation costs, and life-cycle costs (installation, operation, maintenance, security and disposal).

- Supplier's status as a DSBSD-certified small business or micro business, including small businesses or micro businesses that are owned by minorities or women, and the Supplier Procurement and Subcontracting Plan, if the bidder is not a small business.
- Supplier's record of compliance with small business requirements

24.5.7 Examples of IT evaluation criteria

The most common evaluation criteria used in IT procurements are assessment of the supplier's:

EVALUATION CRITERIA EXAMPLES	
Proposal quality including required submission and format, readability, neatness, and clarity. The proposal should be logical, reasonable and professional.	✓
Understanding and responsiveness to the RFP's requirements, terms and conditions.	✓
Technical approach and compliance with the RFP's technical requirements.	✓
Overall approach to performing the contract or meeting the requirements of the RFP, including warranty offerings.	✓
Proposed plan for performing needed services.	✓
Overall understanding of the project and the business need(s).	✓
Experience on projects of similar size and scope	✓
Proposed methodology for performing the project.	✓
Proposed implementation/orientation/start-up procedures and efforts.	✓
Commitment and flexibility to the project's schedule requirements.	✓
Approach and plan for managing the project.	✓
Training, reports and documentation offered.	✓
Proposed maintenance plan and costs.	✓
Expansion and upgrade capabilities and costs.	✓
Problem resolution/escalation process.	✓
Willingness and approach to meet environmental objectives (if applicable).	✓
Non-acceptance of statutory and crucial contractual terms and conditions	✓

24.5.8 Supplier evaluation criteria

The qualifications and experience of the supplier are crucial to the success of the project. The following evaluation criteria may assist agencies in determining which suppliers would be most beneficial to the project:

Past performance with similar projects and past performance of supplier's proposed personnel, consultants, or subcontractors who are specified to be assigned to the project.	✓
Experience with similar projects including a record of recent past performance of similar projects of similar scope.	✓
Performance on similar contracts with respect to such factors as control of costs, quality of the work, and the ability to meet schedules. Supplier reliability and past performance can be verified by contacting proposed references and other government and commercial customers.	✓
Availability to perform the project or provide the needed goods and services within the agency's time frame. Supplier should have the personnel, equipment, and facilities to perform the services currently available or demonstrated to be made available at the time of contract award. This criterion should include considering the current and projected workloads of the supplier that would affect its ability to perform the required work on schedule, and the availability of key personnel to be assigned to the project.	✓
Reputation for personal and professional integrity and competency.	✓
Financial strength and stability. Supplier's financial capability can be verified by obtaining a credit rating service report or obtaining certified financial	✓
Proposed quality control plan (QCP), if applicable.	✓
Record of compliance with public policy issues and statutory requirements.	✓
Status as a DSBSD-certified small business or prime supplier's planned use of small businesses	✓
Record of compliance with small business subcontracting plan requirements	✓
Record of satisfactory performance and contract compliance on previous contracts with VITA or the Commonwealth, if any.	✓
Interviewing supplier key personnel	✓
Short-listed supplier presentations	✓

If the acquisition is aimed at contracting with a service provider, below are some additionally recommended best practice evaluation criteria:

Supplier's process maturity and competence	✓
Supplier's vertical knowledge, approach to performing the contract or meeting the service level requirements	✓
Supplier's proposed geographic coverage. If supplier will subcontract for portions of the geographic coverage, validate the competence, knowledge and experience of the proposed subcontractors	✓
Supplier's project management abilities and proposed management plan	✓
Supplier's infrastructure capabilities and software product knowledge	✓
Supplier's organizational change management skills and implementation tools	✓

24.5.9 Weighting the evaluation criteria

The SPOC and ET may use discretion in determining how to score proposals, provided that it is not arbitrary. If criteria are weighted, do this with caution to assure that they are properly weighted in accordance with the importance of each criterion.

Note: If using the VITA RFP template, the evaluation criteria are derived directly from section 5 (Functional and Technical Requirements) and section 6 (Supplier Profile) of the template, as well as the supplier's response to the proposed contractual terms and conditions.

Section [2.2-4302.2](#) of the *Code of Virginia* provides as follows:

"Issuance of a written Request for Proposal indicating in general terms that which is sought to be procured, specifying the factors that will be used in evaluating the proposal, indicating whether a numerical scoring system will be used in evaluation of the proposal, and containing or incorporating by reference the other applicable contractual terms and conditions, including any unique capabilities, specifications or qualifications that will be required. In the event that a numerical scoring system will be used in the evaluation of proposals, the point values assigned to each of the evaluation criteria shall be included in the Request for Proposal or posted at the location designated for public posting of procurement notices prior to the due date and time for receiving proposals. No Request for Proposal for construction authorized by this chapter shall condition a successful offeror's eligibility on having a specified experience modification factor."

24.5.10 Methodologies for weighting criteria

If weighting criteria is used or a numerical score system is used, the point values assigned to each of the evaluation criteria shall be included in the RFP or publicly posted prior to the due date and time for receiving proposals. Agencies are free to design rating plans which best achieve their business needs and the requirements of a particular procurement. The key in using any rating system is consistent application by the evaluators. If additional guidance on weighting or numerical scoring systems is desired, please contact SCMinfo@vita.virginia.gov.

24.5.11 Supplier's obligation to understand RFP content and specifications

When suppliers sign and submit a proposal, they are communicating that they have read and understood all of the content, requirements, terms and conditions and specifications of the RFP. Each proposal should include an intent to contract statement that is signed by an authorized representative of the supplier stating their understanding of this obligation.

Make sure these requirements are clearly stated in the proposal requirements section of the RFP.

24.5.12 Completing the RFP package

A comprehensive RFP package, including all of the appendices will be assembled by the SPOC with the assistance of the other PPT members. The SMEs will provide the completed technical requirements sections of the RFP and participate in final review of the completed RFP. The business owner shall provide the completed business and functional requirements sections of the RFP and participate in final review of the completed RFP. The SPOC is accountable for a complete, comprehensive RFP package. When finalizing the RFP package prior to posting, the SPOC shall:

- Review the RFP sections submitted by SMEs and the business owner for accuracy, completeness and clarity, assuring the overall quality of RFP.

- Draft the remaining content of the RFP, including general and VITA's IT-specific terms and conditions.
- Select and include the appropriate and approved VITA IT contract template.

Non-VITA SPOCs shall use their agency's contract format until they receive training in VITA's contract template usage or request VITA's assistance in template training. It is required that agencies use the "VITA Minimum Contractual Requirements for "Major" Technology Projects" matrix for major projects requiring CIO approval and it is highly recommended for use in all delegated IT procurements. The matrix may be found on SCM's website at this location under the Forms section:

<https://www.vita.virginia.gov/supply-chain/scm-policies-forms/> that non-VITA SPOCs shall use to confirm inclusion of certain critical IT contractual terms and conditions.

