



TENDER, BID & PROPOSAL TYPES: A QUICK GUIDE FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

What are the different types of tenders and competitive evaluation processes for professional services procurement and, more importantly, what do they mean?

Here is Julian Midwinter & Associates quick guide to the world of competitive procurement.

Types of tenders, bids & proposals

In addition to the generally well-understood terms “tender” and “proposal”, there are “open” and “closed” processes, and then variations within each that can apply to professional services procurement.

“Open” or public tenders and proposals

An open tender is just that, open to anyone.

Generally advertised (though not always widely) through government websites, paid tender alert subscription services, in media or trade journals, they invite anyone to submit a tender.

Open tenders are most likely to be issued by government or government entities who seek competitive proposals.

“Closed” or invitation-only tenders and proposals

As the name suggests, closed tenders involve only selected bidders. Those invited have been pre-qualified in some way – perhaps by successfully making it through round one of an *Expression of Interest* (EOI), or by being invited based on an existing relationship or reputation.

Closed tenders are most likely to be found in the private sector.



Other names for professional services tenders, bids & proposals

Some of the newer variant names for professional services “tenders” include:

Unsolicited proposal

Professional service providers may have services they want to sell directly to government, whether the government has requested them or not.

[A famous and controversial example is the Barangaroo complex and casino in Sydney.](#)

Most state and territory governments (except Tasmania and Western Australia) have now provided guidelines for unsolicited proposals.

In NSW, unsolicited proposals have become a big thing ever since Barangaroo was approved.

Unsolicited proposals can address community needs, encourage private investment and drive innovation.

They're tricky to pull off though, as the main requirement to pass muster is “uniqueness”. It can be very difficult to position your offering as truly unique.

Application for inclusion (AFI) or Request for Registration of Interest (ROI)

AFIs and ROIs are very similar to tenders, and have many similar compliance requirements. However, it's better to think of AFIs and ROIs as the first part of what can be a two- or three-stage process.

Successfully completing an AFI or ROI generally gets you a pre-approved supplier list that consumers shop from.

Some recent good examples include the Commonwealth Government's Legal Services Multi-Use List (or LSMUL) or the variant, [NSW Roads and Maritime Services Request for Registration of Interest \(ROI\) process for infrastructure and related design services.](#)

Once you've completed the application or registration process, been approved and have your place on the list, to some extent it's up to you what you make of it.

You need to attract positive attention around what it is you do, and build relationships with the relevant purchasers.

You'll most likely then need to provide responses for the next phase which may be, as in the case of the Commonwealth Government, a “Request for Quote”.

Request for Quote (RFQ)

RFQs can involve as much work as tender, but focus on more granular questions requiring detailed responses.

RFQs are typically used when an organisation has already fully scoped and decided what service solution it wants for a project, or what sort of volume is on offer, and needs to rapidly obtain very specific details and (perhaps most importantly) competitive pricing from a range of potential service providers.

Request for Information (RFI)

An RFI is issued when a consumer wants to scope and gather information about a specific firm or market, and is often an intelligence-gathering exercise that will inform a future tender or proposal request.

Get in touch and find out how more about how we can help you [win more tenders, bids & proposals.](#)

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