

Procurement Practices and Principles for GIS Practitioners: *Tips and Recommendations from a Proposal Writer's Perspective*

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Introduction

- Applied Geographics, Inc. (www.AppGeo.com)
- With AppGeo for ten years as Director of Marketing
- In charge of preparation for major proposals and formal RFP responses
- Perspective of an RFP reader and proposal writer

I  PROPOSALS

Topics

- Why Procurement?
- Things to Think About in the Procurement Lifecycle
- Focus on the Written Request
- When You Need Help
- Top Ten List

Why Buy Outside (at all)?

1. COTS Products and Support
2. Staff Augmentation
3. Expertise
4. Speed of Delivery
5. Cost-effectiveness
6. Objectivity/Opinions/Fresh Ideas

Procurement is:

- Complicated, Painful
- Challenging, Interesting
- Objective, Rules-based
- Judgment Required
- A lot of Work
- Worth the Effort
- 4 All of the Above

Procurement Path



- Identify Deficiency
- Define Scope
- Estimate Cost/Effort

- Secure Budget
- Issue Request
- Award Decision

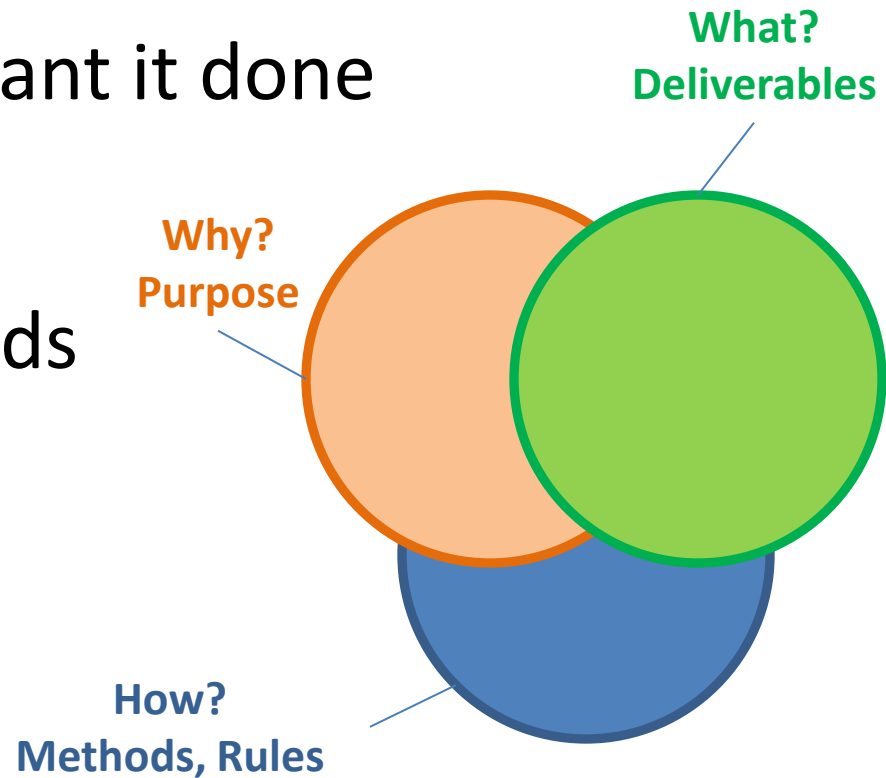
- Manage Project
- Accept Deliverables
- Track Results

Identifying the Need

- Statement of Purpose
- Identify users and use cases
- Include stakeholders/IT staff in defining requirements
- Identify specific benefits of/justification for
- Check compatibility with current HW/SW, ways of doing business
- Consider the larger context

Scope and Specification

- Defines the deliverables you require
- Defines how you want it done
- Provides examples
- References standards
- Quantifies
- Qualifies



