



ITS Business Services RFP and Contract Guidelines

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Version History

Date	Version Number	Name	Reason
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1. Purpose

These guidelines document practices used during the RFP creation, review and rating processes. They are meant to ensure the selection of software follows County purchasing policies and is fair and unbiased while getting the best product and services for the client department and County.

It is very important that ITS play the role of an unbiased advisor in the RFP process. Limiting ITS opinions and recommendations to just the facts establishes a reputation of objectivity and professionalism with the SME's and project sponsors. This builds the image ITS has with them and creates a new expectation in them as to what the ITS role will be on future engagements. It is important for those reasons that ITS remains objective and provide only facts rather than recommendations based on perceptions. The client departments must be allowed to form their own opinions and to use their own judgment.

2. Scope

This document applies to all RFP's produced by ITS Business Services in the course of Packaged Software Selection and Implementation projects.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

Several ITS staff may be involved in the RFP process during the course of a software selection and implementation project. ITS staff partner with the client department(s) to ensure the RFP is a complete and accurate representation of the business need.

3.1. ITS Project Managers

The ITS project manager has overall responsibility for preparing the RFP, ensuring adequate review by ITS staff and client department(s) staff. In most cases, the ITS project manager will be a member of the RFP review committee.

3.2. ITS Project Team

The ITS project team consisting of a combination business analysts, systems analysts, programmer analysts, and DBA's provide input and assistance to the project manager and client during the requirements definition tasks of the project. Generally a business analyst will be assigned the task of developing the business requirements for the client

Project team members will review the RFP prior to release, and may also participate in the RFP evaluation process, vendor interviews or product demonstrations.

3.3. ITS Technical Services

ITS Technical Services staff review the description of Johnson County computing standards and technical infrastructure prior to RFP release. Technical Services will also be asked to review RFP responses to determine compatibility with these standards and the County infrastructure.

3.4. Client Department Sponsors

The client department project sponsors have the responsibility of ensuring that the business requirements are communicated to the ITS project team. These sponsors assign SME's to the

project and approve the RFP selection committee membership.

Client Sponsors will have final approval on the RFP ranking criteria and contract elements. These sponsors will also ensure appropriate funding is available for the proposed project.

3.5. Client Department Subject Matter Experts(SME's)

The subject matter experts work with ITS to gather, document and review the business requirements the new software application will need to meet in order to support the department's goals and objectives. The SME's may participate on the RFP selection committee at the discretion of the Client Sponsor.

4. Related Policies, Procedures, and Standards

Johnson County, Kansas Administrative Policies, Section #110
Johnson County, Kansas Administrative Procedures, Section #110
Johnson County Information Technology Services Application Architecture Guidelines
Johnson County Information Technology Services PM Guidebook
Johnson County Information Technology Services SDLC

5. RFP Preparation

RFP preparation occurs after all business and functional requirements have been documented, reviewed and finalized with the client department. These requirements are combined with the Purchasing RFP boilerplate information and several other sections to form the RFP.

5.1. Business Requirements

The business and function requirements section of the RFP is the most important RFP element in a software selection project. Complete requirements, at the appropriate level of detail, ensure that products can be evaluated as to how well they meet the client department's business objectives.

5.2. Technical Infrastructure narrative

The technical infrastructure narrative is also an important component for software selection RFP's. This section informs potential vendors about the Johnson County technical environment and the County's technology preferences. Always confer with ITS Technical Services to ensure Johnson County Technical Infrastructure overview section is accurately described. A recently developed RFP is a good place to start, but a review is necessary to ensure this section is up to date.

Network and infrastructure diagrams can also be included in the RFP to give a more complete picture of the County's technology. Care should be taken to ensure no sensitive details are included, for example, no IP addresses or server names should be shown on the diagrams.

