DRAFTING RESULTS-DRIVEN REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS

THURSDAY JUNE 17, 2021

TODAY'S TRAINING ROADMAP

Value of competitive procurement

Common agency challenges in conducting competitive procurements

Results-driven contracting theory of change

OPM support tools for writing RFPs

Questions and answers

OPM PROCUREMENT REFORM

- Secretary McCaw announced heightened expectations for competitive procurements in August 2019.
- OPM procurement reform team undertaking initiatives to increase competitive procurement with agency help.
- OPM has developed tools and templates to assist agencies with writing RFPs, a key element of competitive procurement.

WHAT IS COMPETITIVE PROCUREMENT?

PROCESS BY WHICH THE STATE LOOKS FOR THE BEST VALUE OPTION TO OBTAIN SERVICES NEEDED

- Solicitation must be public, open, and fair
- Allows agency to choose best solution for services needed
- Request for Proposal process is used to select a vendor

CHAT QUESTION #1

What are the biggest challenges your agency faces in conducting competitive procurements and writing RFPs?

COMMON AGENCY CHALLENGES

- Resource constrained
- Limited procurement experience
- Difficult to balance different stakeholder perspectives
- Lack of strategic input on key decisions
- Procurement can be a rushed, compliance-driven activity prioritizing process over outcomes with little space for innovation

WHAT CAN GO WRONG IN PROCUREMENT?

TYPICAL PROCUREMENT ACTIVITY	RESULT
RFP didn’t provide a strong problem statement or goals explaining the desired end outcome	Vendor responses weren't aligned with what the government really needed
Team rushed through RFP writing to get it out the door fast	RFP release was delayed or needed to be reissued because key components weren’t met
Agencies didn’t plan enough in advance to conduct competitive procurement	Poor-performing contracts keep getting renewed
Agencies don’t evaluate vendor performance	Departments aren't sure if services are meeting resident and government needs

PROCUREMENT RED FLAGS

WHEN SHOULD MY AGENCY TAKE A DEEPER LOOK AT OUR PROCESSES?

- Contracts renewed year after year
- Previous solicitations recycled with only minor changes
- Individual(s) in charge of writing the “meat” of the RFP are not the actual subject matter expert
- RFP and resulting contract seem divorced or misaligned
- Little or no competition on RFPs, same vendors/providers getting awarded
- Outcomes from service or program are poor or unknown

RESULTS-DRIVEN RFP COMPONENTS

Component	Key Questions
A clear **problem statement** with defined **outcome goals**	What are you trying to achieve? In what ways do you want to modify the status quo?
A defined **target/user population**	Who are the intended recipients or users of this program or service? What are their needs?
A **scope of services** description that invites innovation	How does the RFP create space for vendors/providers to propose solutions that will help achieve the outcome goals?
Performance metrics and a **plan for managing performance** during the contract term	How will you measure whether the procured program or service is making progress toward the goal?
A purposeful **evaluation and selection process**	How does the selection process elevate the proposals most likely to achieve the stated outcome goals?
Aligned **incentives**	Where appropriate, how does the contract payment structure encourage the vendor/provider to achieve the stated outcome goals?

CHAT QUESTION #2

What are RFP examples or sections that you felt were particularly effective? What parts do you wish you had more guidance or support for?

RESULTS-DRIVEN RFP WRITING THEORY OF CHANGE

RFPs contain information applicants need to craft good responses

Responses aligned with what residents need

Proposals most likely to improve results are identified and selected

Contracts reinforce improving results using expectations, incentives, and requirements

