



Stimulus Learning Series: Using Procurement to Advance Innovation

Crafting successful, results-driven RFPs

August 10, 2021

Introductions

Responding to open answer questions

Type into the chat: Tell us your name, your location, your organization, and one thing you are interested in learning today.

Agenda

1. Procurement: a critical government function

1. RFP writing deep dive

- a. Information Gathering to Inform your RFP
- b. Problem Statements and Goals
- c. Metrics and Contract Management

1. Hearing from you: How are you thinking about procurement at this moment?

Practicing with our interactive tools

Responding to poll questions

Pick many poll: Have you attended any of our prior calls in the stimulus learning series? (select all that apply)

Pick one poll: Which role within the procurement process best describes you? (select one)

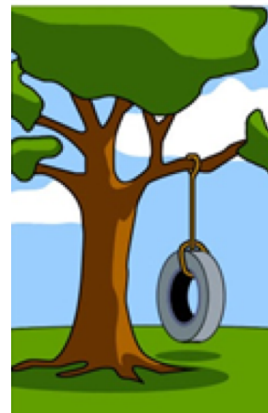
Sound familiar?



*How you
explained
it.*



*How the
contractor
built it.*



*What you
really
needed.*

We help drive procurement improvements across four areas

Results-driven contracting (RDC) is a set of strategies designed to help entities use procurement and contracting to achieve better outcomes for residents.



Transforms the procurement process to be efficient, inviting, and transparent



Improves the outcomes of contracted programs, products, and services



Elevates and resources procurement as a strategic function



Invests in equity to improve economic mobility and achieve better outcomes for historically marginalized populations

Governments face a variety of challenges when drafting RFPs

Common Challenges

RFP lacks a description of the jurisdiction's overarching goals or desired end outcome.

Team rushes through writing the RFP to get it out the door fast.

Limited information gathering or market research occurs, or RFP is simply recycled from the last time it was issued.

The Scope of Work is overly prescriptive and includes onerous requirements.

Impact

Vendors' responses don't align with what the jurisdiction actually needs.

RFP release is delayed or RFP must be reissued because of errors or missing info.

The RFP lacks emerging best practices, vendors' or clients' perspectives.

Few quality proposals are received, or vendors feel limited in their ability to be innovative.

