



FREE IT BUYER'S GUIDE · PRACTITIONER EDITION

Request for Proposal Template

Step-by-step playbook + customizable RFP for IT deployment projects.

An RFP is a contract negotiation in disguise. The clarity of the RFP determines the quality of bids you receive, the change-order pain you'll feel later, and whether the winning vendor delivers on time. This template walks you through every decision.

Published free by SRS Networks for IT buyers, procurement leads, and project managers writing RFPs for IT deployment work. Includes all 10 required sections, 4 optional high-value sections, sample scope-of-work language for cabling/network/wireless, a sample evaluation rubric, and an 8-week suggested timeline. Every section is followed by Why this matters / Example / Common mistake sidebars.

Template Title	Request for Proposal (RFP) — IT Deployment Projects
Version	v2.0 (Practitioner Edition)
Audience	IT buyers, procurement leads, project managers, business sponsors
Best Used When	Scoping a multi-site IT deployment for competitive bid
Sections	10 required · 4 optional · 3 appendices
Typical Cycle	8 weeks from issue to award
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HOW TO USE THIS TEMPLATE

An RFP is more work to write than people expect. Plan for 30-50 hours of buyer effort to produce a good RFP — and that investment will pay back 5-10x in better bids and fewer change orders. Follow the 8 steps below in order; do not skip Steps 1-3.

STEP 1. Confirm you actually need an RFP

Issue an RFP when you (a) know what you want, (b) know who the qualified vendors are, and (c) want competitive pricing. If you don't yet know (a) or (b), issue an RFI first.

STEP 2. Assemble your internal team

Minimum: business sponsor (signs off on outcomes), IT lead (technical accuracy), procurement (contract terms), legal (T&Cs). Add operations or facilities if site access is non-trivial. Lock 3-5 weekly status meetings before you start drafting.

STEP 3. Document the current-state environment

Pull together: site list, floor plans (or sketches), existing equipment inventory, known constraints (union labor, after-hours, escort policies). Vendors cannot bid accurately without this — and you cannot evaluate bids without it either.

STEP 4. Define the business outcome, not the technology

Lead with what the business needs to achieve. The technology recommendation should be the vendor's job. Buyers who over-specify technology in the RFP get bids that match the spec but miss the outcome.

STEP 5. Customize this template

Replace every [PLACEHOLDER]. Delete optional sections that don't apply. The 10 required sections should remain in order — vendors read RFPs in a predictable sequence and breaking that sequence creates errors in their response.

STEP 6. Run an internal redline before publishing

Have someone NOT on the writing team read the draft cold. If they have questions, vendors will too. Common gaps caught here: undefined acronyms, missing site count, ambiguous acceptance criteria, vague pricing format.

STEP 7. Distribute and run a Q&A window

Send to 3-5 shortlisted vendors. Open a Q&A window in week 2; share consolidated answers to all bidders. Hold an optional 30-min pre-bid call to surface ambiguities early.

STEP 8. Evaluate, debrief, and award

Score responses against the published rubric (Section 8). Shortlist top 3, invite for vendor presentations, check 3 references each, and award within 4 weeks of response deadline. Debrief every losing vendor — it protects your reputation and improves your next RFP.

SUGGESTED 8-WEEK RFP TIMELINE

8 weeks is the SRS-recommended cadence for an enterprise IT deployment RFP. Compress below 6 weeks and bid quality drops materially. Stretch past 12 weeks and top vendors lose interest. The schedule below assumes a 50-site multi-state deployment.

