

Evaluation and Contract Award

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February 15, 2022



HARVARD Kennedy School

Government Performance Lab

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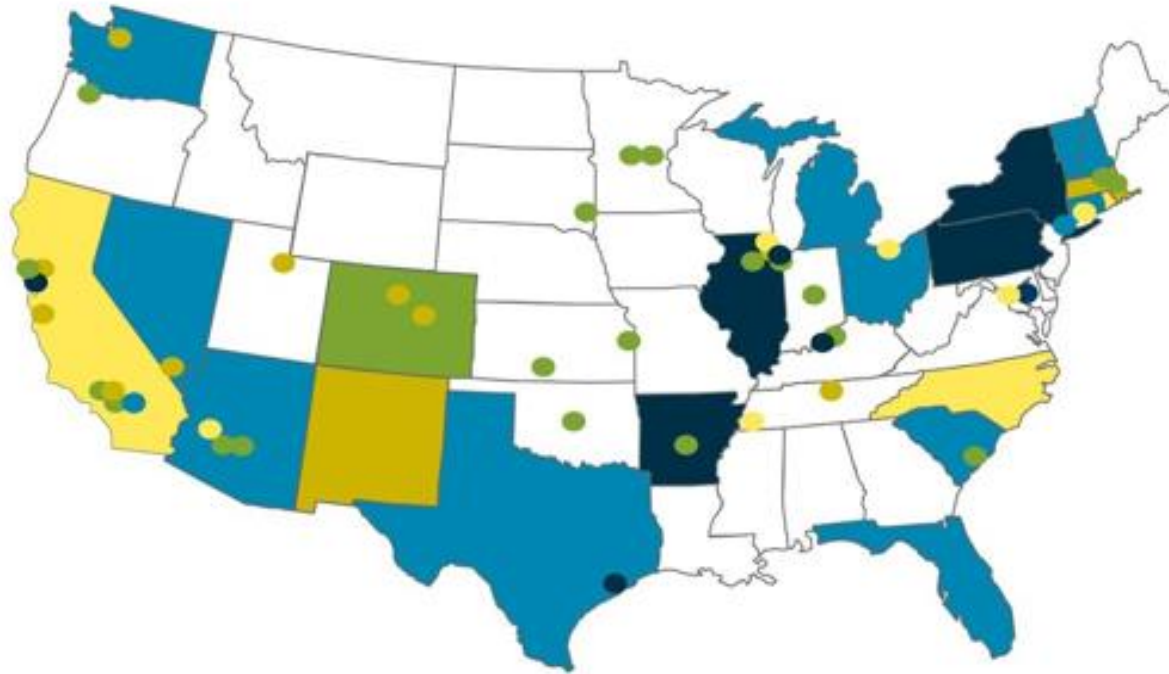


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Over 200 projects across 35 states

- Criminal justice
- Child welfare
- Homelessness & behavioral health
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Provide hands-on technical assistance

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National Network

Convene state and city innovators

Publications

Spread ideas through policy briefs and tools

GPL Trainings for RFA Workforce Fellows 2022-23



Equity in Procurement and Grantmaking
October 27, 2022

How do we center equity in procurement and improve accessibility for small and minority-led organizations?

Planning and Drafting Results-Driven RFPs
December 14, 2022

How do we write RFPs that root social services in clear goals and performance metrics, yet still encourage vendor innovation?

Evaluation and Contract Award
TODAY: February 15, 2023

How do we award the RFP to the right vendor and establish a productive, collaborative relationship early on?

Active Grant Management
April 26, 2023
(in-person)

How do we manage a grant such that we see results and codify best practices?

