

MiCTA's RFP Process

In The Beginning:

The RFP process begins with Members submitting specific RFP initiatives for consideration. MiCTA may elect to send an e-mail survey to the membership to determine the strength of the support for a specific project prior to beginning project research. The survey would include a brief description of the project, and request information such as:

- Indication of Members' current interest in MiCTA pursuing the RFP
- Currently considering an RFP for the same products / services, or has an RFP on the street
- Whether the Member will support the organization by using any resulting MiCTA agreements
- Usage volumes that can be cited in the RFP
- Any unique or specific product or service requirements
- Facility and related equipment requirements
- Service and support requirements
- Industry Standards vendors must adhere to
- Current contractual agreements for products and services being requested – vendor's name, contract expiration dates, etc.
- Interest in serving on the RFP Development or Response Evaluation Committee

RFP Development:

MiCTA has developed a base RFP boilerplate that defines the basic submission requirements of the RFP and vendor required submissions. This document is under a constant review and revision process, and can be updated to include specific member bid requirements not currently covered. MiCTA conducts research on the current RFP initiative, and a base outline is prepared as the working document for the Development Committee. Research is also conducted on potential vendors, which becomes the basis of the Vendor Distribution List.

The RFP Development Committee is responsible for defining the purpose and scope of the project, identifying project core requirements, developing product and technical specifications, maintenance / support and vendor service requirements, identifying Member Participation Agreement terms and conditions, and determining evaluation criteria and weights. These sections are inserted into the boilerplate document, and the committee begins the review and edit phase of the project. The committee determines whether a Pre-Proposal Conference with vendors is required, and recommends a central location. MiCTA contracts with a conference center for the date / time recommended, and includes this element as part of the boilerplate requirements. Committee members are also asked to share their recommended vendor list with MiCTA, which is included in the development of the final Vendor Distribution List.

RFP Release Process:

Once the RFP document meets the committee's expectations, the document dates and Schedule of Events are updated, and the RFP is ready to release to vendors. The Vendor Distribution List includes all vendors who have 1) indicated an interest in MiCTA RFPs, 2) currently hold a MiCTA Approved agreement, 3) name submitted by committee members, and 4) identified through MiCTA's web research. An RFP Release Notice is e-mailed to each vendor contact along with a User Name and Password to access the RFP documents, which are posted to the MiCTA web site. Additionally, MiCTA will publish a notice of the RFP release in the USA Today paper and on-line service as required by the project or co-sponsors. Vendors contacting the MiCTA office, who are not on the distribution list, will be provided with the User Name and Password to access the posted documents. RFPs are posted for a minimum of 28-days, and may be longer depending on the complexity of the RFP. MiCTA begins the solicitation process for Evaluation Committee participants, and contacts possible retreat sites for availability and costs.

Vendor Questions and Answers:

If a Pre-Proposal Conference is held, MICTA and members of the Development Committee will address all attending vendors. A brief overview of MiCTA and any co-sponsors will be provided, overview of the core requirements of the RFP, and then general questions from vendors will be addressed. Any additional questions will be handled as follows. When a Pre-Proposal Conference is not held, vendors are instructed to contact the MICTA office via e-mail only with all inquiries. MICTA then rewrites these questions in a generic format, submits to the appropriate person for response, and then posts the question and response to the RFP page on the MiCTA web site. This correspondence continues until about 3-5 days before the RFP response is due. All QnA's remain open for those vendors who submitted an Intent to Respond (ITR) form until the RFP closes.

RFP Due Date:

Vendor responses must be received by 5:00 PM, EST, on the due date specified in the RFP. Responses are checked in against the ITR list. Original signed documents are separated and stored in a secure location, and copies are prepared to distribute to the Evaluation Committee.

Any vendor, whose response may be delivered late, must contact the MICTA office prior to the deadline and request an extension. If approved, the vendor must send a copy of the response via e-mail before the 5:00 PM deadline, and overnight express the original signed document and all required copies, which must be received before 5:00 PM, EST the next day. The e-mail copy and submitted copy must be a mirror image of each other. Vendors making a first contact after the RFP closing date / time, will not be allowed to submit a response, but are encouraged complete a vendor registration that will add them to the Vendor Distribution List for future project notices and to continue to watch the web site for projects they can participate in.