Government and **vendors/providers** work together to improve results

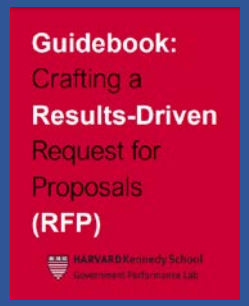
OVERVIEW OF OPM SUPPORT

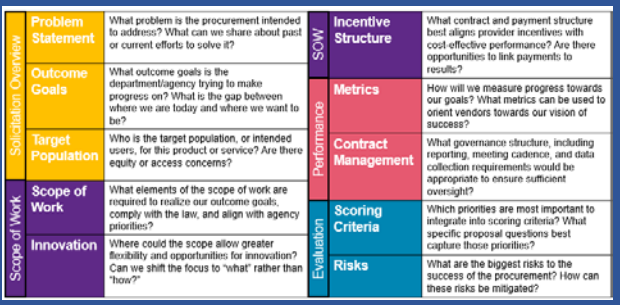
- OPM expects agencies to increase their percentage of competitive procurements
- Agencies are not alone, OPM Finance is a partner in supporting more competitive procurements
- OPM has developed several tools and support options to assist agencies in writing RFPs

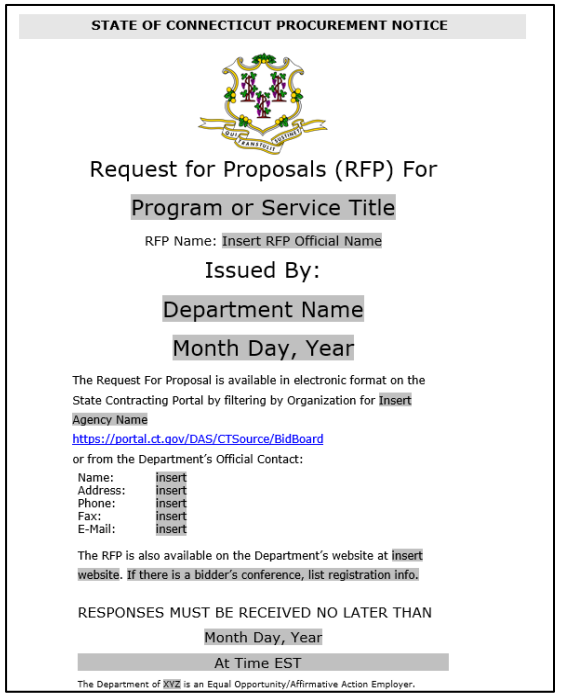
① POS and PSA RFP Templates

② Summer and Fall RFP Writing Sprints

③ Lighter-Touch Technical Assistance







STATE OF CONNECTICUT PROCUREMENT NOTICE

Request for Proposals (RFP) For

Program or Service Title

RFP Name: Insert RFP Official Name

Issued By:

Department Name

Month Day, Year

The Request For Proposal is available in electronic format on the State Contracting Portal by filtering by Organization for Insert Agency Name

https://portal.ct.gov/DAS/CTSource/BidBoard

or from the Department's Official Contact:

Name: insert
Address: insert
Phone: insert
Fax: insert
E-Mail: insert

The RFP is also available on the Department's website at insert website. If there is a bidder's conference, list registration info.

RESPONSES MUST BE RECEIVED NO LATER THAN

Month Day, Year

At Time EST

The Department of XYZ is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer.

