Requests for Seafood Traceability Technology

A Guide

Introduction

The following Request For Proposals (RFP) process aims to accelerate uptake of traceability technology into the global seafood supply chain by facilitating efficient and effective matchmaking between seafood companies and traceability providers.

This guide provides **step-by-step instructions for how to:**

- Create a proposal for seafood traceability technologies
- Assess proposal submissions
- Develop criteria for final vendor selection

This guide can be used as a stand-alone product or in conjunction with the **RFP Template Tool.** While we aim to provide a comprehensive process for RFP development, each supply chain has unique attributes and challenges and adjustments may be required.

Why an RFP?

An RFP process can help both seafood companies and traceability technology providers save time and resources.

Through a well-designed RFP, seafood companies are able to articulate explicitly the goals of their traceability system, the approach they are looking for, and their current capacities. In return, technology vendors can better assess the likelihood of fit of their products and services and streamline proposals to most effectively meet stated needs.

A transparent RFP process also **levels the playing field for technology vendors** and
and encourages collaboration between vendors who may offer different and complementary tools, increasing the opportunity space for both new providers and new products.

What is a Request for Proposals?

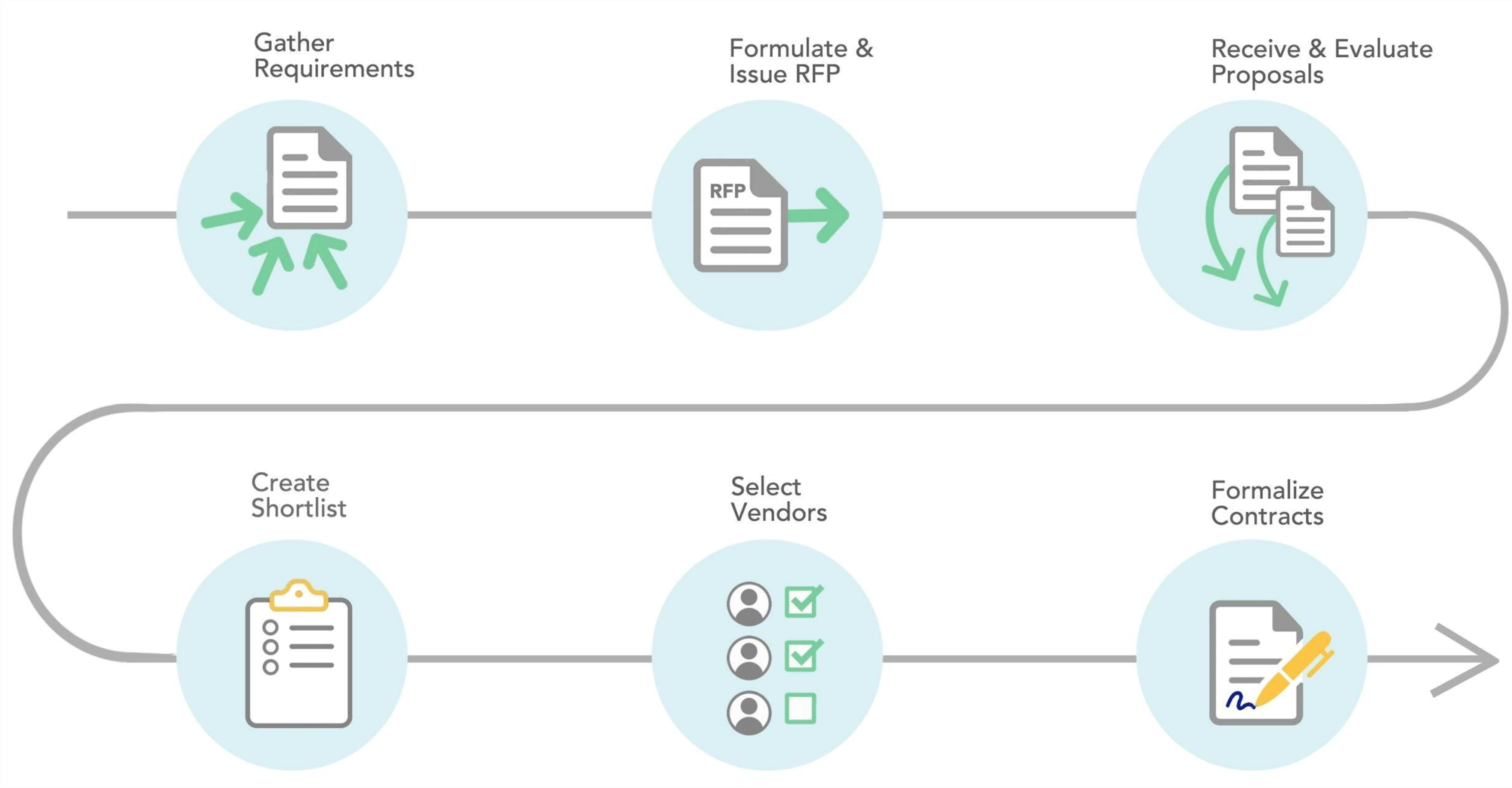
A request for proposals (RFP) is a process where a company or organization openly solicits bids on projects from service providers. An RFP outlines project goals and expectations, timelines, and guidance on how the bid should be formatted and presented.