Governments face a variety of challenges when drafting RFPs

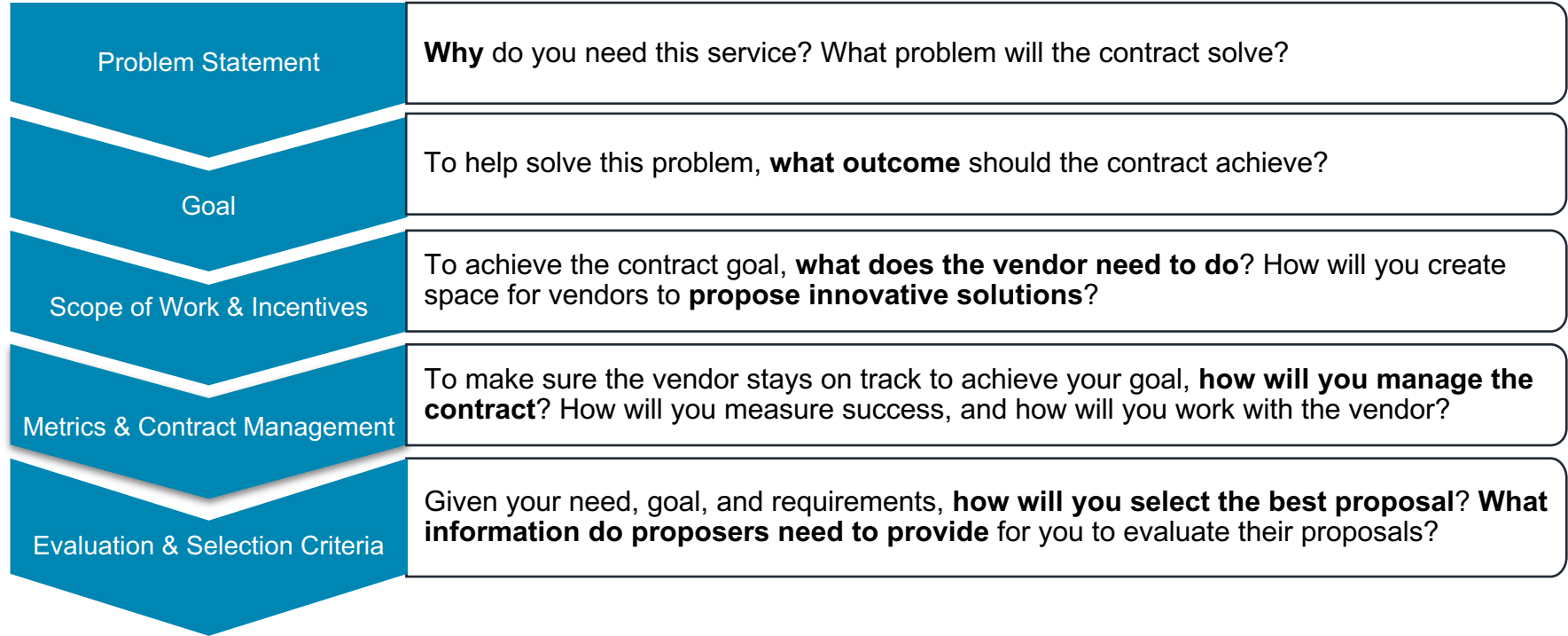
Common Challenges

Impact

Poll: From where you sit, which of these common challenges occurs most frequently in your jurisdiction? (select one)

Type into the chat: Are there other challenges your jurisdiction commonly faces when procuring for services?

To write a results-driven RFP, you need to know....



GPL Guidebook: Crafting a Results-Driven RFP

Our RFP [Guidebook](#) provides a step-by-step approach to improving your highest-priority procurements and producing better results for your residents. It includes tactical advice, worksheets, templates, and examples **across eight modules covering different sections of the RFP.**

Guidebook:
Crafting a
Results-Driven
Request for
Proposals
(RFP)



HARVARD Kennedy School
Government Performance Lab



GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE LAB

Today's focus

Module 1



Module 2



Module 3



Module 4



Module 5



Module 6



Module 7



Module 8



Today, we'll cover four of the most important and high-impact sections of writing a results-driven RFP:

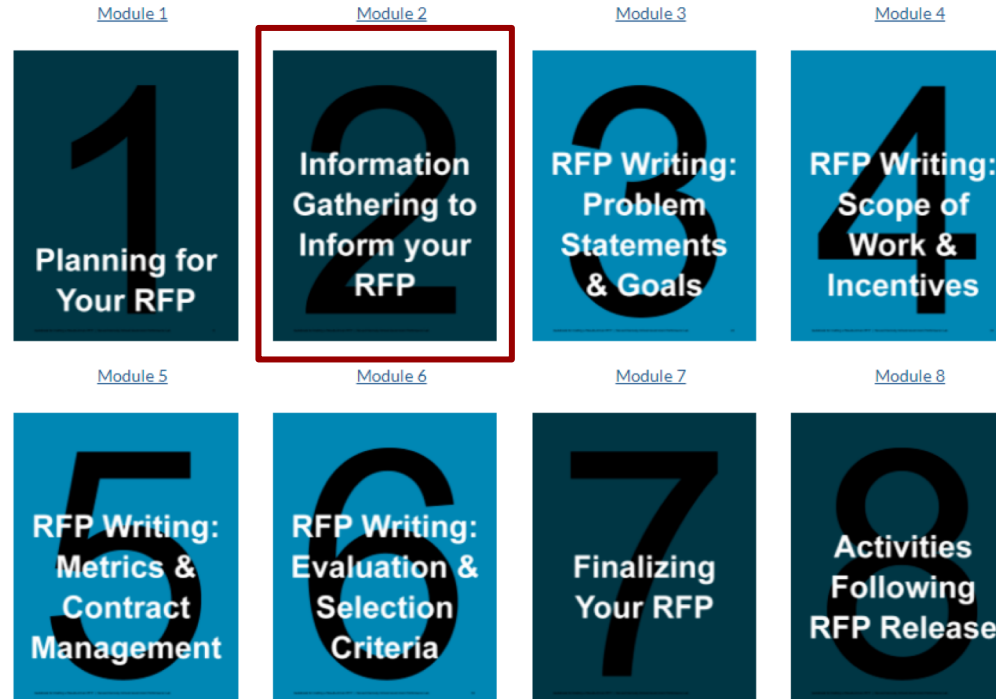
- Information Gathering to Inform your RFP
- Problem Statements & Goals
- Metrics & Contract Management