October 2022

GPL Trainings

April 2023

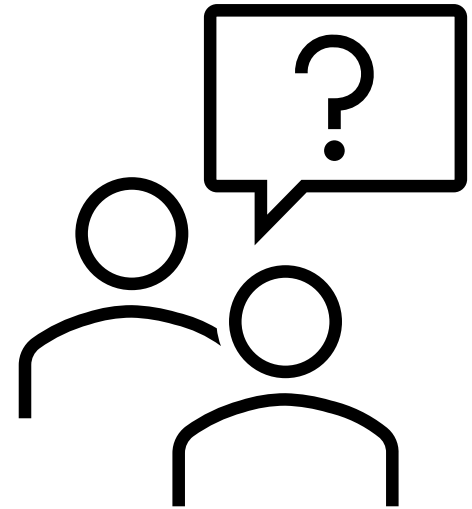
Agenda

- **Framing and evaluation criteria** (25 minutes)
 - **Evaluation process:** proposal questions and evaluators (15 minutes)
 - **Evaluation process:** scoring and debriefs (15 minutes)
 - **Contract award and launch** (10 minutes)
 - Fellow Example: Kier Scott, Central Ohio Performance Pilot
 - **Q&A and next steps** (10 minutes)
-

But first, a Zoom poll.

What aspect of proposal evaluation does your jurisdiction find the most challenging?

- Writing evaluation criteria for workforce RFPs
- Developing a holistic, but not burdensome set of proposal questions and requirements
- Running an efficient, but inclusive evaluation process
- Establishing a productive, collaborative relationship with a vendor at contract's start



Session objectives

By the end of today's session, we hope you will be able to:

1. Write **clear, organized evaluation criteria** that make it easy for reviewers to determine which vendors best address your RFP's needs.
2. Develop **proposal questions and requirements** that are transparent, logical, and accessible to all vendors.
3. Organize an **evaluation process** that is streamlined, fair, and impartial.
4. Come to **contract negotiation and award** prepared with a vision for a productive, outcome-oriented relationship with a vendor.

You can workshop RFPs from your own jurisdiction through office hours with GPL staff!

Framing and Evaluation Criteria

Why does proposal evaluation matter?

Proposal evaluation is a critically important stage!



- The decision what to buy and who to buy it from will directly impact:
 - Day-to-day operations
 - The success of the project
 - The quality of services delivered to residents
 - Which organizations get the benefit of being allocated public resources
- This decision requires balancing fairness, consistency, and effective decision-making.

Any other reason that proposal evaluation is important? Add it in the chat!

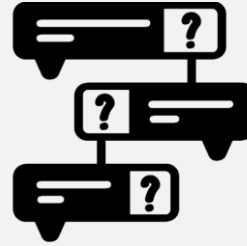
3 major components of proposal evaluation

Evaluation Criteria



The primary criteria by which you'll score or rank a proposal.

Questions & Requirements



The responses to questions and required material you collect from vendors to help you determine how they measure up against the scoring criteria.

People & Process

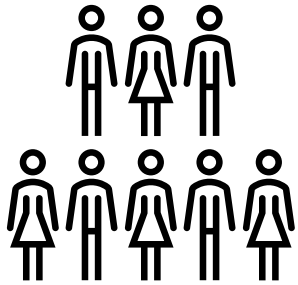


The people involved in reading and scoring proposals and the processes that bring them together.

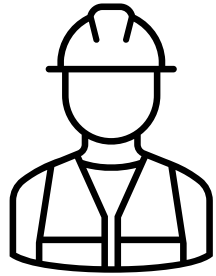
Qualities of effective evaluation criteria

- Connect to your **specific outcome goals, metrics**, and **scope of work**
- Give the **right balance** between multiple priorities
- Provide **sufficient information** to let proposers know **what full points look like** (i.e., to have “fully met” the criteria), and how partial points will be given
- Can be used as another way of **signaling what’s important** to the agency (e.g., equity)
- Clearly **align to proposal questions** and submittals requested
- Are **fair** to all proposers, **consistent**, and **not overly restrictive**

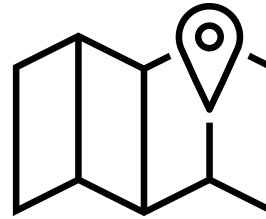
What do typical evaluation criteria include?