Cost Estimation and Budgeting

Fit the Project to the Budget

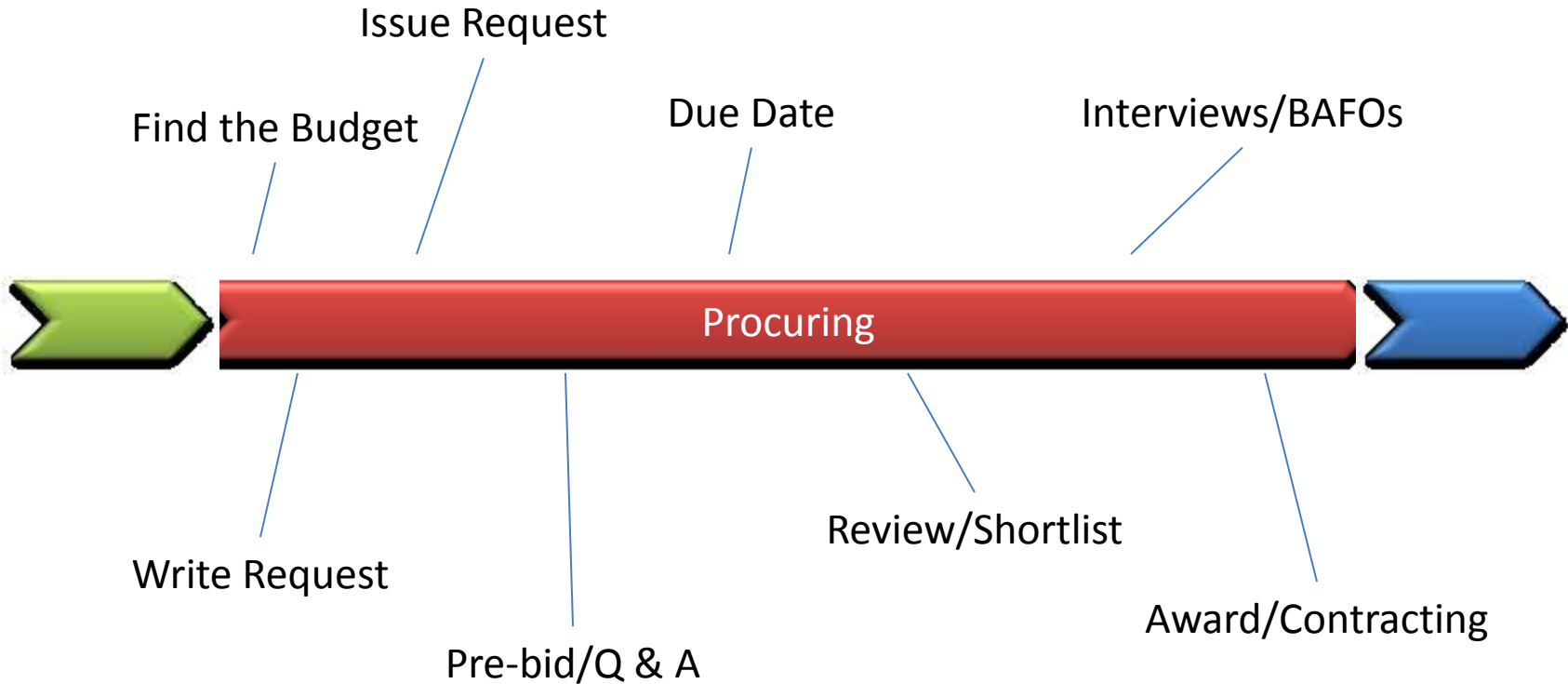
- Limit on Available \$
- What You Can Afford
- Market Prices



Fit the Budget to the Project

- Cost estimation from vendors or peers
- Itemized costs
- Opportunity cost
- Value of end result

Procurement Path



Procuring

“Show me the money”



- Federal and State Grant programs
- State purchasing programs and license agreements for software/hardware
- Unspent funds
- Budget proposals
- Piggyback on other projects