Hearing from you

Type into the chat: What are the highest priority RFPs that your jurisdiction has coming up this year?

In focus: *“Information Gathering to Inform your RFP”*



Planning for your RFP

Planning includes:

- A. Establishing a well-rounded **project team**
- B. Making a **project plan** with key milestones, timelines, responsibilities
- C. **Gathering information** to inform your solicitation and vendor outreach approach

How can we broadly gather insights during RFP development?



Understand your users to better direct and deliver services

Surveys
Interviews
Co-design



Review past performance to improve effectiveness

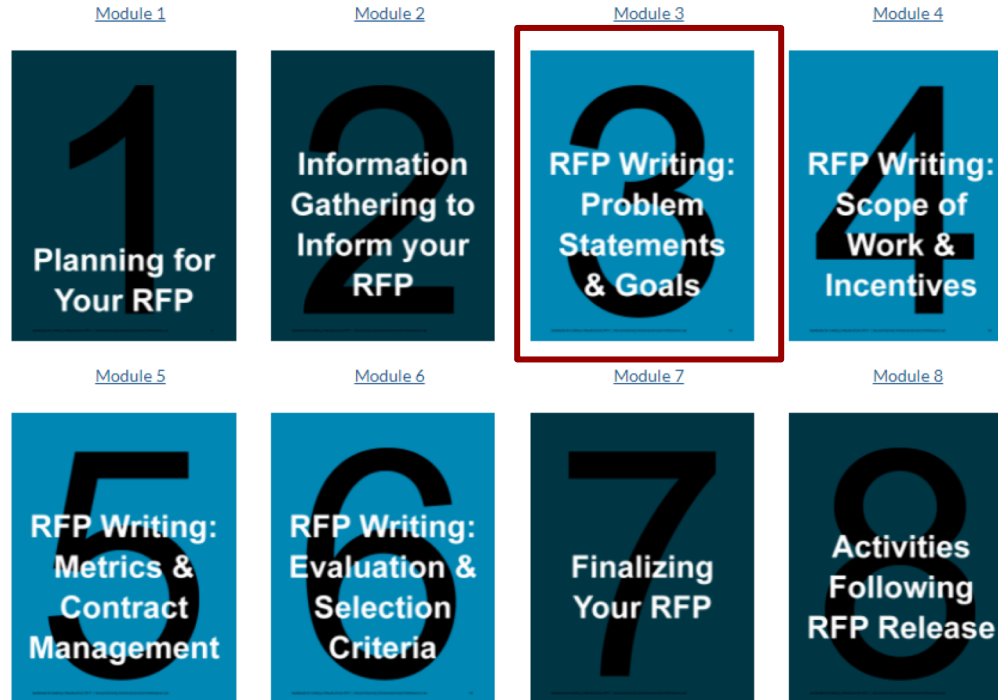
Review past processes
Review program performance data
Interview vendors



Understand what vendors can offer

Internet research
Speak with associations/peer cities
Vendor interviews/focus groups/Requests for Information

In focus: “*Problem Statements & Goals*”



First, set the scene and explain your need



Why do you need the product or service? What problem will the contract solve?

Pro Tips!

- Clearly **explain the gap** between current state and desired future state
- **Identify** key variables and quantify where relevant
- Keep **scope sufficiently focused** to be actionable
- Be **neutral** about possible solutions
- Provide the **right amount of context**. Proposers should understand your context without being overwhelmed.