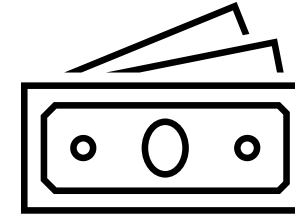
**Organization
and Staff**



**Service
Delivery**



**Geographic
Reach**



**Budget and Cost-
Effectiveness**

What are other evaluation criteria you can think of?

What evaluation criteria might Charleston, SC have used?

RFP for affordable housing development partner

RFP Goals

- Improve housing affordability
- Mitigate flooding and other environmental / site challenges
- Reknit the neighborhood

Scope of Work (key sections)

- Building Design and Layout
- Affordability Targets
- Project Financing
- Drainage
- Complimentary Investments by the City of Charleston

Evaluation Criteria (summary)

- Strength and qualifications of the **development team**
- Strength of the proposed **financing package** in maximizing public benefits from this development while minimizing public cost
- On-site **drainage solution** that is robust and responsive to the site's drainage challenges and can provide a high quality of life for residents under a range of storm/tidal conditions
- **Responsiveness to the City's design priorities and specifications**, and adherence to the State LIHTC design requirements.



Cooper River Bridge TIF District

Based on this RFP, **what evaluation criteria would you use to assess a respondent's development team** and their ability to build climate resilient affordable housing? Please discuss in groups of 3-4.

What is effective in how Charleston, SC defined this evaluation criterion?

Strengths and qualifications of the development team – qualification areas to be assessed:

- **Knowledge of and experience working with the low-income population targeted by this development.** The Offeror should highlight work experience in low-income populations in flood prone areas.
- **Ability to engage and cooperate with the community and government stakeholders.** The Offeror should highlight examples of successful community and local government engagement around past developments, noting specific strategies or approaches that contributed to positive and trust-based relationships with stakeholders.
- **Multi-family development experience.** Developer should indicate the quality and number of units / projects completed in the past 5 years: in the City of Charleston, in South Carolina, and in the United States.
- **LIHTC development experience.** Developer should indicate the quality and number of units / projects completed in the past 5 years in: South Carolina, and in the United States.
- **Experience developing Brownfield sites or sites requiring environmental remediation.** Developer should indicate the quality and number of units / projects completed in the past 5 years
- **Architect affordable housing design experience.** Developer should indicate the quality and number of units / projects of affordable housing designed by the project architect or architectural design partner in the past 5 years
- **Involvement of Disadvantage Businesses Enterprises (DBEs).** Provide firm history and experience with Disadvantage Businesses Enterprise (DBE) programs including small businesses, local businesses, disabled veteran-owned businesses, women-owned businesses, and firms owned by underrepresented ethnic groups.

4 tips for assigning weights

In addition to defining evaluation criteria, you also want to be clear about their relative importance. Assigning weights is a great way to do this. Weights help vendors understand what to emphasize in their proposal (or whether to respond to at all) and allow jurisdictions to balance multiple priorities in assessing RFP responses.

When assigning weights:

100

1. All weighted criteria together should add up to 100%.



3. Reflect on how you want to compare price against other factors. Weighting price is a straightforward and common approach. However, it's not the only option. For example, in RFPs where value for money is a priority, proposal content may be evaluated first, and then compared against price by calculating dollars per point; or, proposal content may be evaluated, the top technically acceptable proposals shortlisted, and award made to the lowest priced proposal among them.



2. Avoid assigning weights smaller than 5%, as this is likely too granular to meaningfully change a score.



4. Identify any mandatory eligibility requirements separately. While you should avoid creating unnecessary eligibility requirements that could exclude viable proposals, some RFPs do have mandatory eligibility criteria (federal funding, local labor law). These requirements should be clearly outlined up front in the RFP, so proposers know whether to apply.