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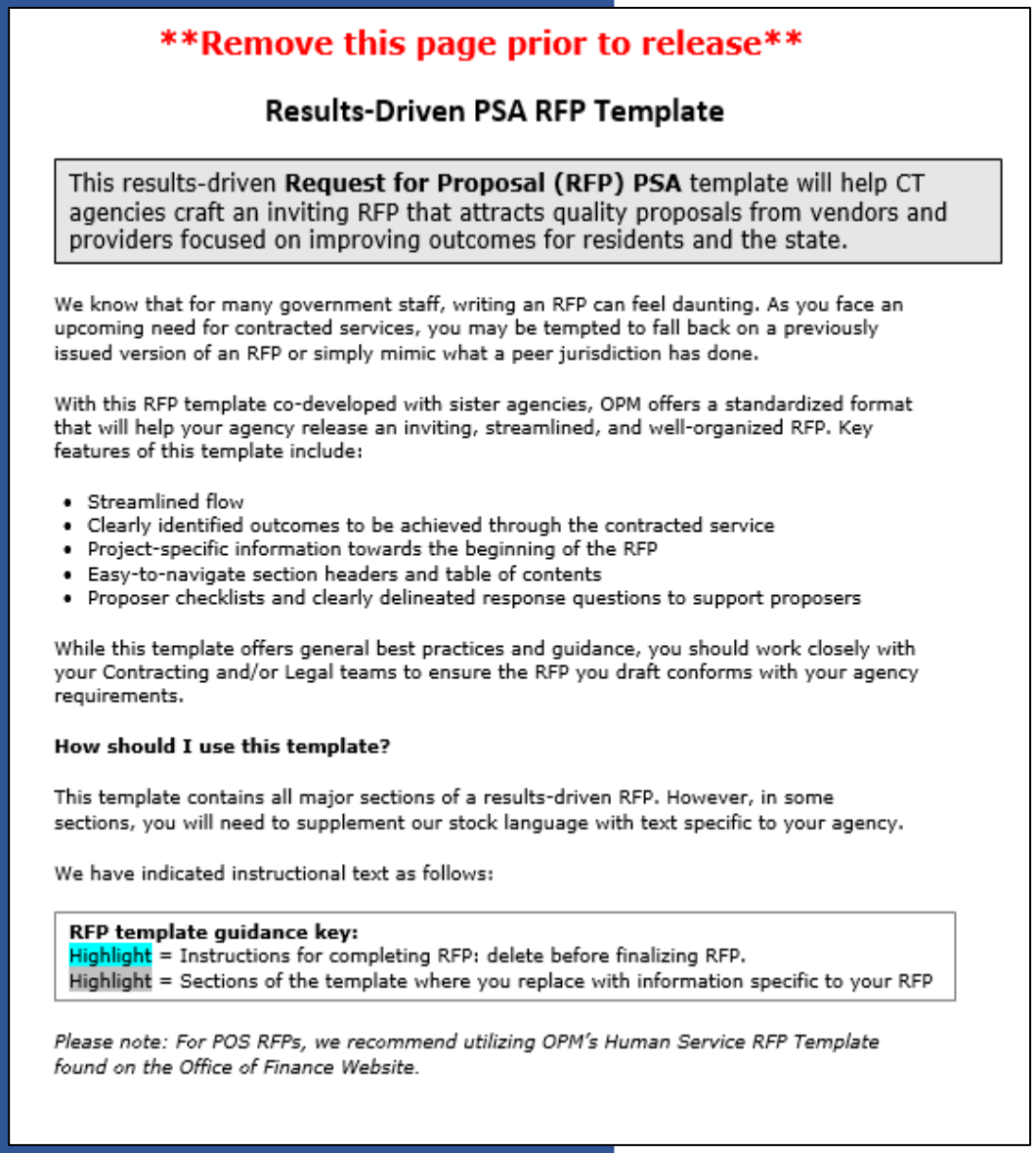
POS AND PSA RFP TEMPLATES

CO-DEVELOPED WITH SISTER AGENCIES AND PILOTED ON SEVERAL RECENT RFPS

- Templates make RFP writing more efficient for government staff
- Creates more standardized experience for vendors/providers
- Still leaves flexibility for agencies to customize
- Both templates are very similar with slight modifications to make POS template more human service oriented

The templates are still iterative and OPM welcomes feedback as agencies utilize for their upcoming solicitations



Remove this page prior to release

Results-Driven PSA RFP Template

This results-driven **Request for Proposal (RFP) PSA** template will help CT agencies craft an inviting RFP that attracts quality proposals from vendors and providers focused on improving outcomes for residents and the state.

We know that for many government staff, writing an RFP can feel daunting. As you face an upcoming need for contracted services, you may be tempted to fall back on a previously issued version of an RFP or simply mimic what a peer jurisdiction has done.