(Note: Be sure to include a statement that any supplier redlines to the RFP and terms and conditions should exclude exceptions or recommended language revisions to any provisions regarding liability. This will be requested from supplier only at time of negotiations.) This requirement is due to the following language in § [2.2-4302.2](#):

"In the case of a proposal for information technology, as defined in § [2.2-2006](#), a public body shall not require an offeror to state in a proposal any exception to any liability provisions contained in the Request for Proposal. Negotiations shall then be conducted with each of the offerors so selected. The offeror shall state any exception to any liability provisions contained in the Request for Proposal in writing at the beginning of negotiations, and such exceptions shall be considered during negotiation."

- Route the complete final draft RFP package to appropriate internal, VITA or other reviewers/approvers.
- Lead the PPT in final review of RFP and all attachments.
- Finalize and complete the RFP package, including all attachments, which should be ready to be issued pending executive steering committee approval, if needed.
- Begin documenting issues for negotiation strategy planning.

24.5.13 Indemnification and Liability Terms are limited in Major IT Projects

If the RFP is for a major information technology project (see § [2.2-2006](#) for definition of "major information technology project"), § [2.2-2012.1](#) will apply. Section [2.2-2012.1](#) provides that terms and conditions relating to indemnification and liability of a supplier must be reasonable and shall not exceed in aggregate twice the value of the contract in any contract for a major information technology project.

"§ [2.2-2012.1](#). Major Information Technology Project Procurement: Terms and Conditions

- A. For purposes of this section, "supplier" means an offeror with whom the Commonwealth has entered into a contract for a major information technology project.
- B. Except as provided in subsection C, in any contract for a major information technology project, terms and conditions relating to the indemnification obligations and liability of a supplier shall be reasonable and shall not exceed in aggregate twice the value of the contract. There shall be no limitation on the liability of a supplier for (i) the intentional or willful misconduct, fraud, or recklessness of a supplier or any employee of a supplier or (ii) claims for bodily injury, including death, and damage to real property or tangible personal property resulting from the negligence of a supplier or any employee of a supplier.
- C. If the CIO believes that a major information technology project presents an exceptional

risk to the Commonwealth, he shall conduct a risk assessment prior to the issuance of a Request for Proposal. Such risk assessment shall include consideration of the nature, processing, and use of sensitive or personally identifiable information. If the risk assessment concludes that the project presents an exceptional risk to the Commonwealth and the limitation of liability amount provided in subsection B is not reasonably adequate to protect the interest of the Commonwealth, the CIO may recommend and request approval by the Secretary of Administration to increase the limitation of liability amount.

The CIO shall make such recommendation in writing setting forth the reasons that the limitations in subsection B are not adequate to protect the Commonwealth's interests. The recommendation shall describe the risks presented to the Commonwealth and how those risks are not sufficiently mitigated by the expected terms and conditions associated with the Request for Proposal. The CIO shall recommend a reasonable maximum alternative limitation of liability amount that is a multiple of the contract value, with the same exceptions to the limitation as provided in subsection B.

The Secretary of Administration shall review and may approve any recommended maximum alternative limitation of liability amount to be included in any Request for Proposal issued for the project. The CIO shall annually publish a list of all approvals granted under this subsection pertaining to any Request for Proposal issued in the previous 12-month period.

D. Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, the Commonwealth may agree to a lower limitation for any contract subject to subsection B or C."

24.6 Issuing the RFP

The SPOC will issue the approved final RFP. Once the finalized RFP is posted in [eVA](#), the requirements definition phase of the procurement is concluded, the evaluation phase begins leading into the negotiation phase. The SPOC shall continue to serve as single point of contact during all phases of the procurement.

Any member of the PPT and/or ET shall NOT disclose any evaluation criteria, requirements, or budget information to anyone not on the PPT and/or ET prior to the posting of the RFP. Team members should be prepared to tactfully decline should a supplier contact them for information and provide the supplier with the SPOC's phone number or e-mail address.

24.7 Posting and advertising the RFP

Section [2.2-4302.2\(A\)\(1\) and \(2\)](#) of the *Code of Virginia* provides as follows:

"1. Issuance of a written Request for Proposal indicating in general terms that which is sought to be procured, specifying the factors that will be used in evaluating the proposal, indicating whether a numerical scoring system will be used in evaluation of the proposal, and containing or incorporating by reference the other applicable contractual terms and conditions, including any unique capabilities, specifications or qualifications that will be required. In the event that a numerical scoring system will be used in the evaluation of proposals, the point values assigned to each of the evaluation criteria shall be included in the Request for Proposal or posted at the location designated for public posting of procurement notices prior to the due date and time for receiving proposals. No Request for Proposal for construction authorized by this chapter shall condition a successful offeror's eligibility on having a specified experience modification factor;

2. Public notice of the Request for Proposal at least 10 days prior to the date set for receipt of proposals by posting on the Department of General Services' central

electronic procurement website or other appropriate websites. Public bodies may also publish in a newspaper of general circulation in the area in which the contract is to be performed so as to provide reasonable notice to the maximum number of offerors that can be reasonably anticipated to submit proposals in response to the particular request. Posting on the Department of General Services' central electronic procurement website shall be required of (i) any state public body and (ii) any local public body if such local public body elects not to publish notice of the Request for Proposal in a newspaper of general circulation in the area in which the contract is to be performed. Local public bodies are encouraged to utilize the Department of General Services' central electronic procurement website to provide the public with centralized visibility and access to the Commonwealth's procurement opportunities. In addition, proposals may be solicited directly from potential contractors. Any additional solicitations shall include certified businesses selected from a list made available by the Department of Small Business and Supplier Diversity;"

Refer to VITA SCM policy, IT Procurement Policy for Enhancing Opportunities for Small, Women-and Minority-owned Businesses, at this website location for soliciting small business participation and complying with this VITA policy: <https://www.vita.virginia.gov/supply-chain/scm-policies-forms/scm-policies/>

24.8 Events That May Occur During the Posting Period

24.8.1 Pre-proposal conference

When the PPT elects to conduct a pre-proposal conference or teleconference, it is held prior to the proposal due date. The conference is open to all suppliers. It is recommended that a pre-proposal conference not be designated as mandatory unless absolutely critical, as it may discourage suppliers from responding to the RFP. Conferences may be held in person at a selected site or be conducted via teleconference or other available meeting technologies that are accessible to all interested suppliers. The SPOC schedules and coordinates any pre-proposal conference. The pre-proposal conference invitation may limit the number of attendees per supplier. The PPT members agree to specific roles in responding to questions during the conference.