Evaluation Process: Proposal Questions and Evaluators

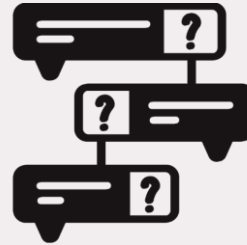
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People & Process



The people involved in reading and scoring proposals and the processes that bring them together.

First, design proposal questions and submission requirements

CLARITY

What to Keep in Mind

- Write questions in **accessible language** and try to maintain parallel syntax for questions of the same format.
 - (e.g., don't switch between "What are your organization's strengths?" and "Applicants should describe their strengths.")

Why It Matters

- If you write a confusing question, you'll get a confusing response.
- Vendors may be experts in their fields, but not experts in proposal writing.

LOGIC

- **Map your questions** logically (and numerically, to the extent possible) to the evaluation criteria you decided on.

- Questions should be closely aligned to and capture the spirit of your scoring criteria. You want the time that vendors spend on preparing a proposal section to reflect the section's relative importance.

LENGTH

- Determine the right **amount of information** you need to gauge vendor fit and how that information is best collected.

- The more you ask for, the more you must sift through later...but if you don't ask for enough, you may have to reach out to vendors with follow-up questions.

FAIRNESS

- Make sure the required attachments (forms, statements, recommendations) are easy to understand and accessible to all bidders.

- You don't want to lose out on quality vendors because your attachment requirements were confusing.

An example of mapping out your questions

Criterion

A4 - Skilled and culturally diverse workforce (8 points)

a. Appropriate staffing structure is provided and explains specific activities used to recruit, retain,

Correlated Question

4.47 Cultural Competence Case Study: A woman gives birth at a local hospital to her fourth child. She does not speak English, nor does she appear to have any social supports.



Visually **map out** each criterion and the questions/requirements to understand whether what you're asking accurately reflects what you want in a provider/vendor.

Also consider **using case studies** or **asking for specific examples** that demonstrate past experiences to get responses that go beyond repeating the RFP's goals.

Small fixes add up to a big impact

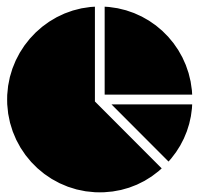
Instead of...



Asking for a long narrative response – an essay.

Let's try...

A case study or multiple short answer responses – a questionnaire.



Mixing responses with budget requirements and additional materials.

How about...

Creating three separate submission templates: response sheet, budget template, and checklist for additional materials.



Letting past RFPs determine your attachments.

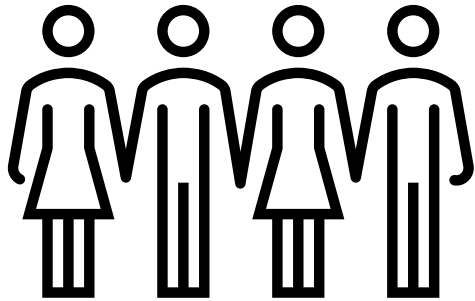
Or we can consider...

Having our goals, SOW, and specifications determine our attachments.

What else can we do to make the process simpler? Drop your ideas in the chat

Then identify the right evaluators

While selecting individuals to evaluate proposals, consider:



- **Expertise:** Evaluators should be subject matter experts in the service area or project being procured or should have related or transferrable expertise.
- **Diversity of perspectives:** In addition to the government project manager, and a procurement official, include front-line staff, residents, and staff from partner agencies or other local governments.
- **The right number of evaluators:** Procurements usually have 3-5 evaluators, and many governments like to have an odd number of evaluators in the event there is a need to break a tie.
- **Impartiality:** Evaluators should have no perceived or apparent conflicts that would influence their evaluation.
- **Availability:** To maintain consistency, the same group should be prepared to participate throughout the evaluation.