Week	Buyer Activity	Vendor Activity
Weeks 1-2 (Prep)	Internal kickoff, draft RFP, internal redline, shortlist 3-5 vendors	—
Week 3	Distribute RFP via PDF + Excel pricing sheet. Set deadline.	Receive RFP, decide bid/no-bid
Week 4	Open Q&A window. Optional 30-min pre-bid call.	Submit questions, request clarifications
Week 5	Consolidate Q&A, share with all bidders. Hold steady on deadline.	Draft proposal, gather references, build pricing
Week 6	Responses due Friday 5pm. Begin independent scoring.	Submit response
Week 7	Score, shortlist top 3, schedule vendor presentations.	Vendor presentations, reference calls
Week 8	Award decision. Debrief losing vendors. Begin contract negotiation.	Receive award decision

COMMON MISTAKE

Do not let the Q&A window close more than 7 days before the deadline. If it does, the answers you publish in the last week become impossible for vendors to incorporate, and you'll get bids that don't reflect the clarified scope.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT OVERVIEW

WHY THIS MATTERS

Section 1 sets the frame. Vendors use it to decide whether to bid at all. Be specific about who you are, how big the project is, and what's driving it now. Generic intros get generic bids.

About Our Organization

Organization name: *[Your company legal name]*

Industry / vertical: *[e.g., Multi-site retail, Healthcare system, Property management]*

Locations in scope: *[e.g., 50 retail stores across 12 states]*

Internal IT team size: *[e.g., 8 internal IT staff plus 2 MSP partners]*

Decision-making structure: *[e.g., Procurement + CIO + VP Operations sign off jointly]*

Project Goals

Describe in 2-3 paragraphs what this project is trying to accomplish at the business level. Avoid technology jargon. Focus on business outcomes.

Primary business goal: *[1-2 sentence business goal]*

Secondary goals: *[]*

Why now (timing context): *[Business driver for this project now]*

WHAT A STRONG PROJECT-GOALS SECTION LOOKS LIKE

Good: "Unify branch network architecture so we can stand up a new retail location in under 2 weeks. Today this takes 6 weeks; the business is committed to 12 new stores in 2026, and the current cadence will not scale. Standardizing the branch network is the unlock." This tells vendors the outcome (sub-2-week store opening), the volume (12 stores), and the implicit ask (standardized branch architecture).

COMMON MISTAKE

Listing technology brands in Section 1 is a common mistake. "We want SD-WAN with Meraki MX270" tells vendors you've already decided — which kills competitive tension and invites every vendor to bid the same spec. Save brand names for Section 2 (current-state) only.

2.0 CURRENT-STATE ENVIRONMENT

WHY THIS MATTERS

Section 2 is where vendors size the bid. Vague current-state descriptions are the #1 cause of inflated bids — vendors will pad 15-25% to cover the unknown. Detailed current-state descriptions tighten bids and surface real differences in vendor approach.

Document what exists today. Attach floor plans (Appendix A) and equipment inventory (Appendix B) as supporting detail. The narrative below covers what's NOT in the appendices.

Existing Network Architecture

Core network equipment: *[e.g., Cisco Catalyst 9300 stack, Meraki MX270 SD-WAN]*

Wireless platform: *[e.g., Cisco Meraki MR cloud-managed APs]*

Cabling standard: *[e.g., Cat6A horizontal, OS2 backbone]*

Pathway infrastructure: *[e.g., J-hooks in open ceiling, conduit at penetrations]*

Current Vendors

Incumbent ISP(s): *[e.g., Spectrum Business + AT&T Business Fiber]*

Incumbent network vendor: *[e.g., MSP XYZ]*

Equipment under existing warranty: *[List which equipment must remain in scope]*

Required Attachments

- Floor plans for all in-scope locations (Appendix A)
- Existing equipment inventory by location (Appendix B)
- Current network diagrams (logical + physical)
- Known constraints (union labor, after-hours requirements, escort policies)

PRO TIP FROM SRS NETWORKS

If you don't have floor plans, attach photos of at least 5 representative sites. Vendors can estimate from photos. Vendors cannot estimate from nothing — they will refuse to bid or pad 20% to cover the visibility gap.

WHAT STRONG CURRENT-STATE DOCUMENTATION LOOKS LIKE

Best-in-class Section 2 disclosures include: (a) site count by region, (b) average sq ft per site, (c) ceiling type (open, hard, tile), (d) union jurisdictions by site, (e) after-hours requirements by site, (f) existing equipment warranty expiry dates. The more specific, the tighter the bids.

