TEMPLATE: Request for Proposal (RFP) of Weatherization Technical Monitoring and Quality Control Inspections (QCI)

A Resource for Weatherization Assistance Program Grantees

**Critical Dates:**

**Issue Date:** Click or tap to enter a date.

**Pre-Bid Conference:** Click or tap to enter a date.

**Pre-Bid Questions Due:** Click or tap to enter a date.

**RFP Responses Due:** Click or tap to enter a date.

**RFP Evaluations:** Click or tap to enter a date.

**Anticipated Work Start Date:** Click or tap to enter a date.

***Best Practice*** *–* Map out your timeline. Not only does it make it clear to the Respondents what the flow of the process will be but it will also keep you on track. Working with your procurement people will help you learn their required steps and allow you to establish this timeline.

**1. Overview**

* **1.1. Purpose of the RFP**
* 1.1.a. Explanation of the need for proposals: In this section you want to explain the need for the RFP. You should establish a data driven quantifiable need. This will help you define your objectives of the RFP process and will assist the Respondent in understanding the broader goals. Use of a GAP analysis where you establish the Current Condition & Desired Condition can assist you in defining what gap(s) exists. (*See companion workbook* Gap Analysis tab) Measuring and then defining this gap will help explain the need of the RFP clearer. Later, it can assist you in developing RFP details and the scope of work.

***Best Practice*** *–* Think about the flow and organization of your RFP at the very beginning. Ideally you would want to organize the RFP, Respondent submission documents, scorecard, and contract similar styles and order. This makes it easier during the review and evaluation of the submissions. It also allows for items in the RFP to be easily incorporated into the contract documents.

If you have a significant number of acronyms, consider a Definitions Sub-Section as part of the Overview it can make it easier for the reader to refer to when reading the document.

* **1.2. Background Information** 
  + The “Agency Name” Weatherization Assistance Program is issuing a Request for Proposal (RFP) from interested parties, hereafter known as “Respondent” for Weatherization Technical Monitoring and Quality Control Inspections (QCI) services.
  + The Weatherization Assistance Program has been supporting low-income residents save energy and money while increasing the comfort of their homes and ensuring their health and safety for over 50 years. Eligible households are those with incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. The target groups for this program are households including persons who are elderly, people with disabilities, and families with young children.

***Best Practice*** *–* The Background section can be as generic or detailed as you want. It is important that you keep the reader engaged. The example above lets the Respondent know it is a federally funded low-income program that serves a specific group of individuals and has been around for a long time.

Using the “KISS” principle (**K**eep **I**t **S**uper **S**imple) is recommended. The history of the program and other background items might not be as important to the Respondent as it is to you. There are additional tips on the companion workbook “*Writing Tips*” tab.

* + 1.2.a. Objectives to be achieved through the contracting process: This section is used to broadly define what will be achieved during the RFP and contracting process. You will go into the finer details in section **2. RFP Details**. The goal of this is to develop the interest of the potential Respondent. You are writing an Executive Summary where you establish tentative objectives and outcomes such as:
    - Inclusive dates of contract – How long can they anticipate this work to last?

***Best Practice*** *–* Remember you are beginning to establish your expectations here. Be clear, direct and to the point. Do not put something in writing that you are not willing do honor.

* + - Potential number of units – What kind of workload can they expect?

Anticipated total number of units would be the minimum.

If the goal is percentage of total unit completions to be inspected indicate the Projected Completions and Required Percentage. It may be necessary to include the caveat that more units are a possibility if an agency exceeds their contract total. Other things to consider when taking this approach:

* Do you expect the respondent to charge the same price when the Anticipated Units are exceeded?
* How will you manage the units inspected when there is multiple funding sources braided into a job?
* Will the units be broken out by single family dwellings, small multi-family (5-24), large multi-family etc. . .

***Best Practice*** *–* If there is a potential of a more open-ended award it is wise to establish a minimum Award Period. It is easier and cheaper to get out of a bad working relationship by not renewing a contract than trying to break an existing one. This is even more advisable if you are working with someone you have no prior experience with. Inclusion of optional extensions is a good idea.