Evaluation Process: Scoring and Debriefs

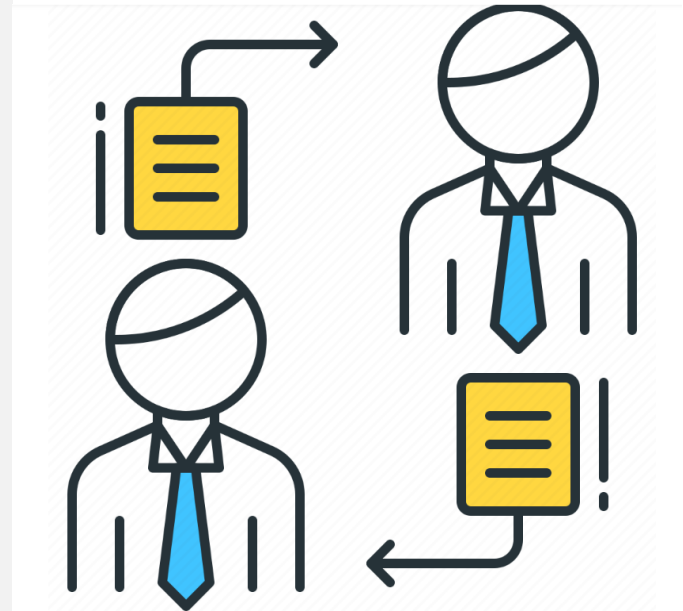
Prepare evaluators by briefing them in advance

Help them understand:

- The RFP goals, objectives, and scope of work
- The evaluation approach and criteria
- Their role as evaluators

To keep your evaluation moving, try the following:

- Ask evaluators to provide feedback on the RFP draft.
- Book dates well in advance to brief evaluators and conduct the evaluation.
- Take care of administrative requirements upfront.



Have a plan for discussing and scoring proposals



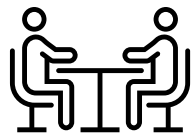
1. Conduct an evaluator orientation to walk through tools and processes, go over expectations, and level-set knowledge. Not all evaluators will start with the same understanding of a service or good.



2. Do some practice scoring exercises to help calibrate scores between evaluators beforehand.



3. Provide a point of contact for evaluators to support them as questions arise.



4. Structure and facilitate the scoring discussion meetings to ensure fairness and mitigate biases.

Then run evaluation meetings that are fair, impartial, and inclusive



- Each evaluator brings a **completed draft score** sheet to the evaluation meeting.
- **Most-junior evaluator speaks first**, stating scores by category and discussing rationale.
- Repeat for all evaluators.
- Evaluators **discuss perspectives and difference in opinions** that might be the result of differing expertise.
- Each evaluator can **change or confirm individual scores** based upon the discussion.
- Scores are **automatically averaged** in the evaluation toolkit.
- The proposal(s) with the **highest combined score(s)** are recommended for selection.

We have a winner! But what about the other proposals?

Post-award debriefs

- Debriefs are short, optional meetings between procurement staff and unsuccessful proposers to offer guidance for future RFPs.
- Clearly advertise the opportunity to debrief and make it available to all unsuccessful proposers.
- It's a great way to promote a customer service mindset and encourage proposers to pursue other opportunities.

During the debrief:

- Treat proposers fairly and consistently, while setting them up for success in the future.
- Provide constructive feedback to the proposer about their own proposal. Do not share information about other proposers.
- Help the proposer feel encouraged to propose again.
- Ask for feedback on the RFP and solicitation process to make future improvements.
- Log a written record outlining the details of the debrief discussion in the RFP file.

Contract Award and Launch

You've awarded the contract to a provider – now what?

Contract award is just the beginning! To get results, you need to establish trust and rapport with your vendor so you can:



Negotiate terms



Track progress



Address challenges



Celebrate success



Monitor and mitigate risk



Determine whether this is a vendor to work with again



Don't be like the fish in *Finding Nemo* – have a plan!

Negotiating with your vendor – what's in your control?

So much of negotiation is identifying what factors – given WIOA requirements – you actually can adjust with a provider.