Example Problem Statements



HVAC Unit: *The HVAC unit currently used in City Hall is outdated and doesn't protect well against dust and allergens.*



Homeless Services: *2,000 people in the County experience homelessness, placing them at increased risk due to COVID-19.*

Example: city homelessness RFP

The goal of Youth Intentional Housing Supports is to quickly house youth experiencing housing insecurity while providing the support needed to **remain stably housed and build a foundation for success in the future. ...**

1. Connects to goal

3. Quantifies key variables

According to the City's Dashboard to End Homelessness, in March 2018 there were **1,227 youth experiencing homelessness in the City**. Of those, 126 were matched to projects and awaiting enrollment, and 45 youth experiencing homelessness were enrolled in projects and awaiting permanent housing. An average of **158 new youth seek support from our system each month, and it takes 144 days from identifying a youth to that youth being housed**.

2. Explains gap with current state

4. Sufficiently focused

In order to reduce these prolonged episodes of homelessness, the Department seeks **to support a menu of housing interventions** for youth that are **developmentally appropriate and quickly deployable**.

5. Remains neutral

Building off your problem statement, draft your goals



What outcome should the contract achieve?

Pro Tips!

Your goal IS NOT to finalize contract or get the cheapest product. Your goal IS the outcome you hope to achieve from the contracted product/service. It should:

- Articulate a **clear vision of success**
- Center on the **“what” instead of “how”** (i.e., outcomes over process)
- Be **actionable** and realistic
- Be **quantifiable**

Example Goal Statements



HVAC Unit: *Improve air quality in City Hall for employees and residents.*



Homeless Services: *Decrease the number of people experiencing homelessness who fall within a COVID-19 high risk category by 25%.*

Taking an outcomes-oriented approach invites innovation

CONVENTIONAL



Taking an outcomes-oriented approach invites innovation

CONVENTIONAL



**BETTER:
WHAT ELSE MIGHT BE OUT
THERE**



Example goal statement makeovers

Not-so-good goal statement	Better goal statement
Provide after-school and summer programs to youth	Improve student academic outcomes by increasing enrollment in after-school and summer programs targeted to youth in grades K-8.
Ensure landscaping and vegetation is watered at least once per week	Reduce overall water use while maintaining plant health.
Provide supportive services run by certified nursing assistants for elderly individuals three times per week.	Enable elderly individuals to safely live at home by providing services that can decrease placements into long-term nursing care by 30%

Example: city IT procurement goal statement

“The procurement of a new fire record management system will help the fire department:

- 1. Reduce response times to resident emergencies** through data analysis of deployment strategies, crew performance, and external impacts to meet the relevant accreditation standards
- 1. Reduce incidents of emergencies** by using data to create targeted community risk reduction programs (e.g. falls per capita)
- 1. Optimize deployment of resources** (human, tech, physical assets) through improved use of data collection to facilitate long-term data-driven decisions
- 1. Meet all regulatory requirements**, including town, state, and national reporting”

In focus: *“Metrics & Contract Management”*

Module 1



Module 2



Module 3



Module 4



Module 5



Module 6



Module 7



Module 8



Extend RFP goals into a plan to manage the contract towards success



Performance Metrics (KPIs): How will you measure progress and assess whether you're on track to achieve your goal?

Pro Tips!

- Clearly **define success**
- Keep it (relatively) **simple** (available to most vendors; can be regularly calculated)
- Balance **outcome and output measures**, including a mix of both
- Identify **data tracking responsibility**, especially when the vendor must provide data
- Leave **room to learn**

Example: city broadband performance metrics

This City released an RFP to procure a contractor to install 60 miles of fiber optics for the City. It outlined its anticipated performance metrics as an attachment to the RFP documents:

“The following metrics represent the City’s proposed approach to defining, measuring, and tracking project success of over the lifetime of the development. The final set of performance metrics will be negotiated by the successful bidder and the City prior to the finalization of an agreement between parties.”