3.0 TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS AND SCOPE OF WORK

WHY THIS MATTERS

Section 3 is the heart of the RFP. The single biggest predictor of change-order pain is ambiguity in Section 3. Be explicit. Use the sample scope-of-work language below as a starting point and customize for your project.

In-Scope Work

Cabling work: [e.g., Cat6A horizontal cabling, X drops per location, Y locations]

Network hardware: [e.g., Switch deployment per location, controller setup]

Wireless deployment: [e.g., Predictive design, AP install, controller config, validation survey]

Project management: [e.g., Single PM coordinating all sites, weekly status reports]

Other in-scope items: []

Sample Scope-of-Work Language

The language below is what SRS Networks would use to define each work type. Customize as needed.

SAMPLE CABLING SCOPE LANGUAGE

Cabling: "Vendor shall furnish and install Cat6A UTP plenum-rated horizontal cabling from TR/IDF to each work-area outlet, terminated on Cat6A keystone jacks (T568B) and 48-port Cat6A patch panels. All horizontal runs shall be supported on J-hooks at 4-foot intervals or in existing ladder rack/cable tray. Drop count per site is defined in Appendix A. Total scope: ~50 sites, ~35 drops per site, ~1,750 total drops."

SAMPLE NETWORK HARDWARE SCOPE LANGUAGE

Network hardware: "Vendor shall procure, configure, and install access-layer switches per the bill of materials in Appendix D. Base configuration includes VLAN setup, management IP assignment, SNMP polling configuration, and integration with the buyer-furnished cloud controller. Vendor shall NOT replace existing core/distribution equipment unless explicitly scoped per site."

SAMPLE WIRELESS SCOPE LANGUAGE

Wireless: "Vendor shall perform a predictive wireless design for each site (Ekahau Pro or equivalent) based on Appendix A floor plans, install access points per the design, configure SSIDs per buyer-furnished controller settings, and perform a post-install validation survey delivered as PDF + native heatmap files."

Out-of-Scope Work

Be explicit about what is NOT in scope. Common items to clarify:

- Pathway and fire-stopping (vendor-provided or building-provided?)
- Equipment procurement (vendor-furnished or buyer-furnished?)
- After-hours premium labor
- Permitting fees
- Hardware warranties (vendor maintains or buyer maintains?)
- Existing equipment removal and disposal

COMMON MISTAKE

The most common change-order surprise in IT deployments is pathway and fire-stopping. Buyers often assume the cabling vendor will handle it; cabling vendors often assume the general contractor will handle it. Result: a \$15K change order on a \$200K project. Pick one and write it down.

Performance Requirements

Required certification standard: [e.g., TIA/EIA-568 Cat6A permanent link, Fluke DSX-8000]

Required testing deliverable: [e.g., Per-link Fluke pass report (PDF + .flw files)]

Required documentation: [e.g., As-built floor plan, port-to-panel mapping, riser diagram]

4.0 DELIVERABLES AND ACCEPTANCE CRITERIA

WHY THIS MATTERS

Section 4 is your contract enforcement language. If a deliverable isn't listed here, you can't hold the vendor accountable for it. Be exhaustive — list every artifact you expect, with format and timing.

Required Deliverables

- Project kickoff document (within 5 business days of award)
- Per-site SOWs with detailed scope, schedule, and crew assignment
- Weekly status reports (in your preferred format)
- Per-link Fluke certification reports for all cabling work
- As-built documentation: floor plans, port schedules, panel maps, riser diagrams
- Photo documentation of all completed work
- Closeout package (within 10 business days of substantial completion)

Acceptance Criteria

Substantial completion definition: *[e.g., All locations live + tested + documented]*

Punch list cure period: *[e.g., 30 days post-acceptance for vendor to address issues]*

Final acceptance trigger: *[e.g., Closeout package delivered + accepted by [TITLE]]*

SAMPLE ACCEPTANCE CRITERIA LANGUAGE

Strong acceptance criteria language: "Substantial completion is achieved when (a) all in-scope drops have passed Fluke certification, (b) all access points are installed and associated with the controller, (c) as-built documentation has been delivered for each site, and (d) the vendor PM and buyer PM have jointly walked at least 10% of sites. Final acceptance occurs 30 calendar days after substantial completion, provided punch-list items have been addressed."