Response Evaluation:

The Evaluation Committee commits to a 1-2 week off-site evaluation retreat to read and score the RFP, and conduct any additional processes. MICTA reserves conference facilities in a resort location, and assumes the cost for the meeting rooms, continental breakfast, lunch, and staff requirements. Committee members or their sponsors are responsible for travel and room expenses. The evaluation process will address all Evaluation Criteria as defined in the RFP, and individual scores and comments are entered into each vendor's Evaluation Criteria scoring sheet. The phases of the evaluation process include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Initial Review** – MICTA scans through each response to check off required elements of the RFP, and develops a list of missing elements, and sends a Clarification Report (CR) to the vendor that requires these elements be submitted prior to the Evaluation Retreat. Responses to CR's are evaluated for content, responsiveness, and timeliness of submission.
- **Full Read / Scoring** – the Evaluation Committee breaks down into subcommittees representing Business, Product, and Technical and Support, and reads and evaluates responses to their relevant areas. Subcommittees work on the same group of vendors each day, and at the end of the day each provides an update and comments. If a vendor is found deficient in specific areas, they may be sent a Deficiency Report (DR) via e-mail, and given a specific number of days to respond. DR's are evaluated for content, responsiveness, and timeliness of response. Failure to respond to a CR or DR will result in the vendor losing all or part of the points assigned to the particular element.
- **Financial Review** – either the MICTA Financial Officer or qualified members of the Evaluation Committee review the audited financial reports, Annual Reports, Dun & Bradstreet / Credit Bureau reports, Accounting Practices Letter, and banking and auditing references submitted. Additionally, a web search is conducted for pertinent information concerning each vendor's management, scalability, research and development and overall corporate/company stability.
- **Client References** – vendors are required to provide prior notice to each client reference authorizing them to provide a reference verification to the Evaluation Committee representative. Responding clients are asked a series of questions, scores are issued based on the response, and comments noted. If the reference refuses to respond, the vendor will lose the points associated with this process.
- **Subcontractors and Their References** – vendor subcontractors delivering products / services direct to Members will be required to go through the same financial review as the vendor. Additionally, their current and past client references will go through the same verification process. If product / services are not provided direct, the vendor assumes all responsibility for the actions of their subcontractors.

- **Benchmark Cost Proposal** – vendors may be requested to submit a Benchmark Cost Proposal response if responses to the cost proposal are such that comparative analysis between vendors cannot be completed. The Evaluation Committee develops the benchmark that is e-mailed to vendors, and requires each to respond specifically as defined. Vendors are scored on 1) Known Out-Of-Box Costs including price competitiveness / stability, incentive offerings, maintenance / support / training / SLA costs and professional services costs and customizations, 2) Demonstration of Known / Understood 3-Year Costs, and 3) Cost as Proposed.
- **Presentation / Demonstration** – the Evaluation Committee determines whether or not to require vendors to provide an on-site presentation / demonstration of their products and services. If the on-site process is not required, vendors may be asked to participate in a conference call and address any additional issues or concerns of the committee. The presentation or conference call will focus specifically on the product and service offering with limited time spent on company overview and marketing processes.
- **Product Testing** – is conducted on the recommendation of the Development and Evaluation committees. The process is conducted in a realistic office setting, completely documented, and a white paper report on the outcome is written and posted to the web site as part of the project wrap-up process.
- **Best and Final Offer (BAFO)** – the Evaluation Committee may opt to invoke the BAFO opportunity whenever vendor offers are not as competitive as they could be or sufficient information was not provided to make a definitive decision on an Approved award recommendation.

Award Recommendation:

Once all phases of the evaluation process are completed and scores entered into the scoring sheet, the cost value ratio is determined for each vendor. The cost ratio is then applied to the vendor's cost proposal to determine the best overall value and very good value proposals. The Evaluation Committee determines the Approved recommendations based on the cost value and comments offered during the entire evaluation process. The award recommendation is voted on by the Evaluation Committee, and then forwarded to the appropriate Boards for final review and approval. Vendors receiving an award are notified immediately upon Board approval, and contract negotiations with MICTA begin. Vendors not receiving an award are notified via e-mail.

Project Wrap-Up:

MICTA writes up the evaluation and award process, and posts to the web site for Members to review and use as justification for utilizing MiCTA programs without going out for bid.

MiCTA Request For Proposal

Base Outline

The purpose of a MiCTA RFP is to aggregate Member demand, which will 1) facilitate institutional purchases of cost-effective products and services, 2) promote product / service interoperability based on industry standards, 3) influence market trends that are more favorable to the membership. Usage of any/all resulting agreements with the Approved vendors by the membership is strictly voluntary.

