



## The Right Answer for the Project

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Asking the right question is an important step toward finding the right answer. When seeking proposals for a design/build project, a deficient Request for Proposal likely will result in confusing bid results or an incomplete project. To carry that further, asking the wrong question has a great likelihood of generating the wrong answer. With this type of dilemma, the hidden problem is timing. Determining there is an incomplete (or wrong) answer after construction has started significantly affects how the project can be revised.

With conventional, commercial buildings there are many solutions available to enclose the functions that comprise a business. Rules, regulations, common guidelines, geography, and time of year all impact the decisions that a builder makes in offering suggestions for a client's building project. As the single-source provider for the project, a builder can become snarled in complex issues if the "guideline" for competitively bidding a project lacks certain information. Does the "bidder" challenge the "request" and submit a complete bid (in their opinion), risking the chance of offending the "author" among other unsavory outcomes? Including "extra" items may make the bid complete, but also make the price extraneously high compared to other prices presented, thereby removing them from consideration.

Answering the "open-ended" RFP is like playing darts with a blind-fold. There are many options for throwing the dart, but there is only one bulls-eye. With more than a few design/build projects completed, the practitioner will come across the situation where a "request for proposal" provides considerable variability in answering the questions presented. This "open ended" request may affect the final project in many ways, include aesthetics, pricing, scheduling, and maintenance. Without detailed knowledge of the intent of the building or the owner's budget, these questions will leave the respondent with a lot of work to do. It will also generate proposals that are not easily comparable by the owner.

There is no easy answer for addressing RFPs, just as there is no one perfect method for addressing the range of projects that are built. As our industry matures, it is more important than ever that we prepare clients to ask the right questions for their design/build projects. In return, we as leaders in this industry, need to help establish a standard for the "request for proposal" that will give the client good information. With good information generated from the RFP, the client can reliably choose a builder, and the builder can focus on "answering the question" that gives the owner the best solution, without throwing darts in the dark.

EGC is an excellent resource for creating RFPs, with more than twenty years of experience successfully completing design/build projects. Generally, the cost for generating a complete RFP is well worth the investment compared to cost of evaluating incompatible bids. Please contact us for more information.

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