COMMON MISTAKE

Avoid ambiguous acceptance language like "all work performed to industry standards." Define industry standards by reference (TIA/EIA-568, BICSI TDMM 14th edition, NEC 800). Otherwise, you and the vendor will disagree on what 'standards' means at handoff.

5.0 PROJECT TIMELINE AND MILESTONES

WHY THIS MATTERS

Vendors price risk based on how aggressive your timeline is. Padded timelines get lower bids; aggressive timelines get higher bids or refusals. Be honest about constraints and explicit about blackout windows.

Target award date: []

Target mobilization date: []

Target first-site completion: []

Target substantial completion (all sites): []

Target final acceptance: []

Blackout Windows / Constraints

Windows when work cannot occur: [e.g., Black Friday weekend, end-of-quarter freezes]

Required after-hours work: [e.g., Cutover work between 10 PM - 6 AM at retail locations]

PRO TIP FROM SRS NETWORKS

If you have a hard business deadline (store opening, lease expiry, regulatory deadline) name it explicitly. Vendors will adjust crew sizing and overtime policy to hit a real deadline. Vague deadlines get vague commitment.

6.0 VENDOR QUALIFICATIONS

WHY THIS MATTERS

Section 6 separates qualified bidders from unqualified ones BEFORE you score on price. Mark each requirement Pass/Fail. A vendor who misses any Pass/Fail item is disqualified regardless of how attractive their price is. This is the single best fraud filter in the RFP.

Required Qualifications (Pass / Fail)

- Active general liability insurance (\$2M minimum)
- Workers' compensation coverage in all states where work will be performed
- BICSI-certified low-voltage technicians on staff (RCDD, RTPM, or Installer 2)
- OSHA 10/30 certifications for field crews
- Documented quality assurance program
- Minimum 5 years in business in IT deployment / structured cabling
- W-2 field technician bench (not 1099 subcontractor-only)

Required References

Number of references: *[e.g., 3 references for similar-scope projects in past 24 months]*

Required Disclosures

- Past 5 years of major projects in our industry vertical
- Geographic coverage / crew bench by region
- Subcontractor disclosure: vendors used, % of work subcontracted
- Financial stability: years in business, ownership structure
- Litigation disclosure: any active project disputes in past 24 months

COMMON MISTAKE

If a vendor cannot disclose W-2 vs subcontractor mix, assume they're a broker. Brokers earn margin between you and the actual field crew, which means their bid embeds 20-30% overhead that doesn't reach the technicians doing the work. The result is thinner margins for the actual installers and lower-quality outcomes.

7.0 PRICING STRUCTURE AND PAYMENT TERMS

WHY THIS MATTERS

Section 7 is where most RFPs lose comparability. If you let each vendor structure pricing their own way, you'll receive 5 incomparable bids. Use the attached SRS RFQ Pricing Spreadsheet (Appendix C) to force apples-to-apples pricing.

Required Pricing Format

All pricing must be submitted using the attached pricing spreadsheet (Appendix C). Free-form pricing will not be evaluated.