5.3. RFP Timeline

The following table outlines the minimum time required for each step of the process after the RFP scope of work has been submitted to Purchasing:

REQUESTS FOR PROPOSAL SCHEDULING:

Activity	Time Frame:
Final Draft of RFP ready to go:	
Advertise	Sun deadline Tues @10AM for Thursday paper
Pre-proposal Conference	Allow 1-2- Weeks from Advertising, or ½ way through response period.
Closes	Minimum 2-Wks from Pre-Proposal. If no Pre-proposal is held, RFP may close 3 weeks from advertising
Distribute proposals to committee	Distribution the following day
Committee meets to review	Allow 1 week
Ranking sheets due	The end of the day after the committee meeting
Interview decision	Within two days when possible
Hold interviews	Give firms at least 1 week’s notice
Ranking sheets due	The end of the day the interviews are held
Department recommendation to Purchasing	
Item to be place on BOCC Agenda	Briefing sheet due to BOCC-Agenda Thursday 12:00.
CMO Agenda Review	Following Friday 10:00
BOCC Agenda Review	Following Thursday
BOCC Approval:	Following Thursday
Issue notice of award	
Negotiations to begin	Allow 2 weeks, can start when preparing for the BOCC if Required
Notice to proceed	Upon Receipt of Contract Agreement Bonds & Insurance

These represent the minimum time frames for each activity. As software RFP’s generally are very detailed, lengthening the vendor response time may encourage more responses and should be considered when possible. Likewise, if a large number of responses are received, the review committee may need additional time to review them.

5.4. Rating/Ranking Sheets

The rating or ranking sheets should be adjusted to make sure RFP responses are evaluated on the appropriate criteria. These can be modified on an as needed basis to ensure the proper questions, issues, and items are being addressed by proper questioning techniques. The project manager should drive this process with suggestions and advise to the client sponsors who have final approval.

Rating sheets for response ratings and vendor demonstrations should be included in the RFP. Sample rating sheets can be reviewed here: <..\\.\\.\\.\\Business Services\\Methodologies - PM & SDLC\\SDLC Templates\\Sample RFP Ranking Forms.doc>

5.5. Required Response Format

Every RFP should include detailed directions about what information should be included in the vendor responses. This provides a consistent baseline for comparing RFP responses. It can also measure how thoroughly a vendor understands the County's requirements.

In addition to the standard elements from the Purchasing boilerplate, consider requesting these required elements in each vendor response:

- Project Approach
- Proposed Project Timeline
- Sample support and maintenance contracts
- Sample implementation contract

See Appendix A for other potential topics to be included in the vendor responses.

5.6. Cost Proposal

Costs should be requested in a format that allows the County to compare vendor's responses. See Appendix B for a sample cost proposal that allows different types of costs to be compared.

5.7. Pre-bid Conference

For very complex RFP's, Purchasing may suggest that a pre-bid conference be held to allow vendors to ask questions about the requirements. The project manager should attend this conference and be prepared to answer questions during the call. Pre-bid conference information should be included in the RFP.

5.8. Vendor Research

In addition to the vendors that subscribe to the DemandStar services, a list of target vendors should also be provided to Purchasing for inclusion on RFP notification list.

6. Vendor Response Review

6.1. Business Requirements

Vendor responses must address how well the product matches the client department business need. Business requirements must be the emphasis. Utilize people from the client department, to ensure that the business requirements are focused on. Solicit input from the Technical Services perspective, but technology should not be the primary driver in selecting a product.

6.2. Vendor Contact

Never discuss the selection or project with a vendor during response review process. Refer any telephone calls or emails to Purchasing. This will help avoid any perception of bias that may lead to a vendor protesting final selection. It will also ensure that all vendors receive the same information.

6.3. Reviewers

The goal of the Vendor Response review is to select the product that best meets the business needs, along with an appropriate level of due diligence in recognizing technical infrastructure

implications. Generally, the project manager and business analysts are excellent ITS candidates to review the vendor responses. Department SME's and users are good candidates from the client department. The project client sponsor should approve the SME's and end users that will evaluate the responses. There should be an odd number of reviewers if possible.