Procuring

Know the source(s) of the money

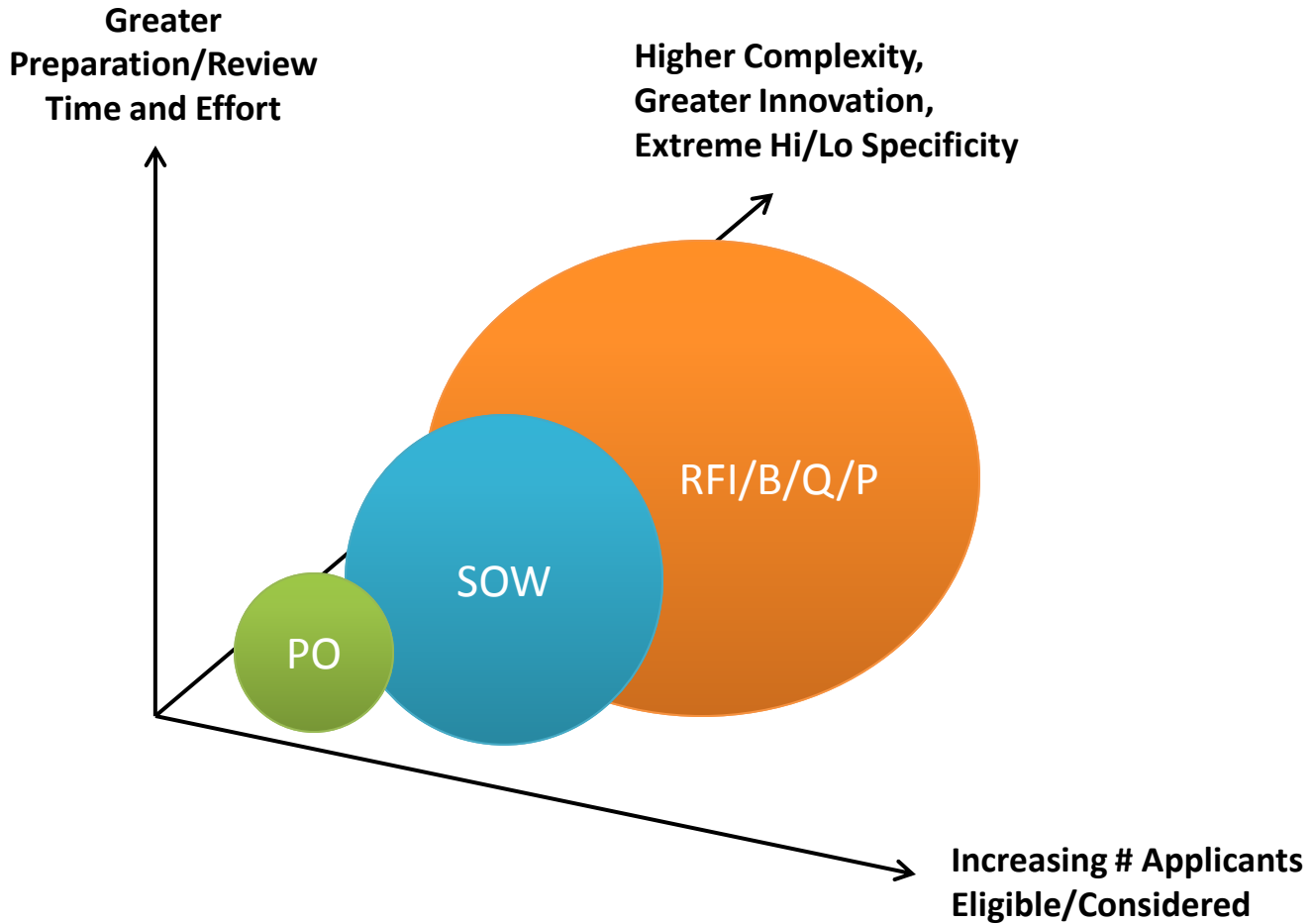
- Spending limits and rules
- Timeframes for completing projects
- Reporting and Accounting Requirements
- Deliverable Type and Scope
- Matching Funds
- Publicity/Attribution/Transparency



What's the "Write" Approach?

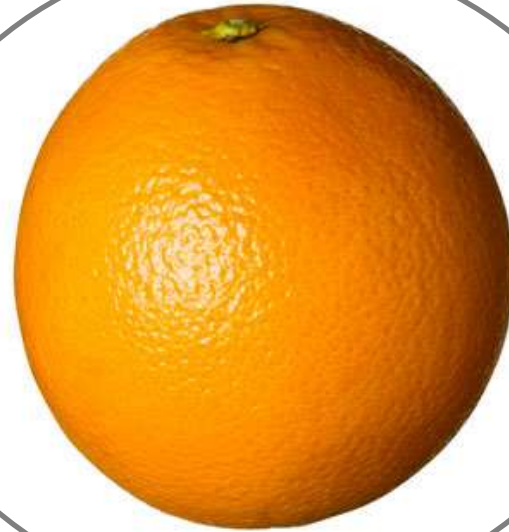
- PO - Purchase Order
- SOW – Statement of Work
- RFR – Request for Response
- RFI – Request for Information
- RFB – Request for Bid
- RFQ – Request for Quotation OR Qualifications
- RFP – Request for Proposal