Required Pricing Breakdown

- Per-location material costs (cable, jacks, panels, hardware)
- Per-location labor costs (pull, terminate, test, document)
- Mobilization fees (if any)
- Project management fees (broken out separately)
- Travel and per-diem (if applicable)
- Change-order rate (T&M hourly rate for out-of-scope work)
- Total project cost, fully loaded

Payment Terms

Payment schedule: *[e.g., 10% mobilization, 60% milestone-based, 25% substantial completion, 5% final]*

Payment terms: *[e.g., Net-30 from invoice, ACH preferred]*

Retainage: *[e.g., 5% retainage held until punch-list cure period complete]*

SAMPLE PAYMENT SCHEDULE

A balanced payment schedule for a \$500K, 50-site deployment: 10% at mobilization (\$50K), 60% milestone-based on per-site substantial completion (\$300K paid in tranches as sites complete), 25% at full substantial completion (\$125K), 5% retainage released after 30-day punch-list cure period (\$25K). Vendors will accept this; it balances their cash flow needs against your accountability needs.

COMMON MISTAKE

Avoid front-loaded payment schedules (e.g., 50% upfront). They eliminate your leverage if delivery slips. Avoid back-loaded schedules (e.g., 100% at completion) — strong vendors will no-bid because cash flow is uneconomic. A 10/60/25/5 split is the SRS-recommended baseline.

8.0 EVALUATION CRITERIA

WHY THIS MATTERS

Publishing your evaluation rubric BEFORE responses come in is one of the single highest-leverage things you can do in an RFP. It signals professionalism, deters protest, and forces vendors to address what you actually care about — instead of guessing.

Responses will be evaluated against the following weighted criteria. Vendors should know up-front what we're optimizing for so they can shape their response accordingly.

Criterion	Recommended Weight	What We're Looking For
Technical Fit	30%	Direct match between proposed solution and requirements
Vendor Experience & References	25%	Similar-scope projects in our vertical, recent past, W-2 crews
Price	25%	Fully loaded total + change-order rate
Approach & Methodology	20%	Project plan, communication cadence, risk management

Sample Scoring Rubric (1-5 per criterion)

Score	Definition	Behavior
1	Weak	Doesn't meet requirements; generic response
2	Partial	Meets some requirements; significant gaps in approach
3	Meets	Meets all requirements; approach is sound but unexceptional
4	Strong	Meets all requirements; approach shows experience and forethought
5	Best-in-class	Meets all requirements + offers insight or value beyond the ask

Evaluation Process

- Pass / fail qualification check first (see Section 6)
- Independent scoring by 3+ evaluators against published criteria
- Shortlist 3 vendors for vendor presentations and reference checks
- Award decision within 4 weeks of response deadline

Price Reasonability Check

Bids more than 20% below the average of all bids will be flagged for additional scope review. The lowest IT bid is often the lowest because scope was excluded.

PRO TIP FROM SRS NETWORKS

When prices land in a tight band (top 3 within 8% of each other), price has revealed itself as a non-differentiator. At that point, optimize for vendor experience and operational discipline. The 5% savings won't matter if the cheaper vendor misses your launch date.

9.0 SUBMISSION INSTRUCTIONS

WHY THIS MATTERS

Vague submission instructions mean every vendor submits in a different format, which makes scoring impossible. Be specific about format, page limit, attachments, and channel.

Response deadline: *[Friday MM/DD/YYYY at 5:00 PM Pacific]*

Submission method: *[e.g., Email PDF + Excel pricing to procurement@yourcompany.com]*

Response format: *[e.g., PDF response (max 25 pages) + Excel pricing spreadsheet]*

Page limit: *[e.g., 25 pages excluding pricing + appendices]*

Required attachments: *[e.g., Insurance certificates, BICSI certs, references, sample as-built]*

Q&A Window

Q&A submission window: *[Questions due by [DATE]; consolidated answers shared with all bidders by [DATE]]*

Single point of contact for questions: *[e.g., procurement@yourcompany.com]*

Pre-Bid Conference (Optional)

Pre-bid conference details: *[e.g., Optional virtual session [DATE/TIME] - register at [LINK]]*

PRO TIP FROM SRS NETWORKS

Cap response length at 25 pages excluding pricing and appendices. Top vendors will fight for the limit and you'll get sharper thinking. Uncapped RFPs come back as 80-page decks no evaluator will read carefully.