Output Metrics

- On-time start of construction
- On-time completion of fiber pulling
- On-time completion of technical documentation

Outcome Metrics

- On-time site restoration clean-up to City specifications
- Count of community complaints received indicating failure to adhere to contract requirements, disaggregated by neighborhood to monitor equitable impact
- Complaint resolution

Components of a Performance Metrics plan

Metric Name

Metric Definition

Reporting Responsibility

Reporting Frequency

Purpose of Reporting

RFP Goal(s) aligned with Metric

The Guidebook has templates and prompts to get you started

1.4 PLANNING PROMPTS

1. Build a project team matrix, similar to the version below, to identify the internal stakeholders for your RFP project team. We have filled out row one as an example.

INTERNAL STAKEHOLDER ROLES			
Name and position of internal stakeholder	In what areas can this person offer support, critical input, or feedback?	What does this person's capacity look like during the next four months?	Stakeholder role
Example: Jane Martinez, Performance Analyst in the Mayor's Office	Example: Jane would provide helpful input on the performance metrics we develop to monitor the vendor's work.	Example: Jane thinks she can devote 5 hours per month for the next 4 months.	Example: <input type="checkbox"/> RFP drafting team <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Consultant <input type="checkbox"/> Decision-maker <input type="checkbox"/> Supporter

Template for identifying roles

Problem Statements

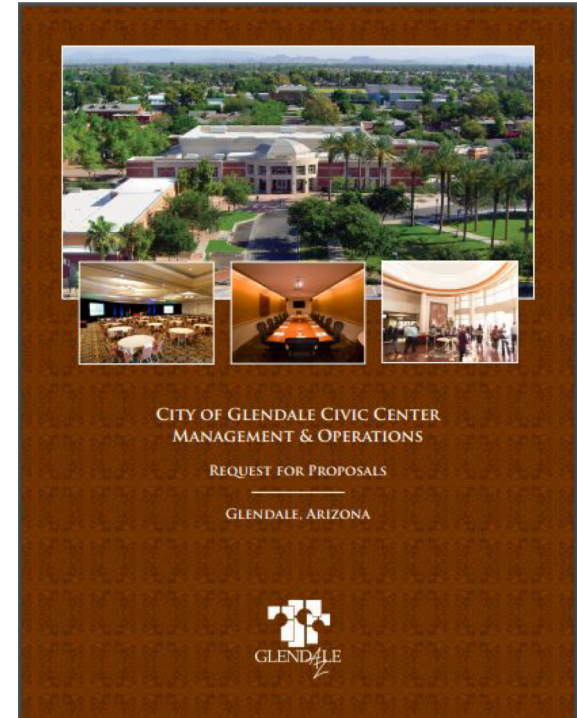
1. Imagine that a friend of yours, who lives in but does not work for your jurisdiction, asks you what problem you are trying to solve with this procurement. In your own words, how would you describe the problem to them?

Example brainstorming question to understand the core problem the contracted service will address

Audience questions and additional tips

Best practices for creating a successful RFP document

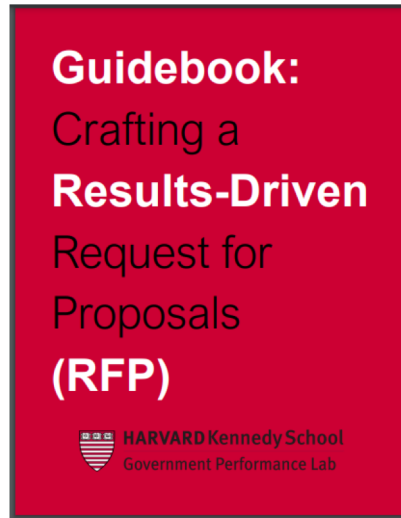
- Place **all project-specific information**, including the Scope of Work, **towards the beginning of the RFP**, and terms and conditions at the end.
- Create a welcoming document: use **easy-to-navigate section headers** and **include a table of contents**
- Use **plain language**, avoiding jargon and agency-specific terminology. Write for humans!
- Use **proposer checklists** to help proposers easily understand what their submittal package should include.



The GPL is here to support you

The GPL provides technical assistance to jurisdictions across the country and has grab-and-go resources like our RFP Guidebook.