Consider breaking this data out in a table by units per service area and/or possibly number of units per week, month, or quarter.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Service Area** | **Minimum Contracted Units** | **Monitoring Percentage** | **Anticipated Total Units to be Inspected** | **Anticipated Units to be Inspected Quarterly** |
| Agency 1  (County 1, 2 & 3) | 345 | 5% | 18 | 4 |
| Agency 2  (County 4, 5 & 6) | 470 | 5% | 24 | 6 |
| Agency 3  (County 7, 8 & 9) | 500 | 5% | 25 | 6 |

***Best Practices*** *–* Consider inserting a map of the service areas. Listing the anticipated number of inspections per service area would also be helpful in Respondent planning. Visual data always has more impact.

* **1.3. Additional Needs (optional)–** What additional tasks do you expect them to do?

There is potential for the QCI’s to do other related tasks. Taking advantage of a 3rd party that was not part of the weatherization process could yield unbiased information such as:

* + - * + In Progress production unit inspections
        + Identifying and summarizing training needs based off the strengths and weaknesses observed during their inspections.
        + Client Education.
        + Client Satisfaction Survey

***Best Practices*** *–* This is information that could be used as part of a Training Needs Analysis when developing a Training and Technical Assistance (T&TA) RFP and completing Section V8.4 of the Master File.

**2. RFP Details**

* **2.1. Project Description and Scope of Work**

In this section you will establish the scope and technical aspects of the services the Respondent be providing. You can revisit the initial overview with finer details of what you described in sub-section **1.1 Purpose**, if you desire.

Critical elements here are:

What do you expect the Respondent to do during the Monitoring and QCI process?

How are they supposed to execute this?

What will be the results of their work?

What are the deadlines the Respondent will need to meet?

It is recommended that this section is written in a style like work instructions. Taking this approach will keep you thinking in terms of the process from start to finish. Key components of this section should become the performance measures of the winning Respondent’s contract. This is not a section you want to be vague or ambiguous. Clear direct statements are important.

***Best Practices*** *–* Want a better idea of what Work Instructions look like? See the companion workbook “*Work Instructions*” tab

* + 2.1.a Specific tasks and responsibilities - Think in terms of the workflow of the inspector when mapping this out. List the major tasks the Respondent will be doing. Some major areas to consider would be:
* Inspection Scheduling
  + Minimum client notification time
  + Maximum number of contact attempts before skipping
* Desk Audit or File Review
  + Monitoring Tool, checklist(s), or form(s) to use
  + Intake, Audit, Production documentation
  + Weatherization Readiness documentation
  + Sub-contractor invoices
* Onsite Technical Inspection
  + Monitoring Tool, checklist(s), or form(s) to use
  + Accountability of materials installed
  + Verification of workmanship and compliance to standards listed in Sub-Section 2.1.b.
* Onsite Testing
  + Monitoring Tool, checklist(s), or form(s) to use
  + Compliance to standards listed in Sub-Section 2.1.b.
* Deficiencies
  + Required documentation
  + Notification procedures
  + Follow up procedures
* Rework
  + Scheduling procedures
  + Required documentation
  + Additional testing requirements

***Best Practices*** *–* There is no need to list every item that is on your QCI documents or testing forms you can reference those documents by name as appendix or attachments to this document and include them in the Bid Packet.

Make sure to include those Additional Needs you added in **Section 1.2** such as:

* In Progress production unit inspections
* Technical Training items
* Client Education
* Client satisfaction evaluation
* Additional Building Diagnostics – What is required of the QCI if there are obvious missed opportunities for Energy Conservation Measures?
  + 2.1.b. Requirements and standards to be met – Listing the standards the Respondent will be required to conduct their inspections to.
    - * Grantee program guidelines
      * Grantee technical manual or field guide
      * Grantee energy auditing standards
      * Relevant standards or policy for additional funding sources used

***Best Practices*** *–* Remember DOE Program Notice 22-4 section 1. SWS-Aligned Field Guides requires, “*Grantees must provide Subgrantees and/or contractors with all technical requirements (e.g., field guide(s), building diagnostic and combustion safety procedures) for field work. The Grantee must confirm receipt of those requirements and provide follow-up and clarification upon request. A signature on a contract can serve as proof of receipt.*”

* + 2.1.c. Expected outcomes and deliverables – What do you expect the Respondent to produce as a result of their work that will be submitted to you? And how will it be submitted?
    - * What are the forms, documents, and photo images that you need in the client file?
      * What additional items do you require from the Respondent after each inspection?
      * How do you expect these items to be captured? (paper, electronic, both)
      * How do you expect these items to be delivered?