10.0 TERMS AND CONDITIONS

WHY THIS MATTERS

Section 10 is where legal review pays off. Most vendors will accept your standard T&Cs if you send them; vendors who require their own paper add 2-4 weeks to contracting. Have legal pre-approve your standard T&Cs before issuing the RFP so post-award negotiation is fast.

By submitting a response, vendors agree to the following terms. Any exceptions must be explicitly listed in the response.

Liability and Insurance

Required insurance coverage: *[e.g., \$2M GL, \$1M E&O, workers' comp in all states of operation]*

Indemnification language: *[Standard mutual indemnification per attached MSA]*

Intellectual Property

IP ownership of deliverables: *[All as-built docs, test reports, and project documentation are buyer property]*

Data Handling

Confidentiality requirements: *[NDA required at award; vendor may not disclose project details]*

Termination

Termination clauses: *[Termination for convenience with 30 days notice; termination for cause with 10 days cure period]*

COMMON MISTAKE

Do not allow the winning vendor to substitute their MSA for yours after award. Lock terms before you issue the RFP. The single biggest cause of post-award delays is renegotiating T&Cs you should have settled upfront.

AFTER YOU RECEIVE RESPONSES

Receiving the RFP responses is when the actual evaluation begins. Follow the steps below to go from 5 stacks of paper to a signed contract in 2 weeks.

STEP 1. Pass/Fail screening first

Before scoring on technical or price, check every response against Section 6 Pass/Fail items. Disqualify any vendor missing a required qualification. This typically eliminates 1-2 vendors before you ever read the proposal text.

STEP 2. Independent scoring by 3 evaluators

Send the surviving responses to 3 evaluators. Each scores independently against the rubric. DO NOT discuss until each evaluator has scored solo. Group discussion before independent scoring causes anchor-bias and washes out real disagreements.

STEP 3. Reconcile scores in a 90-minute session

Bring evaluators together. For every criterion where scores diverge by more than 2 points, discuss specifically what each scorer saw. The discussion almost always surfaces a fact one scorer missed. Re-score after discussion.

STEP 4. Shortlist top 3 for presentations and references

Invite the top 3 vendors to a 60-minute presentation. Send a structured agenda: 10 min vendor intro, 30 min Q&A on their response, 20 min reference review. Reference-check ALL 3 vendors, not just the leader.

STEP 5. Award and debrief

Award within 4 weeks of the response deadline. Notify the winner first, then schedule 15-min debrief calls with every losing vendor. The debrief protects your reputation for the next RFP and surfaces blind spots in your evaluation.

PRO TIP FROM SRS NETWORKS

When debriefing losing vendors, lead with what they did well, then explain the gap. The goal is to leave them positive about you so they bid your next RFP. The IT vendor community is small — losing vendors talk to each other about how buyers treat them.



APPENDIX A · FLOOR PLANS AND SITE LISTS

Attach floor plans and site lists here. Per-location detail enables accurate per-site bids.



APPENDIX B · EXISTING EQUIPMENT INVENTORY

Attach current hardware inventory by location.



APPENDIX C · PRICING SPREADSHEET TEMPLATE

Attach the SRS Networks IT RFQ Pricing Spreadsheet (free download at srsnetworks.com/what-is-an-rfq-for-it-projects).

ABOUT THIS TEMPLATE

Published free by SRS Networks - a nationwide structured cabling and IT infrastructure deployment firm headquartered in Salinas, California, serving multi-site enterprises and channel partners across all 48 contiguous US states since 1996. 500+ deployments, 5,000+ sites. We review buyer RFP drafts at no cost - email partners@srsnetworks.com.

Want SRS Networks to review your draft before publishing? Email partners@srsnetworks.com or call **(866) 224-3636**. Returned within 3 business days at no cost — no obligation to bid.

More IT procurement resources at srsnetworks.com/rfp-vs-rfq-vs-rfi-for-it-projects