

State Procurement Office

Workshop No. 205

**Planning,
Using Requests for Information (RFI),
and Collaboration
for Health and Human Services**

Pursuant to HRS Chapter 103F

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Starting the Procurement Process

- **Planning**

It takes time!!!!!!

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Planning HAR Chapter 3-142

Planning includes, but is not limited to:

1. Determining service goals and outcomes
2. Determining what services to purchase based on the needs
3. Establishing clear service specifications and provider requirements
4. Establishing proposal evaluation criteria
5. Establishing procurement schedules
6. Collaborating with stakeholders to establish service related parameters

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TIME
DEVELOPMENT
CRITERIA
MINDFUL
AWARD
CONTRACT
FAIRNESS
KNOWLEDGE



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Planning: Identify the Team

- RFP coordinator
- Program manager
- Proposal evaluators
- Fiscal staff
- Contract administrator
- Program evaluator

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Planning and Timelines

Work backwards. Things to consider:

- Service start date
- Provider start-up time after execution of contract
(Note: Ensure it is clear in the RFP if this is allowed/anticipated.)
- Time needed to get a contract executed
- Time needed to evaluate proposals.
- Proposal preparation time by providers
- Request for Information (RFI)
- Development of RFP

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Some Planning Activities

1. Requests for Information (RFI)
2. Collaboration with other state agencies, providers, and stakeholders
3. Needs assessments
4. Data and information gathering (Awards/contracts database, RFPW, etc.)
5. Review current contract, program monitoring, evaluation reports

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Requests for Information (RFI)

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What is a Request For Information (RFI)?

- Tool used to gather, share, clarify, and incubate ideas and information.
- The RFI can be responded to in many ways including but limited to:
 - Writing
 - Meeting
 - e-mail
 - Teleconference
 - Video conference/webinar
 - Webcast

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Examples of Subjects for RFIs

- **Configuration of services**
(Different combinations of services or geographic areas of services, or is the service feasible)
- **Method of payment**
(Cost reimbursements, unit rates, guaranteed minimums, etc.)
- **Target population**
(Expand/contract target population, include service for family members or significant others)
- **Personnel requirements**
(Require one MSW licensed social workers per 4 case managers who will supervise the 3 BA licensed social workers instead of all MSW.)

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Conducting an RFI

Guiding Principles

- ✓ Be open
- ✓ Be fair
- ✓ Keep a good record

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RFIs for Health & Human Services

Requirements Pursuant to HAR §3-142-202

- ***An RFI must be conducted whenever developing/preparing to issue an RFP***

“...At a minimum, a purchasing agency shall prepare a request for information prior to the development of a request for proposals to obtain community input and facilitate community planning activities...”

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RFI Requirements (continued)

- **Notice of the RFI must be posted on the Procurement Notices System (PNS)**

“...Public notice shall be given for all requests for information in accordance with section 3-141-407 and shall be posted for a minimum of seven days...”

- **An RFI shall be in writing**

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The RFI Timeline

- Varies depending on what the purchasing agency is seeking.
- Feasibility of a new service (RFI will occur early in the process)
- An established service (Might include a draft of the service specifications and be issued a little later in the process.)

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RFI Timeline (continued)

- Give as much advance notice as possible when there will be significant change(s) in a RFP.
- For quality information, it must flow both ways. Allow time for respondents to ask clarifying questions.
- Recommended time for conducting an RFI is 2 to 9 months prior to the procurement notice for an RFP.

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The RFI Notice

What do we need to include in the RFI notice?

- **Name of the state agency** issuing request;
- **Description of the information** being sought;
- **What needs to be included in the response;**
- If applicable, aside from written responses, **other means by which the responses can be submitted**

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The RFI Notice (continued)

- **Statements that shall be included in the RFI notice:**
 1. Participation is optional, and is not required to respond to any subsequent procurement action a purchasing agency may take.
 2. Neither the purchasing agency nor the interested party responding has any obligation under the request for information.

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The RFI Notice (continued)

How much time do we need to allow for responses?

- Shall be posted on the PNS for a minimum of 7 days. Give more time whenever possible (2 weeks is better).
- If there will be an RFI meeting, provide more time.

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Conducting a RFI Meeting

- Be Prepared!
- Have members of the team present
- Have an agenda
- Keep a good record of the meeting and who attended
- Answer questions

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The RFI Meeting

Request for Written Responses

- Make the request for submittal of written responses after the meeting.

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Summarizing the RFI Results

- **Summarize approximately how many responded.**
 - ~ How many attended the meeting.
 - ~ How many written responses.
- **Summarize the issues.**
 - ~ Generally questions are grouped into clusters of issues.
- **Summarize the purchasing agency's response.**
 - ~ Measures the purchasing agency plans to take in response to the feedback.

