

# Requests for Information as Tools in Transit Technology Procurements

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## Introduction

This document was developed with funding from the Oregon Department of Transportation Public Transportation Division to give Oregon transit agencies a brief overview of the value that a request for information (RFI) can offer when they procure technology.

RFIs can assist in the following ways:

- By alerting vendors to your pending procurement, increasing the likelihood of getting proposals when issuing a formal procurement process such as a request for proposal (RFP).
- By helping build relationships with potential vendors outside a formal procurement process.
- By starting off with a written description of the planned procurement, conversations with vendors and demonstrations of their solutions are more likely to be useful and targeted to agency needs.
- Where there are known risks or uncertainty in a project, an RFI allows vendors to provide feedback on directions an agency is exploring.
- RFIs can be shared with other agencies that have carried out or are considering carrying out similar procurements, opening the door to getting information from peers.

## RFI Dos and Don'ts

### Do

- Contact any agencies that are seeking or using similar services or systems to consult on benefits and problems.
- Provide a background on the agency and the overall project.
- Focus on the return on investment the agency is seeking through the procurement.
- Keep the document brief.



## Don't

- Include overly detailed or final requirements. You may not know all of the features you want and the RFI gives vendors an opportunity to provide options. Providing a complete scope with all requirements may undermine the RFP since the final requirements should be provided to all interested parties through a formal, equal, and fair process.
- Expect complete candor or the perfect solution from vendors. They may still underestimate costs or fail to provide full transparency about the weaknesses of their solutions. The RFI is only one tool for reducing risk.

## RFI Outline

- Introduction and purpose of the RFI
- Agency description, with facts relevant to the procurement. For example, paratransit fleet size in the case of a paratransit-focused procurement.
- Project description, including main benefits and general goals of the system. Don't prescribe the solution, but rather focus on the results you want.
- Key project considerations, such as:
  - Agency concept of operations, into which the solution will be integrated
  - Any unique or noteworthy aspects to the projects
  - Areas where feasibility is still being explored
  - Existing systems or processes the solution will need to be compatible with
  - Features that may require customization or new software development
- Questions, such as:
  - Does the respondent know of other agencies with systems similar to the one described?
  - Can the respondent provide guidelines for anticipating costs, implementation time, training time?
  - What agency capacities need to be in place to support a solution over its entire lifecycle?
  - What common barriers to successful projects have the respondent encountered that could be addressed during the RFP process?
  - Does the respondent's solution use or support transit data standards where applicable (for example GTFS, GTFS-realtime, GTFS-flex, or GTFS-ride)
  - Who would own the data generated by the vendor's solution, and what are the methods to provide all agency-owned data available when requested?
- Parameters for RFI responses:
  - Deadline
  - Any preferred formats
  - Any information that must be included in the response
  - Point of contact for questions about the RFI