

PLANNING A SOLICITATION – TIMING FACTORS

Before you begin the process of creating a solicitation, you must first consider how much time is necessary to complete the procurement.

Planning a procurement is crucial to ensuring that the purchase is received in a timely manner, especially in cases when the availability of a critical commodity or service is at stake.

The length of time it takes to complete a procurement from PR assignment to contract award varies and depends upon many factors.

Some of these factors have requirements mandated by law and OSP policy and the timing cannot be adjusted, and some have more flexibility.

Upon receiving a PR, immediately check the delivery date requirement so that you can begin planning accordingly.

To prioritize your time accordingly when you are on a tight schedule to complete the purchase, allot time for these mandated factors first, then see how much time you have left to complete the remaining, more flexible steps of the process.

Schedule these factors in the procurement process first:

- Deadline for delivery, if applicable.
- Solicitation posting time.
 - By law, a solicitation must be publicly posted for a minimum of 5 calendar days and up to a maximum of 90 days. More complex solicitations may need the longer posting time.
- Publicly posting the Anticipation to Award (ATA) - 2 weeks.
- Legislative review of contract awards for services - If required, 30-45 days.
- State holidays, scheduled leave, possibility of inclement weather.

Based on the delivery deadline, you may have to shorten the amount of time used to complete some steps of the procurement.

When you are on a tight schedule, the following steps may have to be adjusted to move more quickly.

After scheduling your mandated procurement steps, schedule these flexible steps.

- Market Research
- Reviewing/writing specifications and finalizing the solicitation.
 - May include collaboration with multiple parties.

- Solicitation review and approvals by end user, supervisor, or other parties prior to posting.
- Reviewing the submitted bids or proposals to ensure submission requirements are met by the prospective contractors.
- Evaluation process (for RFPs). Typically, around 2 weeks, but longer if demonstrations are required.
- Negotiation, and review of negotiation agreement document by both parties, if applicable.
- Creating final AASIS documents and obtaining approvals.

Procurement Workplans

A best practice, especially for critical procurements, is to create a workplan for the project to help you stay on target with completing each step.

A workplan lists the steps of a project in order, along with the deadline for completing each step and the responsible party.

Your agency may have its own workplan template, or you can find one online or contact any buyer at OSP for guidance.

HELPFUL HINT

When collaborating with others in creating a solicitation, such as an end user, you must also allow for the uncertainty of the other party's schedule.

Every procurement is different.

Depending on the impact of each step in affecting the outcome of the solicitation, you may adjust your procurement timeframe in different ways for each solicitation.

The key is to have a solid understanding of the goals of the purchase in order to plan how it can be efficiently and effectively executed to achieve that goal.

“A goal without a plan is just a wish.”
- Antoine de Saint-Exupéry