This year, we'll be launching a community of procurement reformers in government. If you're interested in receiving support or learning more, reach out to elena_hoffnagle@hks.harvard.edu.



<https://govlab.hks.harvard.edu/guidebook-crafting-results-driven-request-proposals-rfp>



Hearing from you

Pick many poll: What additional topics related to procurement and contracting would you like to learn more about this year?

Pick many poll: What form of support would be most helpful?

Looking ahead: GPL's stimulus learning series

July 9	Benefits & Economic Mobility
July 15	Early Childhood & Families
July 29	<i>Implementation deep-dive:</i> Guaranteed income programs
August 2	Behavioral Health & Housing
August 10	<i>Implementation deep-dive:</i> Using procurement to advance innovation
August 25	Jobs & Economic Development

Questions? Contact Danielle at danielle_cerny@hks.harvard.edu

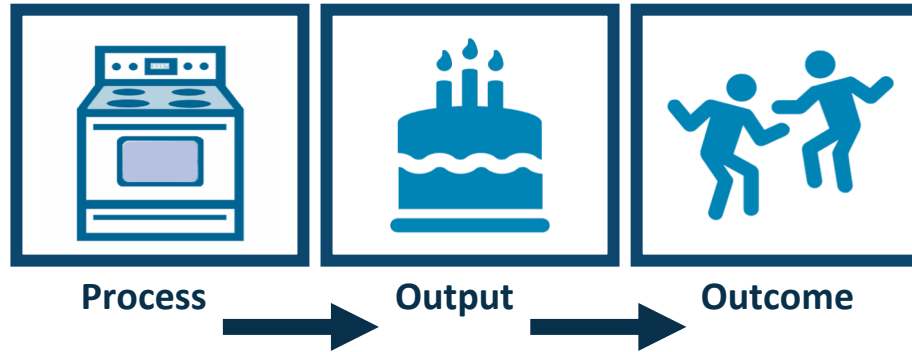
Register for upcoming sessions at: <https://govlab.hks.harvard.edu/stimulus-learning-series>

Appendix

Appendix: make a project plan!

Stage	Activity	Due Date	Responsible	Other Key Stakeholders	Status
Plan	Executive Management approval	Apr 30	Project Manager	Bureau Manager, Director	Complete
	Finalize project budget	May 25	Asst. Director	Director	In Progress
	Draft project plan	May 31	Project Manager	Buyer	In Progress
	Kick-off call with project team	Jun 1	Project Manager	Buyer, City Attorney, Bureau Manager	Not Started
Draft	RFP drafting begins	Jun 2	...	...	Not Started
	Final draft sent for approval	Jul 15	...	...	Not Started
RFP Open	Release RFP	Aug 1	...	...	Not Started
	Deadline for questions	Sep 5	...	...	Not Started
	Responses due	Sep 15	...	...	Not Started
Evaluation & Award	Responsiveness review	Sep 20	...	...	Not Started
	Interviews w/ short list	Oct 12-15	...	...	Not Started
	Decide recommendation for award	Oct 20	...	...	Not Started
Approval & Contracting	Contract negotiations begin	Oct 25	...	...	Not Started
	Contract required	Nov 30	...	...	Not Started

Appendix: output versus outcome metrics/KPIs - use both!



Outputs: measure the operations and activities

- Important to help you track progress and diagnose whether you need to make changes to the program.
- Often available in the short term

Examples: # of clients served, # of miles paved, % of staff trained, # of lights installed each month.

Outcomes: measure the ultimate result

- Important to make sure you're achieving your goal: the reason for doing this service.
- Can be available only in the long term and may be challenging to collect data on

Examples: reductions in unemployment, decreased water usage, resident satisfaction.

Appendix: metrics (or KPIs) root your vendor conversations in hard numbers

Promising trends...

(steps forward)



Help you

- Celebrate success
- Cement best practices
- Shape future programs and services

Concerning trends...

(steps backward or no steps at all)



Help you

- Address challenges
- Troubleshoot problems
- Monitor and mitigate risk

Monitoring trends in your metrics also help you determine whether this is a vendor to work with again!