With this RFP template co-developed with sister agencies, OPM offers a standardized format that will help your agency release an inviting, streamlined, and well-organized RFP. Key features of this template include:

- Streamlined flow
- Clearly identified outcomes to be achieved through the contracted service
- Project-specific information towards the beginning of the RFP
- Easy-to-navigate section headers and table of contents
- Proposer checklists and clearly delineated response questions to support proposers

While this template offers general best practices and guidance, you should work closely with your Contracting and/or Legal teams to ensure the RFP you draft conforms with your agency requirements.

How should I use this template?

This template contains all major sections of a results-driven RFP. However, in some sections, you will need to supplement our stock language with text specific to your agency.

We have indicated instructional text as follows:

RFP template guidance key:
Highlight = Instructions for completing RFP: delete before finalizing RFP.
Highlight = Sections of the template where you replace with information specific to your RFP

Please note: For POS RFPs, we recommend utilizing OPM's Human Service RFP Template found on the Office of Finance Website.

RFP TEMPLATE INSTRUCTION PAGE

The first page of both templates offers instructions on how to utilize the template

- Much of the document includes **boilerplate text** that does not need to be edited
- The **key** highlights parts that require **direct inputs** versus **instructions** for the RFP drafting team that should be removed prior to RFP release
- The RFP drafting team should still **work with their contracting/legal teams** to ensure **adherence to agency specific guidelines**

