

Request for proposal

For hiring a creative partner. Send the same document to every bidder, so the answers come back in a shape you can compare.

Company

Contact

Issued

Replies due

1 Who we are

What the company does, who buys from it, and who the partner works with.

2 What we need

The work in plain terms, and whether it is one project or ongoing.

One-off project or ongoing work

Expected volume (per month or in total)

The work, in plain terms

3 Why now, and what success looks like

The reason behind the search, and how you will judge the partner after six months.

Why we are looking now

How we will judge success

4 Budget and timeline

Give a range. Without one, proposals cannot be compared.

Budget range

Start date

Decision by

5 What we want in the proposal

Ask for the same things from everyone, in the same order. Tick what you need and add your own.

Item	Detail we want

6 How we will choose

Share the weighting. It is the single best way to get proposals that answer what you care about rather than what the bidder is proud of.

Criterion	Weight	Notes

7 Process and practical details

Dates for questions and answers, the format replies should come in, and anything a bidder must agree to before starting, such as security reviews or a standard contract.

Key dates	Reply format and where to send it
Questions by	
Answers sent	Requirements (security, legal, insurance)
Proposals due	
Shortlist calls	

Worked example

Proposal items and scoring that work

Fill fields 5 and 6 with something close to this. Weights are an example; set your own.

5 What we want in the proposal

Item	Detail we want
Relevant work	Three projects close to ours, with the brief and the result
The team	Who would work on our account, and their roles
How you work	From brief to delivery: tools, review rounds, turnaround
Pricing	For our volume, with what is and is not included
A short response to a sample brief	One page on how you would approach it, no free creative
References	Two clients we can call
Contract terms	Notice period, ownership of files, payment terms

6 How we will choose

Criterion	Weight	Notes
Quality of relevant work	30%	Judged on the three projects
Understanding of our brief	25%	From the sample response
Team and process	20%	Who, how fast, how many rounds
Price for the volume	15%	Total cost, not day rate
References and fit	10%	After the calls

Questions worth adding

These sort strong bidders from polished ones.

- ☐ What happens when the person we meet in the pitch is on vacation?
You learn whether there is a real team or one person and a network.
- ☐ Show us a project that went wrong, and what you changed afterwards.
Every partner has one. The answer tells you how they handle the next.
- ☐ How many revision rounds are included, and what happens after them?
Vague answers here become surprise invoices later.

Before you send it

Six checks. An RFP that passes them gets proposals you can compare side by side.

- ☐ **The scope says one-off or ongoing, with a volume.**
Without it, a studio built for single projects and a team built for ongoing work cannot both price fairly.
- ☐ **There is a budget range.**
A missing number is the most common reason proposals cannot be compared.
- ☐ **Every bidder gets the same document and the same answers.**
Share every question and answer with all bidders by the same date.
- ☐ **The scoring weights are written down before the proposals arrive.**
Weights set afterwards tend to favor the proposal someone already liked.
- ☐ **The sample brief is small.**
One page of approach, never free creative. Strong partners decline unpaid spec work.
- ☐ **There is a decision date, and you will keep it.**
Bidders hold teams for you. A slipping date costs you the best ones.

A four-week timeline

Long enough for considered proposals, short enough that nobody loses interest.

- Week 1** **Send the RFP to three to five partners**
Questions open for five working days.
- Week 2** **Answer every question for every bidder**
One shared answer document, sent the same day.
- Week 3** **Proposals in, score them**
Each scorer works alone first, then compare.
- Week 4** **Two shortlist calls, references, decision**
Tell every bidder the outcome, including the ones you did not pick.