***Best Practices*** *–* These documents might contain Personal Protected Information (PPI) and would need to be handled and transmitted in secure ways.

If the Respondent will be accessing your online system:

* Are there ways to prevent them from accessing unnecessary data?
* Can you limit the possibility of them deleting information that cannot be recovered?
* What are the technical specifications of hardware and software they will need to access the system?

Consider using a Non-disclosure Agreement clause in your contract.

* + 2.1.d. Timeline for project completion – Setting a realistic schedule that meets your needs and deadlines from start to finish of a project.
    - * What is the allowable time from notification of a unit ready for inspection to scheduling the onsite visit?
      * When are the deliverables due, in business days, after the Onsite Inspection?
      * What is the timeline when there are Rework Items?
      * How are the required documents delivered?
      * Whom will they be delivered to?
      * What is the invoicing process and payment timeline?

***Best Practices*** *–* Describing what your expectation for deliverables is critical. The biggest mistake you can make here is assuming they understand what it is you want. Do not be afraid to develop sample documents to more clearly convey your expectations. This will be valuable with Grantee or Sub-Grantee specific documents and forms.

You also need to consider that these timelines will impact you. Being aggressive with your contractor and placing yourself in an untenable situation is not something you want. Ask yourself if you can meet your deadlines.

***Best Practices*** *–* If you have your QCI and other testing forms online you can use hyperlinks in the document in addition to including them in the Bid Packet.

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***Best Practices*** *–* If you have a very detailed lengthy Scope of Work consider making an Executive Summary and reference the full scope document as an Appendix or Attachment to the Bid Packet. This document can then be easily added into the final contract.

* **2.2. Eligibility Criteria –** Here is where you define who it is you are looking for. Ensure each item you list has some form of backup documentation that will be submitted as part of the bid packet. Below are some items you should consider:

***Best Practices*** *–*If youidentify what you believe are critical items you can designate them as *Minimum Pass/Fail Criteria*. This will allow you to disregard non-qualified submittals. (See companion workbook Scorecard tab)

* + 2.2.a. General Provisions – These are the broad requirements. Typically, this would be the minimum requirement to do business with your state or organization. Your contracting personnel should be able to help with this. Some common items would be:
    - * Background check and/or fingerprinting requirements
      * E-Verify documents
      * Confidentiality or non-disclosure documents
      * Conflict of Interest documents
      * Registration as a vendor or bidder in state specific system
  + 2.2.b. Licensure and Qualifications required for bidders – What professional qualification documents do you need them to present as part of the application?
    - * Building Performance Institute (BPI) Home Energy Professional (HEP) Energy Auditor (EA)
      * Building Performance Institute (BPI) Home Energy Professional (HEP) Quality Control Inspector (QCI)
      * State and/or local business license
      * Local utility company certifications
      * Registration in a state vendor system
  + 2.2.c. Relevant experience and expertise – What proof of demonstrated experience do you want?
    - * Proof of relevant prior work history? (Resumes of individual or staff)
      * References?
      * Knowledge and experience with your energy auditing tools?
      * Additional BPI, HERS, AEE Certified Energy Auditor certifications

***Best Practices*** *–* It can be very easy to list off policy, regulation, or standards but can be very hard to define what backup documentation looks like. If there is something that backup cannot be provided for consider adding that item to the *Required Training* section below.

* **2.3. Compliance with federal or state regulations and standards** – Items that ensure you are legally able to do business with them or give preference to a Respondent.
  + - Liability Insurance
    - Workman’s Compensation Insurance
    - Women, Minority, Veteran owned business proof/verification
    - Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) Number or other proof that individual or business has not been disbarred from doing business with the federal government.
    - W-9

***Best Practices*** *–* Remember 2 CFR§ 200.321 requires preference in the procurement process to small, minority, and women owned business.

Do not forget Davis-Bacon, Buy America and other similar provisions associated with your federal funds. These are all flow down provisions in your federal award terms and conditions.

* **2.4. Minimum professional technical equipment necessary** – It is important to ensure the Respondent is properly equipped for the tasks you expect them to do. Establish a list of minimum tools and have the Respondent submit some kind of inventory sheet showing things like:
  + - Brand
    - Quantity
    - Model number
    - Date of last calibration
* **2.5. Cost Proposal** – Laying out how you want the Respondent to bid the project. This would correlate to how you have described the work in section 2. RFP Details. You want to ensure that each submission is using the same style and format in their pricing, so the cost comparisons are relevant.