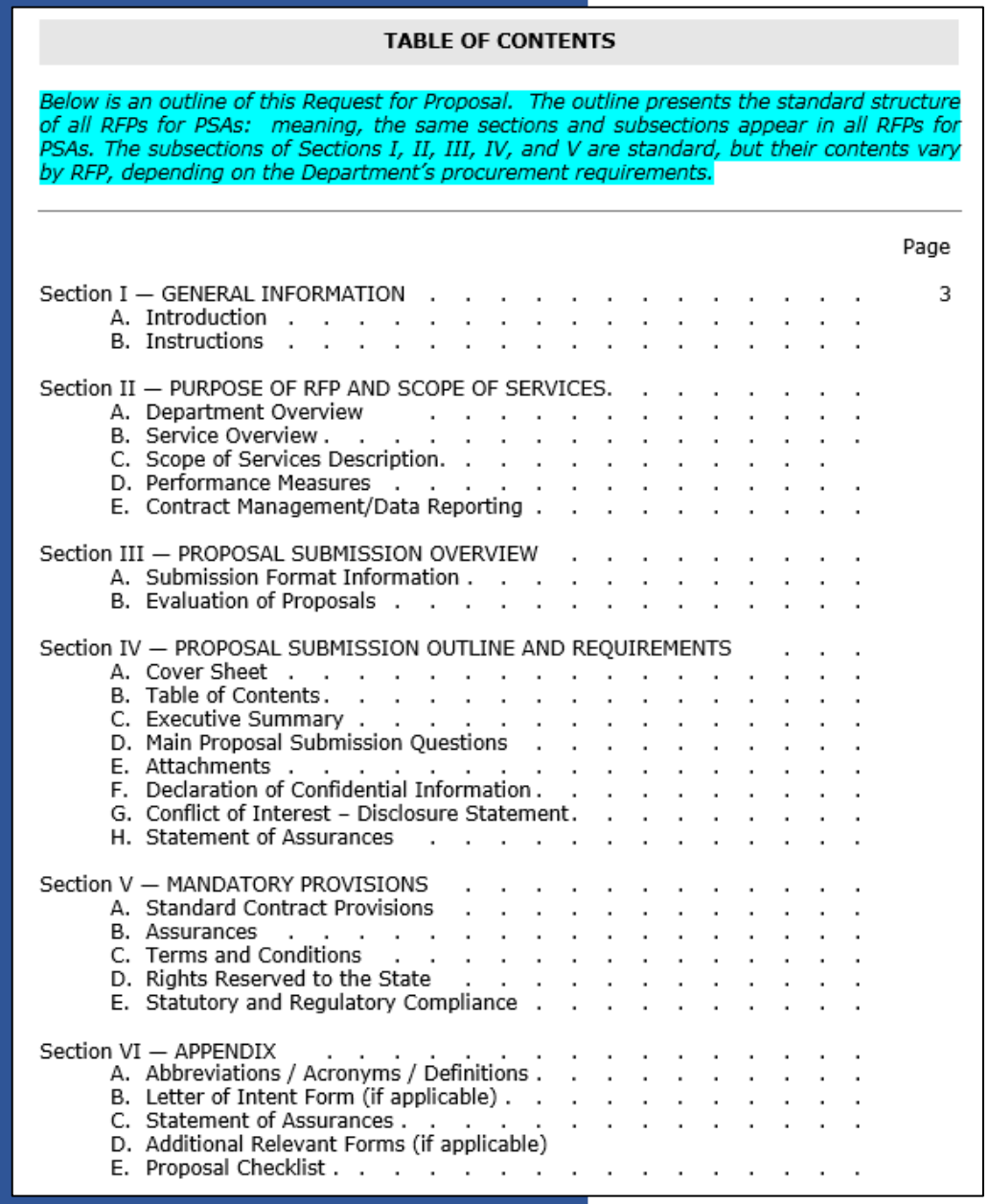


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Below is an outline of this Request for Proposal. The outline presents the standard structure of all RFPs for PSAs: meaning, the same sections and subsections appear in all RFPs for PSAs. The subsections of Sections I, II, III, IV, and V are standard, but their contents vary by RFP, depending on the Department's procurement requirements.

Page

Section I — GENERAL INFORMATION 3
A. Introduction
B. Instructions

Section II — PURPOSE OF RFP AND SCOPE OF SERVICES.
A. Department Overview
B. Service Overview
C. Scope of Services Description.
D. Performance Measures
E. Contract Management/Data Reporting

Section III — PROPOSAL SUBMISSION OVERVIEW
A. Submission Format Information
B. Evaluation of Proposals

Section IV — PROPOSAL SUBMISSION OUTLINE AND REQUIREMENTS
A. Cover Sheet
B. Table of Contents.
C. Executive Summary
D. Main Proposal Submission Questions
E. Attachments
F. Declaration of Confidential Information.
G. Conflict of Interest – Disclosure Statement.
H. Statement of Assurances

Section V — MANDATORY PROVISIONS
A. Standard Contract Provisions
B. Assurances
C. Terms and Conditions
D. Rights Reserved to the State
E. Statutory and Regulatory Compliance

Section VI — APPENDIX
A. Abbreviations / Acronyms / Definitions
B. Letter of Intent Form (if applicable)
C. Statement of Assurances
D. Additional Relevant Forms (if applicable)
E. Proposal Checklist

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- **The template organization** is structured for the **most relevant content to be up front**
- The template **leads with introductory information** and **logistical details** about the RFP
- This is then followed by a **description of the scope of service** and **proposal submission requirements**
- **Mandatory** and **boilerplate information** is moved to the **back of the document**

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW VS SERVICE OVERVIEW

Department Overview
BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR AGENCY
This can be standard across multiple RFPs, but typically **includes language on the agency vision, values, and organization**
Depending on the RFP, additional detail may be given about the **specific division or program team** involved in **implementing or overseeing the services**

Service Overview
DESCRIBE THE PROBLEM YOU ARE TRYING TO SOLVE
Highlight **specific outcome goals**, which should be focused and quantifiable to emphasize priorities
Can also include **additional key insights** from **strategic planning effort** such as the **vision for a successful service** and/or **priorities for improvement** if this is a re-procurement