Not in Your Control

- WIOA-required service delivery standards and guidelines
- WIOA-required performance metrics
- Provider's availability in a given service region

In Your Control

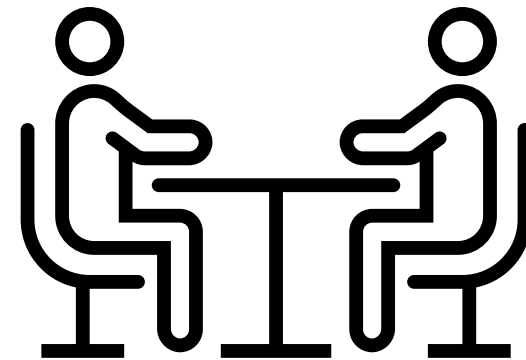
- **Cost and contract length**
- **Invoicing and payment:** how are payments delivered and how often?
- **Additional performance metrics:** what are non-WIOA required metrics you want to track? How often?
- **Governance and role delegation:** Who is responsible for what part of the contract? Who makes the final decisions for different aspects of service design and delivery?
- **Communication:** How do you check in with a provider and how often? What do you discuss?

As you finalize a contract with a vendor, what are other terms you consider? Put your ideas in the chat.

The key to contract management – communication!

Healthy, open communication between you and your vendor is critical to realizing your goals. Before your first meeting, you should determine:

- **Frequency:** how often do you want to meet with the vendor (quarterly, monthly)?
- **Method:** how do you want to meet with the vendor (site visits, Zoom)?
- **Content:** what do you want to discuss?



When we have our first meeting, what should we cover?

1. Vision of success

- Both parties are aligned on the purpose, goals and objectives of contract.
 - Joint awareness of what could impact success.
-

2. Clear sense of roles and responsibilities

- It is clear what the jurisdiction will retain responsibility for and what support the jurisdiction will provide.
-

3. Shared materials for getting vendor up to speed

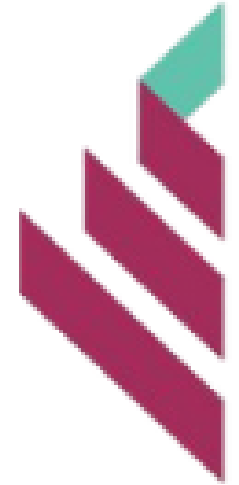
- Provider has the information necessary to do their job well, including transition materials, background, data access, and/or program history.
-

4. Tone of open communication and partnership

- Establish a productive relationship and tone early, get to know provider's team.
-

5. Familiarity with risks and contract requirements

- Outline and discuss risks and mitigation plan.
- Vendors know key dates, deliverables, payment schedules, and contract requirements.



WDBCO Performance Pilot

February 15, 2023

Kier Scott | Policy and Performance Manager, Workforce Development Board of Central Ohio

Central-Ohio Performance Pilot

Purpose

- Gather enough data to test assumptions
- Gives us the ability to troubleshoot and refine processes
- Gather more data to adjust baselines in accordance with our local performance goals
- Gives us enough time to acclimate and teach local providers

Process

- Providers were given a desk aid
- Providers were also given a performance-tracking tool
- Invoice was adjusted to account for the change in process
- Quarterly submissions of the performance tool
- Quarterly performance centers
- On-going technical assistance

Performance Metrics

- Youth Employed in a High Priority Occupation, post-secondary education, or Military
- Youth Earning \$15 or over
- Youth who complete work experiences in their career pathway
- Youth that enters an apprenticeship
- Youth that successfully complete or start a pre-apprenticeship
- Successful Individual Training Account (ITA) Completions
- High-school seniors who obtain a High School Diploma or equivalent

Goals

- Provide more opportunities that lead to more substantial outcomes
- Prioritize clients
- Indirectly/directly increase local WIOA common measures
- Meet the needs of the local economy/region
- Meet the goals of our strategic plan as an organization