This is where you make clear the items you want a price quote on. It is important that you explain what tasks you see as “included” in each price quote they are providing you. These are the tasks you spelled out in section 2.1.a.

***Best Practices*** *–* By creating your own Pricing Sheet Template you can control how the submissions look. This is much easier to evaluate. It will also make it easier for the Respondent to prepare their bid

This is also where you would cover items like mileage, lodging, per diem or other incidental expenses you will accept price quotes on.

***Best Practices*** *–* Another method to make sure you are getting “Apples to Apples” bids would be to create a sample job for the Respondent to bid. You would provide basic data using averages from existing data for each task listed in section 2.1.

Such as:

* Time for file review
* Travel time to and from job (if it is expected to be part of the Cost Proposal)
* Time for onsite inspection
* Time for Exit Interview with Grantee or Sub-grantee post inspection
* Time for completion of required reports, forms, testing documents
* Time for Rework inspection

Respondents can be apprehensive about their bids. The more details you provide in the RFP Details and Scope of Work and making clear to the Respondent what your expectations of the services look like the more comfortable they will be in bidding.

***Caution*** *–* There are 2 worst case scenarios you want to avoid.

1. Issuing an RFP and no one bids on it because it is too vague or complicated.
2. Issuing an RFP then selecting a winner only to have the vendor bail out of the contract because they find out after the initial work, they are in over their heads.

This is why it is repeatedly stressed that you need to make your expectations clear about the QCI process you are wanting the Respondent to bid.

Additionally, you should not expect to just post the RFP and get responses. You should spend time trying to identify and develop potential respondents. It is better to do this prior to the RFP being released for several reason.

1. It removes the potential confidentiality barriers that would limit your conversations.
2. You will gain a better understand of your audience and write a better RFP.

* **2.6. Required Training** – Do you have grantee specific training that you want the wining Respondent to attend?

***Best Practices*** *–* This could be an onboarding opportunity for you and the new contractor to cover a wide variety of items like: Energy Auditing tool, forms, testing procedures, database access or those additional needs from section 1.2 Delivering Tier 1 & 2 training to contractors is an allowable T&TA expense.

***Best Practices*** *–* Required Training allows you to evaluate your new contractor prior to them doing any work. This could preclude disastrous results latter on when it is much harder to address. Having some type of post-training exam or evaluation that allows you to terminate the contract could be a good idea.

***Best Practices*** *–* Parts of section 2 RFP Details should become components of your Evaluation Criteria and help develop your Scorecard. They also should be used in the contract as Performance Measures.

When creating goals and performance measures think **SMART**.

**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, **T**ime-Bound

See the companion workbook “*SMART Goals*” tab for more on this.

**3. Proposal Submission Requirements**

You will want to list items that you expect the Respondent to submit that will allow you and your review committee to determine whether the Respondent is qualified to perform the work. I strongly suggest you place the order for the submission documents aligned with your scorecard.

***Best Practices*** *–* There might be times when you want to place a page limit on the submission documents. Just remember if you ask for them to submit it; You and your Evaluation Committee must read it. Documents that are narrative in nature are good candidates for limits.

* **3.1. Proposal Format**
  + 3.1.a. Instructions on proposal format PDF is always recommended since those documents cannot be easily or accidentally altered after submission.
  + 3.1.b. Structure of the submission Ask for documents that you identify as *Minimum Pass/Fail* criteria up front then have the technical documents after. If you desire you can establish a document naming convention here as well. This is helpful with electronic submission with multiple files.
  + 3.1.c. Required technical documents These would be those backup documents you specify in section 2.3 Eligibility Criteria. This can typically be combined with the item above by listing each item you want submitted in the order you want them in.
* **3.2. Pre-Bid Conference** – This is an optional item, if your procurement procedures permit, where you hold a meeting after the release of the RFP and you can discuss with prospective Respondents the contents of the RFP.

***Best Practices*** *–* After the RFP has been released you never want to speak to or discuss anything that has not been included in the RFP. Giving information to 1 or more interested parties and not to others is ground for an appeal where the results of your RFP can be contested even if the individual or organization never makes a submission.