6.4. Pre-rating Meeting

In some cases, it may be appropriate to hold a pre-rating meeting with the RFP reviewers. The purpose of this meeting is not to collaborate on scoring, but to allow the group to ask questions and discuss the vendor responses. Purchasing should be included in these meetings.

7. RFP Rating

7.1. ITS Ratings

Usually, ITS has one vote in the evaluation process. In the case that more ITS staff review is desired, have all ITS reviewers score the RFP responses and calculate an average for the final ITS scoring.

8. Vendor Interviews and Demonstrations

The ITS project manager should discuss the need for vendor interviews or product demonstrations with the client sponsors. This is generally the second phase of product selection, and is conducted with the top rated vendors following response ratings.

In most cases, demonstrations will be warranted. The number of demonstrations depends on the number of responses received and the ratings. Usually, there is a clear division of scores between the top vendors and the others. The response reviewers should discuss and agree on the number of products to be seen. Purchasing will arrange the demonstrations.

8.1. Demonstration Scripts

Scripts should always be provided to the vendors to ensure that the County sees the functionality of the product. The vendors should be notified that a live product demonstration is expected and precisely what functions are to be included in the demonstrations. These scripts ensure that each vendor presents the same material and can be objectively compared. For this reason, it is important the vendors adhere to the provided script. Purchasing and ITS should work together to keep the demonstration on track.

Reviewers can ask for more detail about any script item as the demonstration progresses.

8.2. Post Demonstration Discussion

Discussion following the demonstrations but prior to rating the demonstrations is allowed and recommended. Again, this is not a group scoring activity, but is an opportunity for the review team to talk about the positives of each product and also any drawbacks products may have. ITS should use this discussion to objectively discuss the merits of each product's technology so the other reviewers can consider this in their ratings.

8.3. Rankings and Cost Rankings

As soon as all reviewers have turned in their rankings to Purchasing, Purchasing will compile the results and determine the cost rankings. This will determine the preferred vendor.

9. Contract Negotiations and Approvals

Any time a vendor has to perform some work, regardless of how extensive the work is, a written contract should be used to clearly define the County's agreement with the vendor. Legal normally takes the lead on developing and negotiating these contracts with software vendors.

9.1. Contracts

If sample contracts were not included in the RFP responses, request these as soon as the number one vendor is determined. Notify the Legal department their assistance will be required for these negotiations and provide the sample contracts as soon as they are available.

ITS prefers certain items be addressed in every software contract. Each contract should be set up for milestone or deliverable payments. A percentage of the purchase price should be designated as a reserve to be paid upon final acceptance of the product. Acceptance criteria should be clearly defined. The implementation phase statement of work and the vendor's RFP response should be included as elements of the contract. A warranty period should always be requested for 90 to 120 days following implementation, during which support and maintenance costs do not apply.

9.2. Software Licensing and Maintenance

For multi-departmental or enterprise software, the initial licensing and maintenance costs are paid from the implementation project. ITS will normally take responsibility for paying licensing costs for subsequent years, depending on budget availability. In the event ITS is unable to absorb licensing costs, ITS management will work with the client sponsor and/or the Budget department to ensure these costs are taken care of.

9.3. BOCC Briefing Sheets

Approval from the Board of County Commissioners is required for purchases over \$100K. Purchasing will take the lead in creating and presenting briefing sheet to BOCC. ITS may be called upon to answer questions. Always notify the ITS director when a software selection contract is included in the BOCC business agenda.

10. Requests for Information

The Request for Information (RFI) process is a less rigorous comparison of vendor products and should be used when greater clarification is needed from vendors regarding their products. An RFI should contain many of the same elements of the RFP, but at a lesser level of detail. The RFI can provide a consistent means to evaluate potential vendors and products.

Appendix A – sample sections for RFP Responses

NARRATIVE: The narrative should include the following information in the following order.

Please use Form 5 for your narrative response. Some items in sub-sections 6, 8, and 9 (below) may be related to companion software, please indicate the name(s) of that software in your narrative.

- Vendor Profile

Annual Revenue.

Number of FTE's by primary function (Marketing, System development, Technical support / Training, Customer support and Research and Development).