RFPs can **offer varying amounts of background information** to inform proposals. When creating a request for seafood traceability technologies, the more information a client is willing and able to supply regarding the existing supply chain, resources, and facilities, the more detailed and customized the technology vendor can be with their response.

Creating an RFP and selecting a bid is a complex process, and it is not uncommon to hire a consulting body to act as a coordinator, information-gatherer, reviewer, and supply chain specialist. In this guide, we use the term "client" to denote those who are looking for a technology system; we use "consultant" to indicate those facilitating the process.

The RFP Process

Overview



Gather Requirements
Formulate & Issue RFP
RFP
Receive & Evaluate Proposals
Create Shortlist
Select Vendors
Formalize Contracts

RFP: The Six Stages

The request for proposal process can be broken down into six stages:

1. Gather Requirements
2. Formulate & Issue RFP
3. Receive & Evaluate Proposals
4. Create Shortlist
5. Select Vendor(s)
6. Formalize Contract(s) & Launch Traceability System

It is worth noting that each of these stages require a varying amount of time and effort. For detailed information regarding each stage, please see the [Stages, Steps & Stakeholders Checklist]

RFP: The Six Stages

Creating a request for seafood traceability technologies begins with **understanding the supply chain**. Without a comprehensive grasp of where product is coming from, how it is handled, and where it ends up, there is no way to determine where weaknesses or strengths in the existing systems may already exist.

Soliciting bids from technology companies is a process of **finding the best fit**—while there may be a number of technologies or companies to choose from, this process exists to help determine which of the available options is best suited for your traceability goals and company culture.

Siloed technology service providers may not be able to meet all of a client's needs. We encourage those soliciting proposals to request interoperable bids, allowing multiple companies to combine technologies for more comprehensive and flexible solutions.

Stage 1: Gather Requirements

Gather Requirements | 1

Gathering Requirements is a **scoping and research phase** used to define baseline project goals, collect required data, determine desired return on investment (ROI) and map the existing supply chain. This stage of the process can be time-intensive and commonly involves field visits, facility assessments, and in-person interviews.

The extent to which this information is collected by the client vs. required of the potential vendor will vary by proposal. While larger or more established companies may already have access to the majority of this data throughout their supply chain, smaller companies or co-ops may be starting the data collection and mapping process largely from scratch. It is ultimately up to the client to decide how much information they initially choose to gather and share in the proposal request.

Gather Requirements | 2

The four steps in the gathering requirement stage are outlined in the following slides. A comprehensive example of information collected at each step can be found in the Scoping & Research Checklist

1. **Define the Goals of Traceability Implementation**, such as business drivers, relevant regulatory requirements, desired return on investment, and certification standards.

2. **Determine Technical Requirements for the Traceability System**, including existing electronic vs. paper records, data sharing mechanisms and capacity, willingness and ability of employees and the capacity of facility to adjust to a new system, and desired changes/outcomes.

Gather Requirements | 3

3. **Map & Assess the Supply Chain** from harvest through export, with particular attention to identifying Critical Control Points (CCPs), Key Data Elements (KDEs), product flow, facility layout, traceability mechanisms currently in use, and key stakeholders.
4. **Determine Roles & Verification Process** by defining data input (at what point in the supply chain data needs to be entered), verifiable data assurance mechanisms (what tools may be used to assure data entered is accurate), and data access points (who is allowed to see what data sets) for all involved parties throughout the supply chain.