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* **3.3. Pre-Bid Questions Deadline** – This has become more common than the Pre-Bid Conference. If your procurement procedures permit this, you would want to ensure that the questions with your answers are posted in a public way like the RFP was published to avoid potential appeals. As always check with your procurement staff.
* **3.4. Submission Deadline** – Reiterating the dates previously established
  + Date and time by which proposals must be received
  + Submission method (e.g., email, physical delivery)
* **3.5. Contact Information** – Who will be the central point of contact for the RFP?
  + Point of contact for submission, questions, clarifications
  + Contact details (phone, email, postal address)

***Best Practices*** *–* Local procurement policy usually covers confidentiality but, it is important that once the RFP is published that anyone involved with the process avoids discussing the RFP. It is recommended that you limit your comments to what is published in the RFP to avoid creating a real or perceived unfair competitive advantage that might result in the RFP being contested. A single point of contact will also help with this.

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**4. Evaluation and Selection**

Think of this section as the place where you establish the “*rules of the game*” that the Respondents and the issuer of the RFP will follow through the process. These rules should already be established in your procurement policy and procedures and would govern this section. Basic sample language is in *italics*.

* **4.1. Evaluation Process**
  + Description of how proposals will be evaluated – This would typically be a breakdown of the Minimum Pass/Fail criteria established in Section 2.2.
  + Overview of evaluation committee or process – Statements of the general composition of the committee.

*Sample Grantee uses a two-tiered process for evaluation of submissions. Tier 1 is determination of suitability of the respondent. This process examines the submission for compliance with the Minimum Pass/Fail Criteria.*

*Submissions that meet ALL Minimum Pass/Fail criteria will proceed to the Technical Evaluation. The Technical Evaluation uses a weighted scoring methodology and can be found in Appendix E Sample Scorecard.*

***Best Practices*** *–* The Scorecard is the heart of the selection process. If your procurement policy and procedures allow the use of a weighted scorecard it is recommended. The weighted scorecard is the best tool you can use to prioritize the technical items you find most important. See the companion workbook Scorecard for an example of this.

* **4.2. Criteria for Selection** – This section would cover the technical selection process. Additional items from your procurement policy and procedures could also be included here.
  + Technical approach and methodology
  + Experience and qualifications of the bidder
  + Cost and budget considerations

*Sample Grantee will select the submission with the highest Technical Score. In the event there are 2 or more submissions with the same Technical Score, the submission with the lower per unit inspection price as quoted on Appendix F Price Quote Sheet will be awarded.*

**5. Federal Compliance Requirements**

* **5.1. Federal Regulations** – Disclosing all the guiding regulations of each federal funding source. You can find these on the Award Letter of each grant you will be funding this RFP with.
  + Compliance with applicable federal regulations (e.g., Uniform Guidance 2 CFR§ 200 Sub-Part D)
  + Requirements for federal reporting and record retention rules
* **5.2. Terms and Conditions** – This is about full disclosure. Attaching your organization’s standard terms and conditions may be part of your procurement policy. Below are things to consider.
  + Federal grant terms and conditions
  + Non-discrimination and equal opportunity clauses
  + Data management and privacy requirements
* **5.3. Insurance and Bonding** – If you have not detailed all of this in section 2.3 Eligibility Criteria you can place or restate it here.
  + Required insurance coverage
  + Bonding requirements, if applicable

***Best Practices*** *–* By including this in section 2.3 Eligibility Criteria you can then list it as Minimum Pass/Fail criteria in section 4.1. This allows you to ignore submissions that did not include this in their packet.

**7. Additional Information**

* **7.1. FAQs**
  + Frequently asked questions and answers

***Best Practices*** *–* Items that you could anticipate questions and include in your FAQ document would be what are the components of each item you are asking the Respondent to give you a price quote for. Use your Pricing Sheet Template to guide you.

* **7.2. Attachments and Appendices**
  + Relevant documents, forms, and templates
  + Maps, charts, or other support materials
* **7.3. Pre-Proposal Meeting**
  + Details of any pre-proposal conference or meeting
  + Date, time, and location
  + Online meeting login and/or registration
* **7.4. Appeal Process**
  + This is an item that should be covered in your procurement policy and procedures also. This may be part of your procurement rule to publish as part of the RFP.

***Best Practices*** *–* Remember less is better.

Knowing the mandatory components under your procurement rules is important.

While you want to be transparent and upfront with potential Respondents making your RFP to big and complicated could scare off potential candidates. It can be challenging to strike the balance between being informative and being overwhelming.