

Bigmouth Creative
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FOR ORGANIZATIONS

How to: The Accessible and Equitable RFP Guide

BIGMOUTH

BRANDS WITH BITE

An inclusive proposal process shows your organization's values and delivers better results.

RFPs are often your organization's first impression on potential partners. But too often, RFPs unintentionally exclude small firms, minority-owned businesses or agencies that bring fresh, mission-driven perspectives.

Burdensome requirements, unclear budgets and inaccessible formats can discourage the very partners who could deliver the most innovative, community-centered solutions.

Bigmouth wants to help your organization level the playing field, expand your pool of talent, strengthen competition and ultimately improve outcomes for you and your partner agencies. Let's explore 5 ways your organization can level up your RFPs, from initial request to working relationships.



Save a tree (or at least a branch). Please don't print this document unless you really need to—and if you do, give it a second life in the recycling bin. *Mother Earth says thanks.*

1

Accessibility

Diverse and small agencies can't respond to your RFPs if they can't find or understand them. Take intentional steps to give every qualified agency a fair shot at applying.

- Ensure your documents meet accessibility standards (WCAG-friendly PDFs).
- Provide clear submission formats (e.g., PDF or Word) and avoid proprietary platforms.
- Share RFPs widely through multiple channels, not just with insiders or pre-selected firms.

2

Transparency

Vague descriptions of your budget or priorities leave agencies unsure if they're a right fit. Build trust and save everyone time with candid information about numbers, timelines and evaluation criteria.

- Clarify evaluation criteria and scoring so all respondents understand how they'll be judged.
- Outline budget ranges to help agencies realistically scope their responses.
- Share timelines up front — including decision and project start dates.

3

Efficiency

A 50-page RFP response doesn't guarantee quality — it just burns hours. Ask agencies for the information you truly need so they respond with the details that matter most.

- Break large questions into manageable sections.
- Provide word/page limits to streamline agency responses.
- Request only what you need, like portfolio samples, case studies and references.

4

Equity In Participation

Not every agency has a compliance officer or a legal team. Bring more diverse voices into the RFP process by creating opportunities for open communication.

- Allow joint proposals and partnerships between agencies and vendors to encourage collaboration.
- Avoid spec work—strategy or creative concepts—without compensation.
- Clearly outline the required paperwork, including notarized forms and financial documents.
- Offer Q&A sessions or office hours to ensure smaller agencies clearly understand your requirements.

5

Relationship-Building

An RFP isn't just part of the procurement process—it's the beginning of a working relationship. Providing feedback, even to agencies you don't hire, leaves the door open for better fits in the future.

- Treat the RFP process as the start of a partnership, not a transactional moment in time.
- Provide feedback after awarding a contract, especially to finalists. This strengthens the field for future work.

RFP Checklist for Success

We believe the RFP process should build trust, not barriers. Use this checklist to make your RFP more inclusive—and if you'd like support creating one, we're here to help.

- ☐ **Concise Summary:** *A reference checklist of all RFP requirements*
- ☐ **Budget:** *Stated range or ceiling*
- ☐ **Timeline:** *Issue date, due date, award date, start date*
- ☐ **Evaluation Criteria:** *Weighted or clearly outlined*
- ☐ **Submission Format:** *Standard, accessible and consistent*
- ☐ **Questions/Support:** *Open Q&A window with contact info*
- ☐ **Equity Guardrails:** *No unpaid spec work; reasonable timelines*
- ☐ **Accessibility:** *WCAG-compliant PDFs, alt text for visuals*
- ☐ **Content Requests:** *Relevant samples, experience and references only*
- ☐ **Required Paperwork:** *Clear requirements for notarized forms and financial documents*
- ☐ **Feedback Loop:** *Commitment to sharing feedback post-decision*

If you're issuing an RFP for marketing, design or branding, we'd love to be brought to the table to respond—and to show how a purpose-driven partner can make the difference.

To learn more, visit bigmouthcreative.com/get-started/