- **SPOC:** The SPOC may request that suppliers submit written questions at least three business days in advance of the pre-proposal conference. The SPOC shall contact the PPT members and obtain responses to all submitted questions for presentation at the pre-proposal conference. The SPOC shall make the necessary hosting arrangements and lead the pre-proposal conference.
- **SMEs & business owner:** The SMEs and business owner shall respond to questions submitted by the suppliers in writing through the SPOC in a timely matter during the posting period.
- **Suppliers:** Suppliers must notify the SPOC of their intent to attend, and submit questions in advance of attending the conference. When applicable, the deliverable is a completed pre-proposal conference, with all suppliers receiving documented answers to all submitted questions.
- **PPT:** The PPT should make every effort to create a level playing field for all suppliers by providing equal access to information. The PPT should take advantage of the pre-proposal conference to reinforce the importance of the SPOC during the entire procurement process.

24.8.2 Information requests during the posting period

All material information concerning the RFP or the procurement process shall be posted on

eVA. Non-material information will not be posted. These written responses usually include answers to material supplier inquiries, RFP amendments and clarifications, any additions or modifications to procurement process rules and any responses to inquiries concerning the RFP evaluation criteria. All communications with suppliers during the posting period should go through the SPOC. Only the SPOC should contact any supplier.

24.8.3 Issuing amendments to an RFP before proposal due date

An RFP may be amended by the SPOC issuing a written addendum prior to the date and time set for receipt of proposals. Such addenda shall be posted on eVA and the agency website where the RFP is displayed. All addenda must be signed and returned by all suppliers to the SPOC with their proposals. If a deadline extension is granted to any supplier it must be granted to all of the suppliers. VITA does not accept late proposals.

24.9 Cancelling an RFP

24.9.1 Cancellation of a Solicitation

An Invitation for Bids, a Request for Proposal, any other solicitation, or any and all bids or proposals, may be canceled or rejected. When canceling a written solicitation not created in eVA, all vendors who have been issued a solicitation must be notified, and the notice must be publicly posted. When canceling a Quick Quote solicitation in eVA, the purchasing office is not required to notify vendors of the cancellation. When canceling an eProcurement solicitation in eVA, the cancellation shall be made through eProcurement which will update the posting on VBO Buyer. All premium vendors registered for the commodity code used for the solicitation will be automatically notified. Other vendors may view the status of the solicitation in the VBO to see that the solicitation has been cancelled. If the solicitation was posted on the VBO, the solicitation must be cancelled by the issuing purchasing office using VBO Buyer in order to notify vendors of the cancelled solicitation. The reason for cancellation shall be documented and made a part of the contract file. A public body shall not cancel or reject an Invitation for Bid, a Request for Proposal, any other solicitation, bid or proposal solely to avoid awarding a contract to a particular responsive and responsible bidder or offeror (*Code of Virginia*, § [2.2-4319](#)). Personnel responsible for opening bids or proposals must be notified of the cancellation to prevent responses from being inadvertently opened. [...] If a program is canceled after receipt and opening of bids or proposals, original documents will remain a part of the procurement transaction file.

Bidders or Offerors should be notified in writing that the program has been canceled and that duplicate proposals, if provided, will be destroyed unless the Offeror requests their return (APSPM <https://dgs.virginia.gov/procurement/policy-consulting--review/policy/>).

24.9.2 Cancellation before proposal due date

If an RFP has been issued and the due date has not arrived, the RFP may be canceled. The following procedure should be used in such instances:

- A cancellation notice must be posted promptly through eVA and where the RFP is displayed at the time of original release (i.e., newspaper(s) of general circulation and agency website), stating that the decision to cancel the RFP has been reached;
- Notice shall also be provided to all agency personnel responsible for receipt and opening of proposals to prevent responses from being unintentionally opened;
- Any proposals received should be returned unopened to the supplier;
- The reasons for cancellation and/or rejection of any proposal shall be made part of the agency procurement file.

A public body may cancel an RFP, or reject proposals at any time prior to making an award,

but may not cancel an RFP or reject a proposal to avoid awarding a contract to a particular supplier. See § [2.2-4319](#) of the *Code of Virginia*.

24.9.3 Cancellation after proposal due date

When the RFP due date is past and proposals have been received and opened, the proposals may be rejected and the procurement canceled at any time prior to award. The following procedure will be used in such instances:

- A cancellation notice must be posted promptly through [eVA](#) and wherever the RFP was advertised at the time of original release (including the newspaper of general circulation if applicable), stating that the decision to cancel the RFP has been reached.
- The opened proposals will remain as part of the procurement file.
- Any duplicate proposals may be destroyed unless the supplier requests that these proposals be returned at their expense.
- The reasons for cancellation or rejection shall be made part of the procurement file.

When a solicitation is cancelled, the procurement file including all received proposals remains confidential and will become part of the new solicitation procurement file. In the event that a new solicitation is not issued within a period of 12 months from the date of cancellation, the procurement file shall then become available and open for public inspection.

24.10 Receipt and Distribution of Proposals

24.10.1 Receipt of sealed proposals

Public openings are not required and VITA recommends that they not be held. No questions regarding any proposal will be answered until after evaluation and negotiations are complete and an award decision has been made. The SPOC ensures all proposals are received on time and are complete. Proposals that are submitted late will not be considered. The SPOC reviews proposals for compliance with mandatory or must-have requirements or any mandatory terms and conditions. The SPOC maintains an evaluation sheet identifying each supplier's status with respect to the RFP's must-have or mandatory requirements (marked with an M).

24.10.2 Distribution of proposals

Once the SPOC has determined which proposals meet the completeness and compliance criteria described in the above paragraph, he/she will distribute copies of these proposals to the evaluation team, according to defined roles for each. The price data is not distributed at this stage.

24.11 Proposal Clarifications

The SPOC may require certain suppliers clarify information contained in their proposals. The SPOC will issue any clarification questions in writing and these suppliers will be required to submit written clarification responses. A strict deadline for receipt of clarification responses should be included in the written communication to these suppliers. Suppliers must provide responses that sufficiently clarify their proposal's misunderstandings or confusion; however, the response should not reveal a previously unknown issue or problem. Supplier responses must be submitted to the SPOC, who will distribute them to the evaluation team. All clarification questions and responses become permanent records in the official procurement file.

All communications with suppliers during the RFP process should go through the SPOC. Only the SPOC should contact any supplier.

24.12 Mistakes in Proposals

A mistake in a proposal may be corrected or the proposal may be withdrawn depending on the stage in the procurement process when the mistake is discovered. Minor informalities or mistakes in proposals are generally allowed to be corrected before award. Below is a reference table for determining how a proposal mistake should be handled:

Occurrence of a proposal mistake	Available remedy
Before proposal due date	Supplier may correct mistakes discovered before due date by withdrawing or correcting and resubmitting the
After due date but before award	When review of the proposal (before award) indicates that a mistake was made, the supplier should be asked by the SPOC to confirm the proposal. If the supplier alleges that a mistake was made, the supplier may correct or withdraw the proposal. Correction of mistakes at this stage is only allowed if: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mistake and the correct proposal information are clearly evident on the face of the proposal, in which event the proposal may not be withdrawn.• Minor mistakes that are not clearly evident on the face of the proposal but the supplier submits proof of evidentiary value which clearly and convincingly demonstrates both the existence of the mistake and the correct offer and allowing the correction would not be contrary to fair and equal treatment of other suppliers.
During negotiations	Supplier may freely correct any non-material mistake by modifying or withdrawing the proposal.