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Summarizing RFI Results

Who Responded

Example:

“Approximately 35 individuals from 27 organizations attended the RFI general meeting held on March 8, 2008. Over 35 written responses were received. Most of the responses were from providers of services to youth and the majority of those were nonprofit providers on Oahu. Several responses were from parents and one was from an interested community member...”

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Summarizing RFI Results

The Issues

Examples:

“Unit Rate: There were several comments about the unit rate. Most related to being paid the same unit rate for high intensity clients as low intensity clients and how this may lead to “creaming.” There was one suggestion that pricing be a fixed price for an entire program and that only one contract awarded statewide. There was also a suggestion about utilizing capitated rates.

Service Configuration: There was one suggestion that services be configured for one provider to provide the services statewide. There were several other comments in this area reflecting that awarding to only one provider was unnecessary, would severely limit competition and was neither advisable nor feasible.

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Summarizing the RFI Results

Response to Feedback

Example 1:

“Unit Rate: It is unlikely there will be more than a slight increase in the total funds available for this service. ABCD will work to establish a graded unit rate for high and low intensity clients. ABCD has no experience with capitated rates for this type of service and would appreciate assistance from any providers/clients or interested community members who have knowledge of using capitated rates with this type of service.

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Summarizing the RFI Results
Response to Feedback *(continued)*

Example 2:

Service Configuration: The biggest concern was the possibility of soliciting for one statewide contract. Several providers indicated it was not feasible in this field. ABCD will continue to contract by geographic by island with the exception that separate proposals will be accepted for East and West Hawaii...”

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Using RFIs for Federal Grant Applications

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RFI for Federal Grant Applications

Pursuant to HAR §3-143-614

- This is **not** an exemption from procurement whenever federal funds are involved.
- This special procedure may **not** be used with block grant federal funds.
- This special procedure is to be utilized when:
 - A state agency applies for a federal grant;
 - Grant application requires a description of how the funds will be spent; and
 - It is necessary or will increase the likelihood that the state agency will be awarded by naming the provider(s) in the grant application.

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RFI for Federal Grant Applications (*continued*)

- Notice must be posted on the PNS for a minimum of 7 days.
- The names of all who responded and the justification for the selection shall be included as part of the procurement file.

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RFI for Federal Grant Applications (continued)

What Must be Included in the RFI:

- ✓ The state agency issuing the request.
- ✓ A statement that the request is issued for the purpose of including a provider (or providers) in a federal grant application and that if awarded, may result in a contract with the provider(s).
- ✓ A description of the services.
- ✓ The criteria by which the provider(s) will be selected.
- ✓ The deadline for submission of responses.
- ✓ Contact information for questions.

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RFI for Federal Grant Applications (continued)

- Request responses in writing, even if you hold a meeting.
- In describing the services, do not simply refer applicants to the federal website.

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Utilizing the RFI

Summary

- RFIs can be used to for a variety of purposes.
- A RFI is required to be conducted when preparing an RFP for health and human services.
- The RFI shall be issued in writing and posted on the PNS for a minimum of 7 days.
- More than one RFI can be conducted, when applicable.
- There is no set template for RFIs (Check the Procurement Notices Website (PNS) to see how other purchasing agencies conduct theirs.)
- Providing results of the RFI in preparation for a RFP can be helpful to providers

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Want to post your RFI on HlePRO (Hawaii e-Procurement)

- Training to procure on HlePRO is mandatory.
- Ensure providers are registered on HlePRO

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Collaboration

It's a good thing...

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Collaboration

- Collaboration in the context of procurement is defined:
“To work together, especially in a joint intellectual effort.”

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Collaboration *(continued)*

Uncompensated provider participation is encouraged.

Ask providers, other state agencies, clients, etc. to participate in planning activities.

Collaboration also provides a “Heads up” or advance notice gives time to providers to plan & respond more effectively

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Collusion

It's Not okay

- A secret agreement between two or more parties for a fraudulent, illegal, or deceitful purpose (eg., appearing as adversaries though in agreement).

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Areas for Collaboration

- Share information on community needs
- Determine best practices
- Inventory of available resources
- Budgetary or cost factors
- Configuration of services
- Recommendations for service specifications and requirements

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Data Sources to Help with Planning

- **Procurement Awards, Notices and Solicitations (PANS) Website**
 - ~ **Awards/Contracts Database**
 - *Search by: key words (title and description); dept., division; year; provider; general and special population; island*
 - ~ **RFP Website (RFPW)**
 - *Includes RFPs issued since 2004.*
 - *A database of service specifications*
- **Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) website**
 - ~ *Economic data and trends, census, Hawaii databook*
- **The Web!**
 - ~ *A huge data source at your fingertips-*

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“Coming together is a beginning.
Keeping together is progress.
Working together is success.”

- Henry Ford

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Planning Note

“Success comes from preparation.”

E'yen A. Gardner

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Questions?

The SPO website
<http://spo.hawaii.gov>
Manual for State & County Personnel >
Procurement > Solicitation >
Health & Human Services

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