SCOPE OF SERVICE DESCRIPTION VS PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Scope of Service Description	Proposal Requirements
EXPLAIN THE PRIMARY SERVICES AND TASKS TO BE PERFORMED	HIGHLIGHT ALL MATERIALS NECESSARY FOR A COMPLETE RESPONSE TO THE RFP
May have **multiple subsections** that are **structured by categories/types of work** the respondent will perform	May include a **cover sheet**, **executive summary, primary proposal questions, supplementary attachments**, disclosure statements, declarations of confidential information, and a statement of assurances
Do not include specific response questions in this section.	**Primary proposal questions** should be **organized numerically by category or** as a **separate response workbook**
A scope of service description is **different from a templated scope of services** approved by the AG's Office **or a historical contract.** The purpose of this section is to **use non-legal language to describe service expectations** for respondents.	Include instructions on how to submit proposals. **Electronic submissions with length limits are encouraged.**

PERFORMANCE MEASURES VS SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS

Performance Measures
HELP VENDORS UNDERSTAND OUTCOME AND OUTPUT METRICS
Performance measures should **include benchmarks** and **targets** when known, or provide a directional goal
Highlight any **anticipated performance incentives** such as performance payments for achieving certain goals
These **measures** are a **tool for contract management** that don't result in contract breach if unmet

Service Level Agreements
CONTRACTUAL REQUIREMENTS THAT THE VENDOR MUST MEET
Often used for IT services to **highlight service expectations** on items such as response times, but can also be expanded to all services when appropriate
Should be **included in the scope of services description section**
Less of a tool for performance monitoring and more **must-have service requirements**

ADDITIONAL TIPS AND TRICKS

- Some **templated content may change** in the coming months given **recent legislative changes.**

- The **contract management section** offers your agency the opportunity to highlight how **program/contracting staff** will **collaborate with vendors/providers to drive improvements in service delivery.**

- The **evaluation criteria section** offers **two options** for **displaying information** depending on agency preference for disclosing details.

- The **proposal checklist section** should be customized for each RFP with the goal of **making the response process easier** for respondents.

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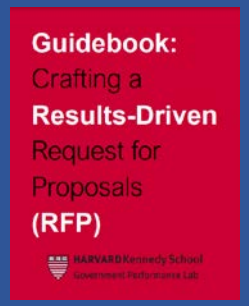
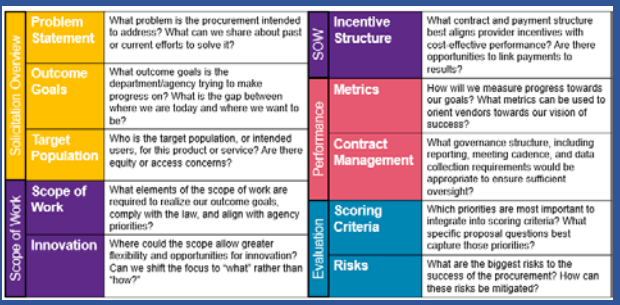




WHAT IS A RESULTS-DRIVEN CONTRACTING SPRINT?

- Brings together an RFP writing team through **structured weekly workshops** and "homework" assignments to allow for more scalable technical assistance.
- Encourages **cross-team collaboration** within the state both between procurement and user agency staff, as well as across agencies.
- Offers **a standardized approach** to generate the building blocks of an outcomes-focused RFP.

Agencies interested in participating should reach out to Colin Erhardt or Lars Benson.

SPRINT TOPICS AND SAMPLE SCHEDULE

Each 90-minute weekly session covers a different RFP section. Sessions can be extended or consolidated to fit agency timelines.

Weekly schedules mix in-session brainstorming with out-of-session RFP prep and drafting.

Week	Sprint Activity
1	Official Sprint Introduction
2	Workshop 1: Problem Statements & Goals
3	Workshop 2: Scope of Work
4	Workshop 3: Metrics & Contract Management
5	Workshop 4: Evaluation Criteria and Proposal Questions
6	Workshop 5: RFP Assembly

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Prep assignment due at 6:00pm	Day off	Participate in Sprint activity from 11:00am-12:30pm	Receive prep assignment by 10am	Work on prep assignment

HOW CAN A SPRINT BENEFIT THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS?