24.13 Modifying or Adding RFP Requirements after Proposal Due Date

If the business owner determines that it needs to modify or add requirements after proposals are received, the existing RFP will need to be canceled and reissued with the modified or additional requirements, as well as modified evaluation criteria. The business owner will need to establish a new proposal submission date.

24.14 Evaluation and Scoring of Proposals

Evaluation criteria shall not be altered after the opening of proposals with the exception of minor changes and only if the alterations are justified and evidence is presented to ensure that such alterations would not materially benefit or disadvantage any supplier.

During the evaluation phase, suppliers may not initiate any communication with the SPOC, PPT and/or ET members. SPOCs may ONLY initiate discussions with suppliers in order to further assess their responsiveness.

Evaluators may request presentations or discussions with suppliers to clarify material in the proposals, to help determine those fully qualified and best suited. Proposals are then evaluated on the basis of the criteria set forth in the RFP, using the evaluation method previously specified in the RFP. Only proposals meeting the mandatory ("M") requirements will be evaluated. Price is considered, but is not the sole determining factor. Two or more suppliers determined to be fully qualified and best suited are then selected for negotiation. A proposal may be eliminated and not evaluated if the proposal is clearly not within the specifications or plans described and required by the RFP.

During the evaluation phase it may be determined that only one supplier is fully qualified, or that one supplier is clearly more highly qualified than the others under consideration. A

written determination shall be prepared and retained in the procurement file to document the meaningful and convincing facts supporting the decision for selecting only one supplier and negotiating with that supplier.

Under no circumstances shall a Supplier's ECOS/Security Assessment be evaluated. The Assessment must not be distributed to the entire Evaluation Team, but only to the SPOC, business owner, and ISO. Assessments are done for the selected finalist Supplier(s) and will receive a VITA approval or disapproval.

24.14.1 Evaluation process – roles and responsibilities

Selection shall be made of two or more suppliers deemed to be fully qualified and best suited among those submitting proposals on the basis of the factors involved in the RFP, including price if so stated in the RFP.

	RFP process steps: evaluation through award	Responsible unit
1	RFP due date	SPOC
2	Opening of proposal submissions	SPOC
3	Administrative screen: vendor compliance with mandatory as well as basic submission requirements	SPOC
4	Business and technical evaluation	PPT and/or ET, SMEs as specialized input
5	Reference checks	SPOC, PPT and/or ET, SMEs as specialized input is
6	Interviews, demonstrations, presentations and/or site visits	SPOC, PPT and/or ET, SMEs as specialized input
7	Clarifications	SPOC
8	Reviewing proposals and preparing a negotiation strategy	SPOC, PPT and/or ET team members, SMEs as specialized input
9	Contract negotiations – SPOC hosts and leads	SPOC, PPT and/or ET team members, SMEs as specialized input
10	Evaluation summary and evaluation team signoff	SPOC, ET, SMEs as specialized input
11	Contract award	SPOC
12	Procurement summary	SPOC
13	Contract management	Sourcing agency contract administration and management.

24.14.2 Scoring proposals

The evaluation and scoring of proposals for most IT procurement projects involves the following steps:

- ET member individual scoring
- consensus meeting(s)
- preparing the short list of suppliers
- demonstrations/testing/site
- visits/presentations by short list suppliers
- in-depth evaluation of short listed proposals
- identify top contenders
- conduct negotiations with top contenders
- perform total solution cost reasonableness analysis

24.14.3 Evaluation team (ET) meetings

The SPOC will coordinate and facilitate all evaluation meetings in an ADA accessible location. ET members must participate in all evaluation segments, including any demonstrations, onsite visits, etc. The SPOC will document the review of the ET and the scoring for each proposal evaluated. A master-scoring sheet should be compiled by the SPOC with the consensus score for each proposal. The evaluation team shall reach consensus on which proposals meet the minimum functional and technical requirements, scoring them based on all pre-established evaluation criteria. The consensus is reached among the evaluators. Only team members may assign or vote on points. All team members are expected to be present and to take an official vote. If none of the proposals meet the minimum functional, technical, and schedule requirements, the ET will decide whether to end the evaluation process at this point.

If such a decision is made, refer to section 24.9.2, Cancellation after Proposal Due Date, and section 24.13, Modifying or Adding RFP Requirements after Proposal Due Date, for further guidance.

24.14.4 Preparing the short list of suppliers

At this stage in the evaluation process, the evaluation team has completed enough of the evaluation to determine which suppliers will make the final short list. The evaluation team shall then identify and rank the short list of suppliers by scoring their proposals against the “wants” list of criteria. The SPOC shall document which suppliers made the final short list.

24.14.5 Conduct in-depth evaluation

In complex procurements, the SPOC may schedule and conduct fact-finding discussions with each supplier on the short list to clarify their offers prior to developing the negotiation strategy. The SPOC is also responsible for coordinating and documenting the completion of the cost analyses and presentation, demonstration, site visit and/or testing results, if any, prior to developing the negotiation strategy. This documentation should include a complete understanding of the offers, to include all segments of the evaluation process. All documentation related to the evaluation must be maintained in the procurement file.

The key point to remember at this stage in the sourcing process is the value of coordinating the results of the evaluations, presentation/demonstration/testing/site visit results and total solution cost analyses in regard to the project's budget. All results must be kept confidential within the ET. It is in the Commonwealth's best interest that all side discussions and social outings with contending suppliers be avoided. All communications with suppliers during the evaluation process should go through the SPOC.

24.14.6 Test/site visit/presentations

Upon request by the evaluation team, the SPOC may request suppliers on the short list to perform testing, supply a pilot project, allow site visits and make presentations or demonstrations to the ET as warranted in order to determine the best solutions from among the short list proposals. Determining whether presentations, demonstrations, testing, and/or site visits are warranted is based on the team's need to obtain additional information in order to arrive at a data driven decision.

The SME(s) will assist the ET in preparing the presentation/demonstration/site visit and/or testing requirements/scenarios. All short list suppliers should be afforded an equal opportunity for the presentations, demonstrations, site visits, test/pilots, etc. required by the ET at this evaluation stage. Before testing begins, the SME(s) might work with short list suppliers to identify a testing protocol that will deliver the desired results.

If necessary, the SPOC will update the evaluation documentation if the process has identified additional items critical to the success of the solution. The SPOC will also reach agreement with members of the evaluation team on the project/site visits and presentations and assess the evaluation results. If SMEs and non-team agency representatives or resources are involved in the testing or pilot, the SPOC will coordinate the testing plan and presentation schedule with these resources.