Stage 2: Formulate & Issue RFP

Formulate | 1

Once the gather requirements stage is complete, information is collated into a final document for distribution. Below is an outline of recommended content. Additionally, the RFP Template Tool offers a pre-designed template with supplemental instructions:

1. **Project Driver** — Define the reason that the client has decided to pursue a traceability system, and clarify the ultimate goals of the project | *Traceability, profit, sustainability, other*

2. **Compliance & Certification Markets** — Determine which KDEs are required for a traceability system to meet the standards selected by the client | *IUU, SIMP, MSC, Fair Trade, other*

3. **Map of the Supply Chain**

4. **System Assessment** — Analyze existing supply chain alignment and data-sharing capacity | *Data recording & sharing capacity, willingness & ability to implement new systems, other*

Formulate | 2

5. **Functionality Requirements** – Define what type of changes need to be made to the existing system in order to meet the project goal | *Shift from paper to electronic, changes in processing plant layout, improved health protocols, other*

6. **Budget** – Outline available funding for the project. This can be shared as a specific amount or vendors may be asked to bid within a predefined range

7. **Timeline** – Create a project timeline that includes all six stages of the RFP process, from the initial data gathering stage through project launch

8. **Stakeholders** – Who is involved and what is their role through the RFP bidding, selection, and implementation process | *Client, consultant, vendors, other*

Issue

Ensuring that the request for proposals is seen by the right audience is critical. Bids can be solicited in two ways:

1. **Individual basis**: when a client sends proposal requests to a list of identified technology vendors they think might fit the needs of the company.
2. **Open platform**: client sends proposal request through organizations such as the Trade Association for Seafood Traceability Technology. Open proposals provide additional benefits by broadening the scope of the search to include previously unknown or unexplored technologies, and/or by specifically soliciting interoperable solutions from multiple vendors.

Stage 3: Recieve & Evaluate Proposals

Receive & Evaluate Proposals | 1

1. **Form Review Committee, Recruit External Reviewers, & Outline the Review Process.** Assessing proposal submissions requires a certain level of technical knowledge, supply chain expertise, and implementation experience. Depending on client's expertise, external reviewers can help weed out proposals with poor fit to create a shortlist.

2. **Receive Vendor Questions & Registration of Interest.** This window of time is provided for interested parties to ask clarifying questions and submit a formal registration of interest. Requesting this prior to the submission period is a way to ensure there is sufficient interest. If necessary, this is an opportunity to re-issue the request to a new or wider audience or make adjustments to the RFP.

Receive & Evaluate Proposals | 2

3. **Prepare the Review Committee & Issue Clarifications.**
   The proposal assessment process is determined by the client, and the client or consultant will need to walk the Review Committee through the screening and scoring criteria developed. A sample assessment form can be found in the Screening & Assessment Criteria Checklist.

4. **RFP Vendor Response Period**

5. **Committee Review & Assessment.**
   Submissions go through two rounds of review – an initial screening to ensure vendors are able to meet basic criteria, followed by a detailed scoring and weighting process. Details can be found in the Screening & Assessment Criteria Checklist.

Stage 4: Create a Short List

Notifications & Interviews

The notification and interview period is an opportunity to engage with potential technology providers. Following the assessment period, a top tier of vendors will be notified that they have been selected for in-person interviews and product demonstrations.

1. **Develop a Shortlist** – Review scores submitted to client, determine shortlist criteria, and select top submissions.
2. **Notify Vendors** – Identify and resolve any outstanding client questions and schedule in-person interviews.
3. **In-Person Meetings** – Hold interviews with product demonstration opportunities and answer any final vendor questions.

Stage 5: Select Vendors & Formalize Contracts

Selection & Finalization

The semi-final stage of the RFP process involves the selection of a vendor and creation/finalization of any legal documents required for partnership

1. **Review Committee - makes final recommendation** for the top vendor or vendors based on in-person interviews and/or demonstrations.
2. **Client - selects vendor** based on recommendations from review committee
3. **Consultant** - facilitates final communications with vendor notifying them of selection, assists as needed with creation of final contracts/MOUs

Stage 6: Launch

Successfully completing the five steps to launch a RFP involves an in-depth understanding of your supply chain and vision for improvement--which may feel daunting when faced with understanding the interaction between laws, regulations, documents, technologies, and actors involved in your supply chain.

We're here to help. There are a number of of great tools already available to the public--we recommend starting with the Seafood Industry Traceability Toolkit, which provides additional resources for those interested in implementing traceability systems in their supply chains.

Additionally, we provided targeted consultative services for seafood traceability implementation, and can be reached at info@futureoffish.org