- **Improves stakeholder communication** within and across agencies
- Provides forcing mechanism on **key RFP writing decisions** and results in a **more efficient RFP development process**.
- Creates a **learning environment** that empowers staff to adopt new approaches and **apply methodologies to future procurements**.
- **Engages senior government leadership** in procurement process to elevate its importance as **a strategic tool** to advance goals.

OPM'S LIGHT-TOUCH RFP SUPPORT OPTIONS

- The RFP Getting Started Worksheet
- The GPL's RFP Guidebook
- Ad-hoc support from the OPM-Finance team:
  - Julia Fusfeld, OPM-Finance (Julia.Fusfeld@ct.gov)
  - Colin Erhardt and Lars Benson, GPL Fellows (Colin.Erhardt@ct.gov and Lars.Benson@ct.gov)

THE GETTING STARTED RFP WORKSHEET

The Getting Started Worksheet condenses the RDC sprint approach into a single 90-minute group exercise and slide deck. Teams begin outlining and creating their RFP by collaboratively answering the questions in the deck.

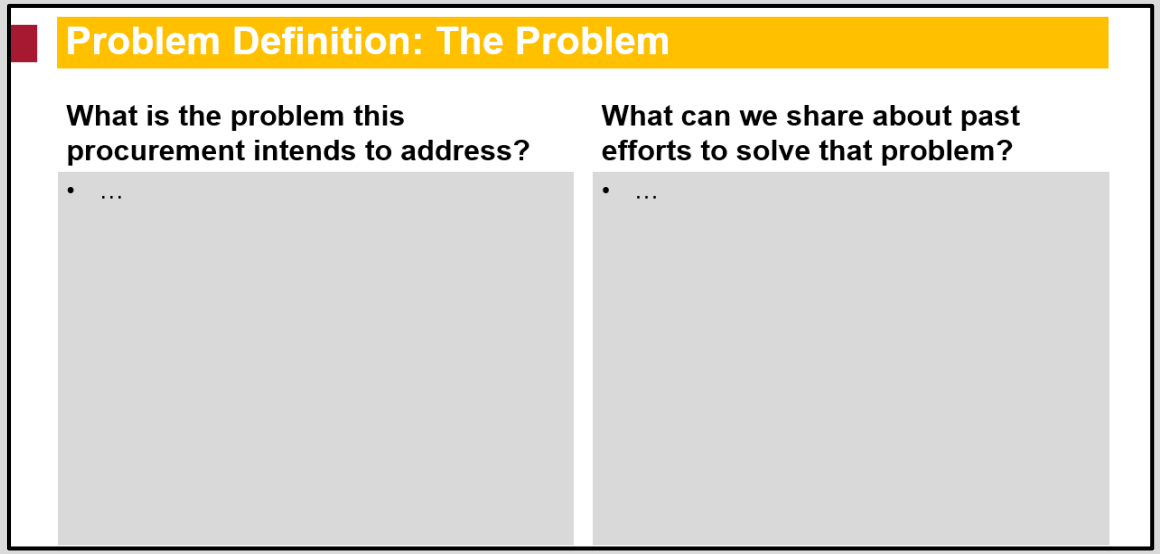
The Getting Started Worksheet's 4 topics

- Solicitation Overview
- Scope of Work
- Metrics and Contract Management
- Proposal Evaluation