Total system installs.

Number of installs of the current version.

Number of systems installed in other state governments.

Number of systems installed in other county governments.

Number of systems installed in other local governments.

Credit History (currently or ever been in bankruptcy).

Any current plans for merger, consolidation, sale of company, etc.

Of systems sold, the percent that are still in use.

If vendor is a joint venture, supplying an integrated solution, number of installs integrated with proposed solution.

If vendor is an application service provider, provide any other relevant information

- Application Summaries. Provide a brief description of the base applications, including a description of each module to address the functional system requirements of the County. The application summaries should:

Provide a basic understanding of the standard capabilities of the software.

Provide insight into the integration of common functions designed into the product.

Describe primary data structures.

Describe on-line and batch capabilities.

Provide system flow diagrams that illustrate how primary system functions are related.

- Vendor Services

Support availability; describe the days of week and hours of day that support is provided.

Average delay from call to solution. If you are providing information about different classes of calls, describe each type of call and the escalation process.

Explanation of users group, if one exists and how often it meets, type of membership, and/or an on-line users bulletin board. Cover both national and local groups.

Ongoing training classes provided, descriptions, where held, and frequency.

How your company seeks input from current customers when planning for system changes.

Describe what is included in maintenance contracts (ex: new versions / updates).

Describe support if the latest update is not purchased. Describe support of previous releases when a new release is available.

Describe a situation in which the user could make a change to the software and a situation, which you the vendor would need to make the change.

- Updates

Provide a history of dates of new versions for the past 3 years and the past 3 releases.

Date next update is planned for release.
Describe features that will be incorporated or changed in the next update.
Describe how the system handles archived data when a new update / version is installed.
Describe the process for requesting enhancements, and the selection process for inclusion in future releases.

- Hardware / Software Requirements and Linkage Issues

Platform(s) that will support your software.
Workstation operating systems that will support your software: Win 2000, Win XP.
Program development language.
Hardware requirements for the workstation (processor, memory, disk storage).
List other software, including any development tools, which are required (ex. SQL) and whether this also requires a separate server.
Hardware requirements for the server(s).
Integration and linkages with other software such as MS Office and email systems.
Ability to create download files to transfer information into other systems.
Mandatory down time (ex: for backup).
Optimum hardware and software requirements

- Security

Various levels of access, e.g. is security handled at the level of the individual record, the business unit or other.
When must passwords be entered (how often, with what actions)?
Describe in detail the security system (operating system passwords, application passwords, and firewall).
Describe the capability for multiple security administrators with various levels of access. (E.G. security administrators in each department with rights to assign access within their department, but not globally)
Electronic signatures on generated documents.

- Integration

Describe the integration of the various modules/systems.

- Documentation. The vendor is required to provide sample sections of the user manuals and technical system operation manuals to the County for review with the proposal. A Table of Contents or outline of the full set of both types of documentation should also be included along with a brief list summarizing the important information about each document including:

The document's title and purpose.
The number of documents to be provided free of charge and those requiring additional cost (state the per unit cost on the pricing sheets).
Special circumstances or restrictions related to reproduction of documentation.
Availability of documentation in electronic format and restrictions on the County's use and modification of these files.
Availability of on-line documentation within the software.

Appendix B – Cost Proposal

Basic Project Estimated Costs

Application Software

Initial license fee
User licenses
Documentation
Cost per module / system, as appropriate

- Training
 - Technical
For various numbers / levels of users
 - End User
For various numbers / levels of users
- Vendor Support
 - Version upgrades
 - Annual maintenance (indicate if an initial warranty period is included and indicate the cost for different levels of support).
 - Additional Project Cost Information:
- Project Management
 - Per hour rate by project team member
- Data conversion
 - Conversion by vendor
 - Provision of file layouts and assistance for conversion by County staff
- Integration
 - Describe the integration of the various modules/systems.
 - Describe methods available for integrating to external systems.
- Software Modifications
 - Per hour rate by project team member
 - Per job rate