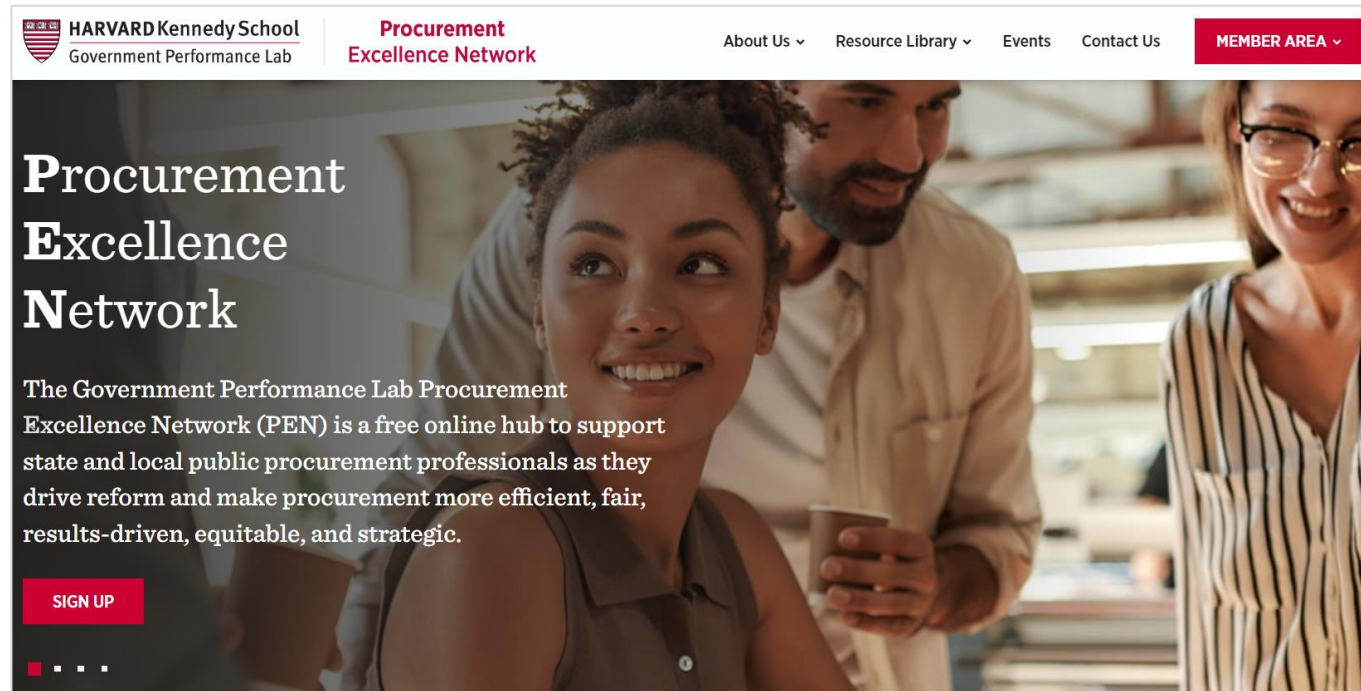
Questions? Comments?

Type your questions in the chat, and we'll answer them live!
Feel free to use office hours with GPL staff to workshop
RFPs in your jurisdiction.

Thank you!

APPENDIX

What is the Procurement Excellence Network?



Website Offerings

- Resource Library
- Community Conversations
- Member Portal and Directory

Non-Website Offerings

- Live Virtual Events
- Office Hours
- Newsletter

[GPLPEN.HKS.HARVARD.EDU](https://gplpen.hks.harvard.edu)


The **Procurement Excellence Network** is a community for procurement professionals who know procurement is a tool for effecting lasting change, a place where innovators and change-makers in state and local government can come together to share best practices, find resources, and refine their craft.