The SPOC may provide an evaluation/pilot form agreement or a script of what is expected in the pilot/presentation and what the team will validate to the short-list suppliers and lead the required negotiations to execute the defined testing protocol. The SPOC will assist the ET in documenting the evaluation criteria for the testing pilot or site visits and advise them regarding the need to keep test or site visit results confidential to protect the agency or Commonwealth's position in continued negotiations.

Selecting suppliers for a pilot does not imply that a final selection has been made. If the pilot suppliers fail to demonstrate the ability to meet the requirements during testing or site visits, the evaluation team needs to be well-positioned to pursue another pilot. The testing units, pilot and supplier labor are to be provided by supplier at no cost to the sourcing agency whenever possible.

After testing, site visits and/or presentations, the SPOC will document the review of the testing, site visits or presentations and the scoring for each supplier and prepare a written report, based upon scoring results of the proposed short-list supplier solutions that were shown to meet the requirements and can deliver a proven, qualified solution. It may be necessary to address whether testing, site visits and/or presentations raised new issues which need to be covered in the negotiation strategy.

If only one supplier is fully qualified the SPOC shall prepare a written determination of the facts supporting the decision to negotiate with that single supplier and retain it in the procurement file.

24.14.7 Preliminary negotiations (if appropriate)

Preliminary negotiations are fact-finding discussions to fully understand each aspect of the supplier's proposal. The SPOC may, if appropriate, communicate with each of the finalists who has met the RFP's mandatory requirements to work through their comments to the proposed contract. The SPOC may come away with additional considerations—how much risk are we willing to accept? What is our strategy for risk associated with this sourcing initiative?

24.14.8 Total solution cost analysis (after preliminary negotiations)

After negotiations are completed a total solution cost analysis can be used. The cost/value ratio determines which supplier is offering the best value solution. Remember, although value/cost ratio criteria may be an evaluation criterion, it is not applied until after negotiations are complete.

It is essential that the evaluation team understand the complete cost of a technology-based business solution. A total solution cost analysis will fit the project's business plan and identify the best solution to match its goals and budget; for example, adding capabilities in order to improve customer service or expand services.

The intention is to arrive at a final figure that will reflect the effective cost of purchase. For example, the lifetime cost of a PC can be more than five times its acquisition cost.

Evaluators should thoroughly consider the complete cost—not only obtaining the PC but operating, supporting and maintaining it during its lifetime including costs of hardware, software, training, maintenance, or other services. The total cost solution analysis is the big picture cost analysis of each supplier's proposal. This includes, but is not limited to, cost elements such as start-up, transition from current, rollout, training, help line support, operating, maintenance and repair, hardware upgrades related outsourcing or consulting and "exit" cost, or, cost to replace this system or solution at the end of its useful life. The analysis may also include lease versus purchase, the benefits, costs, and risks imposed by various contract terms and conditions identified during preliminary negotiations.

The SPOC is responsible for supplementing the evaluation team with the necessary internal resources to gather the data, including the total cost of the solution, required to make a data driven decision. This may include substantial involvement by the SME(s) as well as finance personnel. The SPOC is also responsible for determining the value/cost ratio of each proposal, and assess any inordinate risks or ancillary intangible costs associated with each solution, such as supplier's viability over the life of the solution, quality of the system documentation and its impact on operating costs, etc. (i.e., total cost to the agency or Commonwealth). SMEs and agency personnel should provide input into the total solution cost analysis where needed. The SPOC, working with agency resources and SMEs, will document a cost benefit analysis that clearly represents the total value/cost ratio of each short list solution. Without this data the team cannot determine the true value/cost ratio of the proposed solutions.

24.14.9 Identify top contenders

To develop the initial recommendation, the SPOC will schedule a meeting of the evaluation team to review the results of the testing/pilot project, value/cost ratio and preliminary contract negotiations. A DSBSD-certified Small Business, including certified Small Businesses owned by women, minorities, or service-disabled veterans (SWaM) and micro businesses, might be able to win an award, even if not the highest ranked Offeror, so long as the price quoted is fair and reasonable and does not exceed five percent (5%) of the lowest responsive and responsible bidder. Where conflicts arise, the team will rely upon the consensus rules established at the beginning of the process.

Any open issues or issues in need of further clarification will be documented by the SPOC and included in the negotiation strategy. This documentation will be included in the official procurement file. Agency resource personnel and SMEs who are not members of the evaluation team may attend the scheduled meeting and provide input into the initial recommendation. The SPOC will ensure that all project requirements have been addressed.

Key evaluation questions:

- Are these suppliers aligned with VITA's business needs?
- Are they positioned for future growth and competition?
- Do our contracts preserve our leverage in a changing business environment?

24.14.10 Update executive steering committee (if appropriate)

Once the total value/cost rationale of each solution is determined, the evaluation team will make a recommendation to the executive steering committee (if appropriate). This recommendation is based on the team consensus achieved through reviewing the results of the testing, pilot or site visits, and total solution cost analysis and preliminary contract negotiations.

While the evaluation team will present the initial recommendation to the executive steering committee, SMEs may participate and assist if necessary. The executive steering committee cannot select or affect the recommendation since this must be a data-driven decision; however, they may, at this stage in the procurement process, agree to proceed, request more information or may end the project.

The SPOC is responsible for ensuring that the executive steering committee is fully and accurately informed of the recommended solution, and that they approve the recommendation prior to proceeding with final negotiations. If the executive steering committee requests more information, the SPOC is responsible for obtaining and conveying the requested information to them.

If approval is granted, the business owner ensures that funding documents are fully executed before proceeding with final negotiations. The executive steering committee (if appropriate) provides the appropriate management concurrence of the recommended supplier with confirmation of authorized funding. Short, concise updates to the executive steering committee throughout the RFP process may streamline approval of the initial recommendation.

Key negotiation question:

- Did the suppliers raise new issues that need to be covered in the negotiation plan?

24.15 Final negotiations

In-depth discussion on final negotiations, covering basic and IT-specific negotiation guidance, as well as, links to a negotiation risk mitigation worksheet and negotiation strategy worksheet are found in [Chapter 26](#) of this manual.

24.16 Pre-award activities

Prior to any award the following activities should be completed:

- SPOC confirms supplier's compliance with all statutory and Commonwealth award requirements; i.e., registered in [eVA](#), authorized to transact business in the Commonwealth via State Corporation Commission, not on Commonwealth or Federal debarred or prohibited lists, etc.
- Obtain applicable reviews and approvals of final negotiated contract from OAG, CIO, and/or federal sponsor.