The RFP process is based on Member requests and potential demand for specific products and services, and is provided at no charge to the membership. The cost to research, develop, publish, evaluate, and award an RFP on a national level runs well into the hundred thousand dollar range. Members are encouraged to support this process by participating in either the development of technical specifications or the evaluation/analysis/award process. Because the organization is only as strong as its active members; all Members are encouraged to support their organization by recognizing the successful vendors and utilizing the programs resulting from this process.

The following is a base outline of a MiCTA RFP published on behalf of the membership. Bid documents are constantly revised based on the project and needs of the membership. Therefore, this outline allows procurement officials to confirm the MICTA bid addresses their organizations bid requirements.

Project Introduction Solicitation

RFP Overview:

- Purpose and Scope of Project
- Pricing Structure
- National RFP Response
- True RFP
- Potential Sales Volume
- Members Current Contractual Agreement
- RFP Intention
- Proposal Acceptance
- Proposals Requested

Official RFP Submissions**Submission Conditions:**

- Schedule of Events
- Vendor Cost Proposal
- Intent to Respond
- Late Proposal Response
- Communications Channel
- Vendor Response Format
- RFP Closing Date / Time
- Response Organization
- Required Pre-Proposal Conference
- Best & Final Offer (BAFO) Opportunity
- Tentative Vendor Presentation Schedule

Response Process and Conditions:

- Billable Contract Costs
- RFP Reproduction or Distribution
- Information Confidentiality
- Non-Discrimination Clause
- Proposal Acceptance / Rejection
- Gratuities
- Tentative Vendor Pres. Schedule
- Release of RFP Vendor List
- Proposal Submission Expense

Document / Revision Process:

- Conflicts and Omissions
- Response Modifications
- Final Authority
- Solicited Response
- Refinements / Clarifications
- RFP Document Revisions

Evaluation / Selection Process:

- Evaluation Committee
- Proposal Response Scoring
- RFP Evaluation & Selection Criteria
- Processing Decisions

Award Process:

- Agreement Offer
- Contract Awards
- Committee Recommendation
- Agreement Term
- Award Status
- Right to Negotiate

Required Vendor Submissions**Required RFP Attachments****Vendor Background:**

- Corporate Overview
- Member Tax Exemption
- Insurance Requirements
- Invoice Cost Elements
- Patents
- Billing/Invoice/Payment Options
- Legal Proceedings
- Returned Materials Policy

MiCTA / ATAlliance Program:

- Executive Summary
- Program Announcement
- Program Implementation
- Product Specific Inquiries
- Program Marketing Options
- Other Available Services

Product Specification / Warranty:

- Product Testing
- Manufacturer's Warranty Agreements
- Hardware / Software Technical Data Sheets

Member Participation Agreement**Required Participation Terms and Conditions:**

- Appropriate Funding
- Copyright Requirements
- Member Payment / Acceptance
- Liquidated Damages
- Member Governing Law
- Contract Termination
- Source Code
- Others as Defined

Master Agreement Requirements

Required Terms and Conditions

Attachment A - Project Specifications Defined

Product Overview:

- Vendor's Product Offering
- License Requirements
- Market Share
- Vendor Professional Affiliations
- Standard's Compliance / Conformance

Product / Services Specifications:

- Required
- Specific Brands / Manufacturers
- Preferred
- Specific Models
- Optional

Technical Specifications:

- Required
- Building / Room Requirements
- Preferred
- System Requirements
- Optional
- Security Requirements

Support Options:

- Maintenance / Support Services
- Help Desk - Admin/Technical/Student
- Network Operations Center
- Service Level Agreements
- System Security
- Extended Warranty/Maintenance Agreements

Vendor Services:

- Setup / Installation
- Conversion Services
- Integration Services
- Others as Required

Attachment B - Vendor Profile

- Company Profile
- Parent Company
- Research and Development
- Pricing and Distribution
- Geographical Coverage Area
- Vendor Affiliations
- Company Minority Status
- Federal Universal Service Fund (USF) Participation
- Vendor's Assigned Personnel
- Presentation of Proposal Response

Attachment C - Vendor's Subcontractors and References

- Subcontractor List
- References - Currently Active Installations
- References - Expired/Closed Purchase Agreements

Attachment D - Vendor References

- Current Customers - Active Installations
- Customers - Expired/Closed Purchase Agreements

Attachment E - Vendor Financials

Required Financial Records:

- Annual Report - Most Recent
- Audited Financial Statements Past 3 Yrs.
- Accounting Practices Letter
- Recent Credit Report (Dun & Bradstreet)
- Banking References
- Current/Past Auditing Firms

Attachment F - Vendor Cost Proposal

Attachment G - MICTA Master Agreement

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