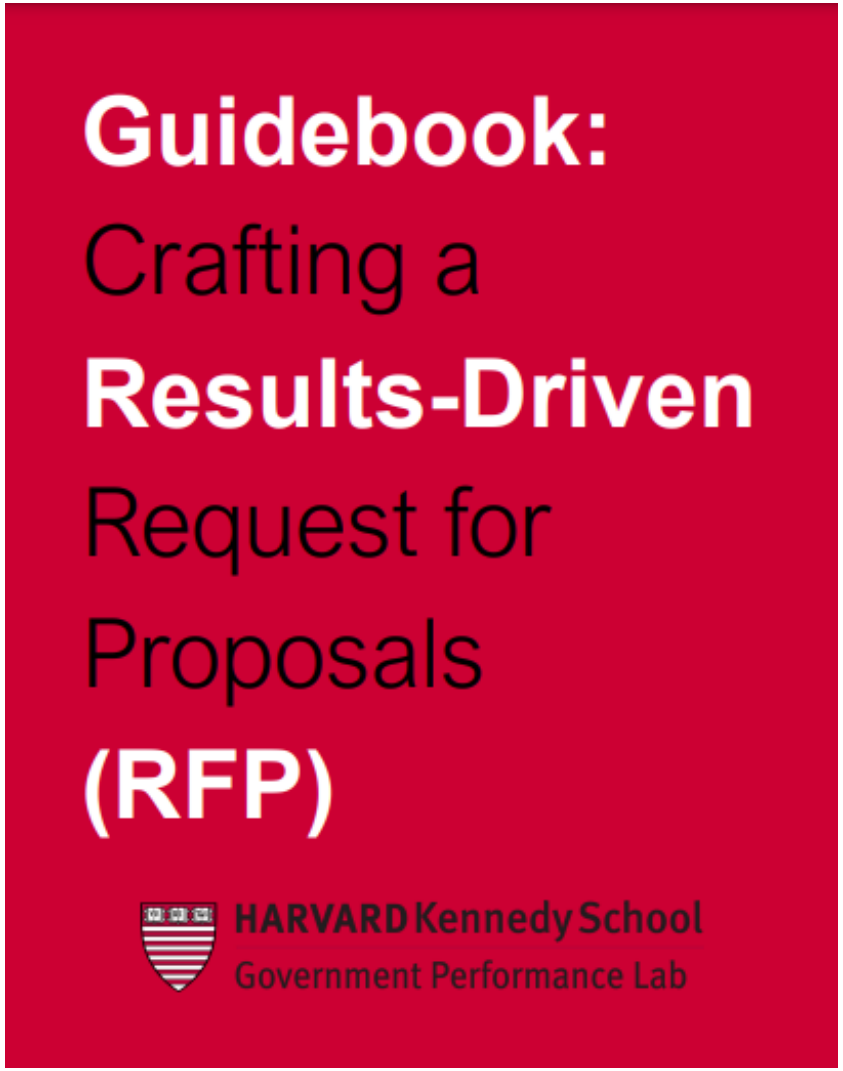
Key questions for RFP-writing from the first topic

Problem Statement	What problem is the procurement intended to address? What can we share about past efforts to solve it?
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?
Target Population	Who is the target population for this product or service? Are there equity or access concerns?

An example of a slide from the first topic



THE GPL RFP GUIDEBOOK



This guidebook includes templates, guidance, and useful tips for every stage of the RFP process, from initial planning and information-gathering to release and proposal evaluation. Download at https://govlab.hks.harvard.edu/guidebook-crafting-results-driven-request-proposals-rfp.

Modules in the guidebook include:

1. Planning for Your RFP
2. Information Gathering
3. RFP-Writing: Problem Statements and Goals
4. RFP-Writing: Scope of Work and Incentives
5. RFP-Writing: Metrics and Contract Management
6. RFP-Writing: Evaluation and Selection Criteria
7. Finalizing Your RFP
8. Activities Following RFP Release

CTSOURCE REMINDER

Agencies must post all competitive procurement opportunities to CTsource, the new state contracting portal.

CTsource features include:

- Monitoring vendor interest
- Posting and distributing RFPs
- Running Q&As
- Reading and scoring proposals

Upcoming updates to CTsource will allow agencies to evaluate vendor performance and read other agencies' vendor evaluations

WHO DO I CONTACT AT OPM/FINANCE FOR HELP?

①

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Lars.benson@ct.gov

③

Kimberly Kennison
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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

UPCOMING TRAINING SESSIONS

CORE-CT Requisition Best Practices
CEE Workflow Updated Procedures
OPM Procurement Standards Revisions

THANK YOU!
PLEASE FILL OUT OUR SURVEY