Appendix A
Procurement Project/EvaluationTeam
Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Statement

This form is available on VITA SCM's website at the following URL:

<https://www.vita.virginia.gov/media/vitavirginiagov/supply-chain/docs/Confidentiality-and-Conflict-of-Interest-Statement-20180701.docx>

Appendix B
Checklist of Issues to Resolve Before and During RFP Preparation

Issues/questions to resolve	YES	NO
1. Has the agency accepted that we must use “best value” methodology in this acquisition?		
2. Has the agency included requirements and links in the RFP for VITA-required ITRM PSGs for Security, Data Standards, Enterprise Architecture and IT accessibility and Section 508 compliance? How will these requirements affect the specifications/requirements in the RFP? What is the emergency or back up plan for standby commodities or services?		
3. Has the agency determined any constraints on RFP flexibility as a result of full or partial federal funding?		
4. Has the agency considered Commonwealth strategic objectives and ensured there is no potential conflict?		
5. Has the agency considered all legacy systems and interface requirements that will be affected by this project and taken all associated risks into account? Are these systemic relationships clearly defined in the RFP?		
6. Would this be an appropriate procurement to designate as a set-aside for DSBSD-certified small businesses, including small businesses owned by women, minorities and service disabled veterans as well as micro businesses? Has the agency analyzed the impact of the RFP process on these small businesses to remove barriers and limitations? Can the RFP be structured to promote the inclusion of small businesses in the solution? Would a supplier be able to form a consortium of smaller suppliers to submit one proposal in response to an RFP? Does the RFP include a requirement to submit a Supplier Procurement and Subcontracting Plan?		
7. Has the agency determined if subcontractors may be used? How will they be identified? What are reporting requirements for subcontracting?		

Issues/questions to resolve	YES	NO
8. Avoid discouraging brand specifications. In PC RFPs, brand names cannot be used in specifications. Is the project equipment required to be a certain brand name or would an equivalent suffice? Will the RFP allow suppliers to propose multiple options to provide the solution to the same functional requirement? If so, RFP should state that each option will be fully considered by the evaluation team prior to the evaluation of the full proposals.		
9. Has the customer analyzed potential supplier management issues and contract management issues if contracts will be offered to multiple suppliers?		
10. Risk of loss – What are the insurance (i.e., errors and omissions, cyber security liability) and performance or surety bond requirements of the project? Bonds are not generally used for IT procurements.		
11. Has the agency established objective evaluation and weighting criteria and developed the evaluation scoring? The criteria must be available to bidders in the RFP or by amendment prior to proposal due date.		
12. If the RFP will contain a SOW process, has the SOW been defined? Has a SOW template been prepared?		
13. What type of contract will be utilized and what terms and conditions are negotiable or not negotiable? Are there special IT or federal terms and conditions that need to be included and are these negotiable? Are there special data protection/access/security/backup terms that need to be included to align with the requirements? If this is a Software as a Service (SaaS) procurement, have required approvals been given by CIO and does the RFP sufficiently address SaaS requirements and include SaaS terms and conditions?		
14. Has the agency planned how the project should be implemented, what deliverables and milestones the supplier will be expected to meet?		
15. What are the invoice and payment specifications? Are payments tied to delivery or milestones? Should payment holdbacks be included as an incentive to the supplier and a protection to the agency? Are there discounts/penalties to be applied if delivery or milestones are not met?		
16. What will the supplier need to supply for record keeping and reporting? What needs to be reported, how often and to whom?		

Issues/questions to resolve	YES	NO
17. Has the agency established clear and sufficient metrics and performance measures to include in the contract to measure project success and supplier's performance? Will the contract contain benchmarking of price?		
18. What changes to performance and/or contract specifications would require a formal contract amendment? Will any performance and/or payment time frames continue beyond the contract term and if so, how will they be managed?		
19. What are the agency's requirements for the contract and/or project manager(s)?		
20. Did we address and include these: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplier Procurement and Subcontracting Plan requirement • What certifications, licenses or statutory requirements will supplier have to meet and/or provide? 		
21. Supplier must show proof of Workers Compensation insurance and other insurance.		
22. Have we conducted a quality review to remove redundancies, conflicting language/terms and ambiguous statements/requirements? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have we scheduled sufficient time in the RFP timeline to obtain all required reviews or approvals by VITA, OAG or other (i.e., federal reviews)? 		
23. Have we included all <i>Code of Virginia</i> requirements for determining if the procurement/project is designated as a High-Risk solicitation/contract in accordance with § 2.2-4303.01 ?		

Appendix C

The RFP Process Checklist

Step	Process	✓
1	Meet with the customer to determine his/her needs. What does success look like? Who will be on ET? Preliminary discussion of the timeline.	
2	Conduct a market analysis to gain awareness of products/services/solutions that could meet the business or technology need. Perform a make vs. buy analysis. Estimate project investment costs including RFP investment cost.	
3	Analyze VITA statewide contracts to determine if the business or technology needs could be met through purchases from statewide contracts. Statewide contracts usually offer lower pricing than agency-specific contracts. If no statewide contracts available, continue with Step 3.	
4	An executive steering committee may be created in support of any project as determined by the business owner; however, for major IT projects and large enterprise procurements, an executive steering committee will be required. The executive steering committee is usually comprised of business owners and executives. The executive steering committee will serve in an advisory role and may assist in developing the business needs and requirements. The executive steering committee will not be involved in the evaluation process.	
5	Determine if project is appropriate for solution-based RFP. If determination is “yes,” RFP should include language which specifies “This is a best-value, solution-based RFP.”	
6	Create a procurement project/evaluation team summary documenting: members’ roles and responsibilities, be clear about the SPOC’s role as lead host, contact and coordinator, and obtain signed conflict of interest statements.	
7	Determine if procurement is appropriate to be set aside for DSBSD-certified small businesses and that barriers and limitations are removed to encourage their participation.	
8	Develop a clear and agreed-upon statement of the purpose of the RFP. This should align with any project planning charter/mission statement previously developed by the business owner in working with VITA ITIB project management (i.e., ProSight). Develop a high level outline of the RFP and have the procurement project/evaluation team review it.	
9	Develop schedule for RFP. Refer to appendix G.	
10	Develop solution requirements or necessary specifications in accordance with the guidelines of Chapter 8 , Describing the Need: Specifications and Requirements.	
11	Establish evaluation criteria including clear, concise definitions for each criterion provided to facilitate team understanding, using the guidelines set forth in this chapter. For all contracts in excess of \$100,000 a Supplier Procurement and Subcontracting Plan will be required. Establish weighting criteria.	
12	Develop an evaluation scoring plan that explains how proposals will be evaluated with the evaluation team.	
13	Identify major project milestones and deliverables for establishing supplier performance metrics and/or payments.	

