

the *requirements specifications*—as well as the technical, detailed specifications that the system must conform to—the *functional specifications*.

The requirements specifications are qualitative descriptions of the expectations of knowledge workers and managers. For example, a statement such as “The system will provide our knowledge workers with the ability to communicate using audio, video, and text, in real time, over our existing network system” could appear as part of the requirements specifications of the RFP. Exactly how this expectation is met is the challenge that vendors must address to win the corporation’s business. However, rarely are vendors completely free to devise a solution without several technical constraints—as defined by the functional specifications. The functional specification for the real-time audio, video, and text communications system could define, in explicit technical terms, the quality and bandwidth of the audio, video, and text; exactly what “real time” means; and could provide a technical definition of the network constraints.

The functional requirements are listed in the RFP so that vendors know what the corporation has in mind and senior management is in agreement regarding what a vendor is expected to deliver. The corporation’s objective evaluation criteria, such as the contribution of up-front costs and the use of subcontractors added to the vendor’s estimate, provides an overall evaluation score that gives vendors a clear idea of where they need to be in order to be competitive. Internally, the objective evaluation criteria listed in the RFP are helpful in overcoming personal biases and emotional attachments to a particular vendor during the evaluation of proposals.

Issue the Request for Proposal

There are several ways to issue an RFP. The first is to use a shotgun approach, using a variety of print media and the web to invite vendors