

The ABCs of RFPs

There is no such thing as too much information when it comes to writing a request for proposal. With that in mind, here's a comprehensive list of elements commonly included in RFPs. *By Candy Adams*

Every exhibit manager's needs are going to be different, so use this list as a helpful guide rather than a mandatory RFP manual. And keep in mind the cardinal rule of RFPs: If you don't ask for it, you won't get it.

- ▶ Cover sheet (include your company name, the project name, the date, and contact information)
- ▶ Deadlines (for responses, exhibit-house presentations, evaluation completion, contract negotiations and sign-off from the legal department, project progress meetings, final walk-throughs, estimated ship date, trade show setup dates, and show dates and exhibit hall hours)
- ▶ Confidentiality clause and/or non-disclosure agreement (NDA)
- ▶ Request for return of "intent to participate" letter (include a template)
- ▶ Disclaimers (regarding the cost to prepare the proposal, right of refusal, and right to modify or withdraw the RFP)
- ▶ Exhibit debut and future show schedule (matrix showing full show name, city, dates, booth size, booth number, etc.)
- ▶ Exhibiting company's background information and current marketing plan (including the style book)
- ▶ Exhibiting company's market position (volume, products, competitive advantages, share, sales cycle, etc.)
- ▶ Target audience (include demographics and psychographics)

- ▶ Show objectives (related to sales, branding and awareness, products/offerings, communication, education, recruiting, etc.)
- ▶ Alternate uses of exhibit properties (corporate lobby, meetings, etc.)
- ▶ Design (include photos if possible)
- ▶ Sizes, colors, shapes, and textures
- ▶ Functional requirements of the exhibit (information desk or reception counter functions, conference-room furnishings, presentation theater requirements)
- ▶ Products and services that will be displayed (including size, type, number, how/if visitors will interact with them, space requirements, etc.)
- ▶ Demonstration areas (including counters, workstations, computers, equipment, etc.)
- ▶ Graphics and signage
- ▶ Lighting
- ▶ Flooring
- ▶ Literature distribution
- ▶ Lead-gathering system(s) and location(s)
- ▶ Storage space requirements (for staff items, giveaways, literature, extra products, etc.)
- ▶ Crating and cases
- ▶ Traffic patterns/flow
- ▶ Estimated ongoing cost of use per show (including pull and prep at exhibit house, transportation, material handling, electrical, I&D labor, rigging, audiovisual, graphics, etc.)

- ▶ Exhibit house service requirements (including exhibit design/fabrication, graphics design/production, turnkey services such as project management, completion of exhibitor-services manual forms and ordering of services, subcontracting I&D services and specialized exhibit transportation, and third-party payment of contracted pre-show and on-site services)
- ▶ On-site supervision
- ▶ Material handling (while in exhibit house warehouse before and after use)
- ▶ Rental of ancillary furnishings and/or carpet
- ▶ Exhibit property inventory control
- ▶ Warehousing, handling, and storing exhibit properties
- ▶ Customer satisfaction and quality-control practices (including customer references and performance reviews)
- ▶ Supplier pricing (including rate sheets for exhibit design and graphics, project/account management, shop fabrication labor, pull and prep, show services, show-site supervision and return warehousing, etc.)
- ▶ Discounts or upcharges (based on rush charges or overtime)
- ▶ Policies on billing
- ▶ Contract terms and conditions (including sample estimate, contract, work order, change order, invoice, inventory, etc.)
- ▶ Ownership options (purchase, rent, or lease) **E**