Step	Process	
14	Identify any technical, functional, security, confidentiality, data protection, cost or schedule risks that need to be addressed and resolved as a result of developing the requirements, specifications and milestones in the RFP, or determine if suppliers should be required to identify any risks associated with their solutions, including costs. All procurement stakeholders should collaborate and communicate to mitigate RFP gaps (i.e., procurement, project manager/business owner, information security officer, functional/technical SMEs).	
15	Utilizing VITA's RFP template(s), VITA sourcing staff shall develop the RFP document in accordance with the guidelines set forth in this chapter. Other agencies should use their own templates and the VITA Minimum Contractual Requirements for "Major" Technology Projects" matrix found on SCM's website at this location under the Forms section: https://www.vita.virginia.gov/supply-chain/scm-policies-forms/ until they have received VITA training on VITA's RFP and contract templates. VITA SCM can provide additional SaaS or ASP terms and conditions. Counsel and review may be obtained from VITA SCM by contacting SCMinfo@vita.virginia.gov .	
16	Determine if pre-proposal conference will be held and whether supplier attendance will be optional or mandatory. Include information about pre-proposal conference in RFP. Pre-proposal conference can be held via teleconference.	
17	Finalize RFP with the procurement project/evaluation team. Review the RFP document to ensure that all necessary and specific requirements are included. Establish proposal submission due date.	
18	Obtain CIO approval if required (refer to manual Chapter 1 , VITA's Purpose and Scope.)	
19	Issue RFP. Post RFP for a minimum of 10 days in http://www.eva.virginia.gov/ . Posting notice of the RFP in a newspaper of general circulation in the area where the contract will be performed is optional. Consider a longer response period for more complex procurements to ensure thoughtful, thorough responses.	
20	Answer questions from suppliers. Conduct optional pre-proposal conference or teleconference, prepared with adequate project team member participation to respond to suppliers' questions. Post material answers on http://www.eva.virginia.gov/ .	
21	Amend RFP if needed. Post amendment on eVA .	
22	Receive proposals.	
23	Evaluate proposals using the evaluation and weighting criteria provided in the RFP.	
24	Hold initial scoring and elimination session	
25	Conduct any supplier onsite demonstrations, presentations or clarification sessions.	
26	Select two or more suppliers deemed to be the most fully qualified and best suited based on evaluations.	
27	Conduct negotiations and finalize contract(s).	
28	Obtain any required reviews/approvals (CIO, OAG, other)	
29	Award contract(s).	
30	Prepare a complete procurement file.	
31	Post notice of contract award in eVA .	
32	In the case of a Notice of Intent, procurement file remains open for inspection for 10 days after award.	
33	Facilitate eVA catalogue.	

Appendix D Contents of a Quality IT RFP

Section	Section content	Content description
1	Introduction	Provides a statement of the problem and must be detailed enough for suppliers to grasp the business issues driving the RFP and the technical issues that may have precipitated the problem.
2	Proposal instructions and administration	<p>Contains all administrative requirements and information with which a supplier must comply in order to submit an acceptable proposal. This section includes ground rules for the procurement, from submitting the RFP to awarding the contract and should contain the following types of information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• if and when a pre-proposal conference will be held• relevant dates for the procurement cycle• requirements for preparing and submitting proposals (i.e., <i>Code of Virginia</i> requirements, as well as proposal protocol)• how proposals will be evaluated• RFP Single Point of Contact name and contact information• when, where and to whom proposals are due• other information that is required for a supplier to be fully responsive <p>If the instructions are incomplete or unclear, suppliers may overlook critical meetings or milestones. Some suppliers may view the lack of quality instructions as a sign of a weak project team or conflicted project which could influence major industry suppliers to not submit proposals. Failure of a supplier to comply with the RFP's administrative requirements may be cause for proposal rejection. This section should present clear rules for responding to the RFP and to make suppliers aware of the penalties for not following them.</p>
3	Proposal format	Provides details on how proposals are to be formatted and bound and the required media (i.e., hardcopy, CD, etc.). It is helpful to include a table to show if various proposal sections are to be submitted separately; i.e., technical from cost, redacted, etc.). This section should not duplicate or conflict with the proposal instructions in section 2.

4	Present situation	<p>Accurately describe the agency’s organizational background and the project’s current business and technical environments so suppliers can effectively and accurately propose solutions to adapt or modify that environment to satisfy the new requirements. Description of the current business environment should include all users and benefactors of the current business services and processes affected. Description of the current technical environment should be a clear definition including all current hardware and software being used, what could be used or should be used to address the project requirements, as well as current interfaces to other existing systems/platforms and/or applications. Workflow and application interfaces may be presented using visuals.</p>
5	Functional and technical requirements	<p>Provides functional and technical requirements and enough information to enable suppliers to understand the issues and prepare a complete and firm proposal. This overview should address both the current business application and the technical environment (hardware, software, communications). It is recommended that agencies not use “must” and “shall” technical requirements, but allow suppliers to suggest how they will solve the problem as part of a solution- based proposal. The technical and functional requirements section includes questions to which suppliers must respond, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • critical success factors • functional specifications for the current system • functional specifications for the projected system • performance specifications • service level expectations • hardware requirements (if mandatory) • software requirements • security and data protection requirements • communications requirements (if mandatory) • testing requirements • whether their solution complies (or can comply) with VITA Security, Data Standards and Enterprise Architecture and IT Accessibility/508 Compliance ITRMPSGs <p>Project management requirements state the conditions for managing and implementing the project. This section should provide suppliers with information they need to develop a project plan, risk mitigation plan or other management plan, as required for the complexity and mission criticality of the project and that spans requirements definition, implementation, installation, testing, training, maintenance, and other phases of the project. The proposed project plan provides assurance that the supplier has the resources required to perform the contract successfully. The project management plan typically contains the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • staffing requirements

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • site preparation responsibilities • delivery and installation schedule and plan • system acceptance test requirements • system maintenance requirements • system training requirements • documentation requirements <p>Agencies should remember that it is possible a supplier can meet the technical requirements, but cannot meet the management requirements as evidenced in their poor or inadequate responses to this section. The management section will help differentiate between suppliers with mature or immature management capabilities.</p> <p>You may ask suppliers to identify all assumptions and any potential risks associated with the RFP and desired project objectives; and/or ask them to describe in detail a similar project and how they resolved problems or issues that occurred during their performance to their customer's satisfaction.</p>
6	Supplier profile	<p>Suppliers are asked to describe their business and professional qualifications and to provide references. They should be asked to present detail about their corporate and financial status and the customers who will serve as references for their professional performance and integrity. The following examples are what is typically required in this section:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplier's corporate history, organizational structure, locations and business-size status (i.e., DSBSD-certification status, if applicable). • Supplier's general background experience and capability for providing the type of solution or product being offered. • A description of the relationship between supplier and any proposed partner/subcontractor/manufacturer, if any, and how long this relationship has been in existence. • Evidence that supplier has the necessary technical, operational and management skills, staff and financial resources and viability to perform the contract. • A list of same/similar currently installed products, systems or solutions. • Names of customers with similar projects, configurations and/or applications who can provide references, including contact names and telephone numbers. • Supplier's qualifications, including resumes, company profile and business processes. • Supplier's usual method of providing services including a description of the work plan, methods to be used and a sample schedule of deliverables/timeline for project completion.