Opportunities to customize your evaluation approach

Step	Key Questions
Identify evaluators	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who has the right expertise, perspective, affiliations, and availability to evaluate proposals?• How can you include the voices and perspectives of individuals who will work most closely with the selected vendor?
Determine what information you need from proposers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Based on your evaluation criteria, what information do you need from proposers to understand whether a proposal is a good fit? Will a template help you get this information in a standard way?• Will it be more efficient for the government, or for proposers, to conduct the evaluation in stages?
Create tools for evaluators to make structured and consistent decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How will evaluators score proposals against evaluation criteria?
Prepare evaluators	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What information do evaluators need to make objective evaluation decisions?

Resource Library Topics


PROCESS EFFICIENCY

 EFFICIENT & FAIR

Speeding up, simplifying, and standardizing the steps in the procurement process

[VIEW RESOURCES](#)


DATA & TRANSPARENCY

 EFFICIENT & FAIR

Using data to increase transparency, identify cost savings, and improve procurement operations

[VIEW RESOURCES](#)


SOLICITATION PLANNING, WRITING, & EVALUATION

 RESULTS-DRIVEN

Conducting market research, drafting outcomes-focused solicitations and evaluation criteria

[VIEW RESOURCES](#)


CONTRACT MANAGEMENT & VENDOR PERFORMANCE

 RESULTS-DRIVEN

Improving outcomes for residents by better managing contracts and evaluating vendor performance

[VIEW RESOURCES](#)


VENDOR DIVERSITY & OUTREACH

 EQUITABLE

Correcting disparities to increase vendor diversity by understanding barriers and setting equity goals

[VIEW RESOURCES](#)


DELIVERING CONTRACTED SERVICES EQUITABLY

 EQUITABLE

Understanding if and why contracted services are not being provided equitably to different populations

[VIEW RESOURCES](#)


COLLABORATING WITH INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

 STRATEGIC

Elevating procurement's strategic value through staff collaboration and leadership buy-in

[VIEW RESOURCES](#)

TRAINING & CAPACITY-BUILDING

 STRATEGIC

Building procurement knowledge, capacity, and skills by leveraging staff and vendor training

[VIEW RESOURCES](#)

Example Resources

Solicitation Getting Started Toolkit

- This toolkit includes three tools you can use to shift towards more proactive engagement with other departments:
 - A procurement intake form
 - A kickoff meeting slide deck
 - An RFP getting started worksheet



Assessing & Tracking Vendor Performance

- Setting up a vendor performance evaluation system can enable governments to track important performance data over time.
- This how-to guide will help you get started in setting up a vendor performance evaluation system in your government.



Process Mapping 101

- This slide deck is a resource you can review at your own pace that covers the mechanics of process mapping and how it can be an asset to your procurement transformation efforts.
- The appendix includes sample slides and notes you can use for your own process mapping sessions.



Getting Started on your RFP

Consider the following questions as you plan for and prepare to write your RFP.

Solicitation Overview	Problem Statement	What problem is the procurement intended to address? What can we share about past or current efforts to solve it?	SOW	Incentive Structure	What contract and payment structure best aligns provider incentives with cost-effective performance? Are there opportunities to link payments to results?
	Outcome Goals	What outcome goals is the department/agency trying to make progress on? What is the gap between where we are today and where we want to be?		Performance	Metrics
	Target Population	Who is the target population, or intended users, for this product or service? Are there equity or access concerns?	Evaluation		Contract Management
Scope of Work	Scope of Work	What elements of the scope of work are required to realize our outcome goals, comply with the law, and align with agency priorities?		Evaluation	Scoring Criteria
	Innovation	Where could the scope allow greater flexibility and opportunities for innovation? Can we shift the focus to “what” rather than “how?”	Risks		What are the biggest risks to the success of the procurement? How can these risks be mitigated?

Risks of (poor) proposal evaluation

- Flashy, well-written proposals may make organizations look more qualified than they are
- Otherwise strong proposals may be ruled out for deviating from technical requirements, like formatting
- Proposals may not include key information that is necessary to make award decisions
- Evaluators may be affected by biases or conflicts of interest

The ultimate risk in any evaluation process is ***selecting a vendor who fails to deliver on the goals of the RFP.***