7	SWaM Section	Suppliers are asked to provide a “Supplier Procurement and Subcontracting Plan” that states the overall commitment percentage that Supplier anticipates spending directly with subcontractors in performing the requirements of the contract. Additionally, Suppliers are asked to provide a list of all subcontractors it anticipates using in Supplier’s performance of the contract. The list of subcontractors should designate those subcontractors that are SWaM businesses, as well as those that are non-SWaM businesses. In the event that a Supplier does not anticipate using subcontractors in the performance of a contract, the Supplier are asked to state this fact in their response.
8	Pricing information	<p>Specifies how suppliers are to provide pricing information and provides a detailed format for them to follow in developing their price proposals. Instructions should be clear enough to ensure that price proposals can be compared on an equal basis. To facilitate this comparison, consider providing a sample spreadsheet that breaks the proposed system into components such as the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • system software • application development software • installation • maintenance • training • documentation • project management • integration of unique hardware or software • license fees (ongoing) <p>Include a pricing schedule/scenario as an example of how proposal prices must be submitted. If lump sum pricing is not advantageous, use a pricing scenario to obtain prices for unknown quantities or hours. Ask for a breakout of recurring versus non-recurring costs. The pricing schedule should be tied to deliverables and must coincide with the method of payment stipulated in the solicitation.</p> <p>When looking at pricing schedules, pay attention to pricing that involves one-time costs versus recurring costs. The initial price of a software package is a one-time cost; annual maintenance and software licensing fees are recurring costs which must be identified to develop a project’s total life-cycle cost. Pricing is not usually the sole determinant for award, but should be used to break a tie between two suppliers with equally good technical and management proposals.</p> <p>For complex projects you may also ask suppliers to submit a milestone pricing schedule to which holdback percentages can be applied to be paid after final acceptance on the final invoice. This</p>

		motivates suppliers and adds protection for the agency if final acceptance is delayed or problematic. It also allows easier contract severability at any milestone if the supplier is non- performing.
9	Agency standard agreement (i.e., contract template)	Contains a proposed contract template with nondisclosure agreements, confidentiality, data protection and security requirements, warranties, licensing agreement requirements and other statutory, legal and IT-specific terms and conditions, or any federal flow-down terms that may be required. Suppliers should be asked to redline the proposed contract template to highlight all exceptions they cannot agree to. Suppliers should not redline the liability clause at this time. They can raise issues or comments for the first time during negotiations later. Identify showstopper issues during the proposal evaluation period because it is possible to select a supplier who will not accept the agency's contract.
10	Supplier's section (optional)	Allows suppliers to include information they feel is relevant although not required or requested in the RFP. They can also discuss potential issues that are relevant to the RFP and to their proposal. For example, a supplier may have additional product features to demonstrate that are outside the scope of the RFP, present a unique solution that was not anticipated by the buyer, or may provide a solution to a problem evident in the RFP that other suppliers did not consider. Even if this particular supplier does not win, the explanation of the problem and the potential solution may still be worth considering.
	Appendices	Contain bulky but relevant information such as network diagrams, technical requirements studies, project plan outlines and other detailed information. Examples include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spreadsheets with statistical information. • Communications network drawings and plans. • List of current equipment. • Standards used within the company. • Tentative project plan with dates. • Contract template • Small business subcontracting plan form • Supplier-completed State Corporation Commission form as registered to transact business in the Commonwealth. <p>The information is then available to the supplier but does not distract from the narrative portion of the RFP. Note: Tell suppliers whether they must use this information when developing their proposals.</p>

Appendix E

A 10-Step Process for Evaluating Proposals

Step	Evaluation Procedure
1	An initial evaluation will be conducted by the SPOC to ensure “must haves” are met.
2	Suppliers not meeting “must haves” will be eliminated from further consideration.
3	The evaluation team (ET) will then review proposals based on the evaluation factors contained in the RFP.
4	A “short list” is determined after reviewing evaluation results.
5	Suppliers on the short list may be asked to deliver presentations or demonstrations.
6	Another evaluation meeting may be held, and two or more suppliers may be selected for negotiation.
7	Preliminary negotiations may be conducted with each selected supplier. Preliminary negotiations allow modification of proposals, including price and negotiable terms and conditions.
8	Perform a total solution cost analysis on top proposals.
9	After steps 7 and 8 are completed with each of the selected suppliers, the ET may select the supplier(s) which, in its opinion, has made the best proposal. The ET is not required to furnish a statement explaining why a particular proposal was not deemed to be the most advantageous. If an executive steering committee was used during the acquisition process, notify the committee of the selection and obtain their approval to proceed with final negotiations and contract award.
10	Complete final negotiations. Funding must be confirmed prior to award. Obtain required reviews/approvals of final contract with CIO, OAG, other. A contract may be awarded to the supplier(s), and notice of award shall be posted in the manner prescribed in the terms or conditions of the RFP.

Appendix F

VITA SCM RFP Timeline Template (Provided as an example)

(Name of Project)

Deliverables	Owner	Start Date	Projected Completion Date	Status	Comment
Requirements Definition Phase					
Conduct Client Interview					
Draft statement of need/scope. Obtain agreement from business owner, and copies of any VITA project management, VITA governance, CIO and/or federal approval documents for the procurement file.					
Make small business set-aside determination and remove barriers and obstacles to encourage participation					
RFP approval letter and SCM justification for RFP, as applicable					
Contact Customer Account Manager					
Develop Procurement Timeline					
Assemble Evaluation Team					
Document Functional Requirements					
Document Technical Requirements					
Add or use template to include all general, statutory, special, IT specific (i.e., Cloud, escrow, warranties, IT specific insurance, IT Accessibility, etc.) terms and conditions					
Develop Evaluation Criteria - Scoring Weights					
Complete Request For Proposal (RFP) Draft					
Obtain Required Reviews/Approvals (CIO, ECOS, OAG, other)					
Complete RFP Final Package					
Negotiation Phase					
Contact SCM SWAM Outreach person					
Release RFP to Supply Base					
Advertise in eVA					
Conduct Pre-Proposal Conference					
Submit Addendums as Appropriate					

Receive and Distribute Proposals					
Facilitate Evaluation of Proposals					
Determine Short List of Suppliers					
Conduct Short List In-Depth Evaluation					
Negotiate with Top Suppliers					
Complete Contract Negotiations					
Confirm Supplier Compliance with all Statutory award requirements					
Execution Phase					
Conduct Legal, CIO, ECOS OAG Contract Reviews and obtain any required approvals and place copies in procurement file					
Sign and Award Contract					
Post Notice of Contract Award					
Conduct Contract Orientation Meeting					