Comparing Options



Procuring

The art of getting what you want –
when you know what you want



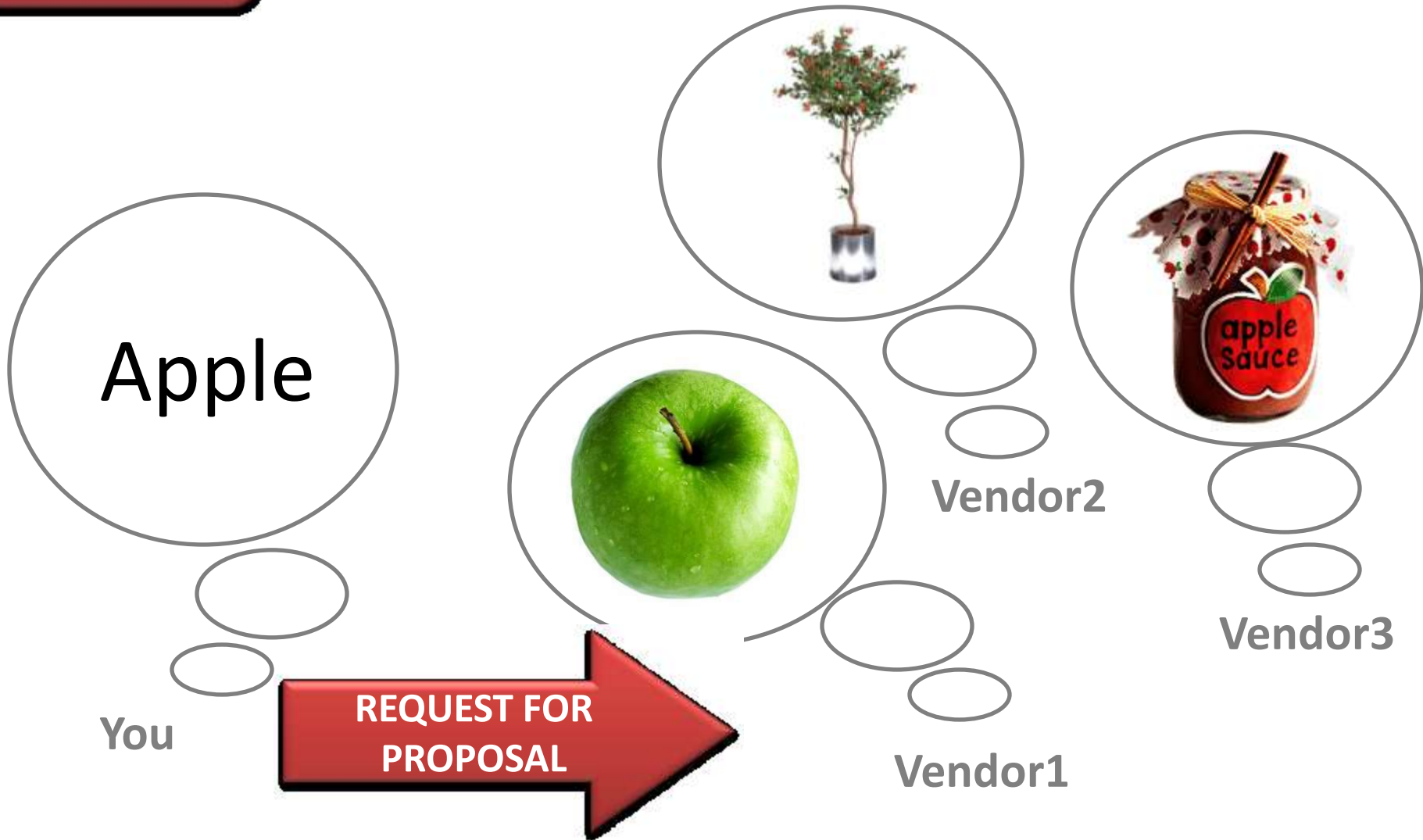
You

**REQUEST FOR
PROPOSAL**

Vendor

Procuring

The art of getting what you want – even when you are not sure



Summary Page

- Title, Number, Contracting Agency
- Dates – Due, Q&A, Review/Decision, Award
- Synopsis
- Cost/Budget Information
- Point of Contact & Rules of Engagement
- Submittal Instructions

Do Include These Essentials

- TOC
- Purpose and Background
- Detailed Requirements
- Cost/budget information
- Proposal Submittal Guidelines
- Evaluation Criteria
- Required Forms, Sample Contract

Specification Guidelines

- Do provide context or background
- Do state problem and end result
- Do provide standards, examples
- Do provide details, requirements, methods
- Do set expectations for project management
- Consider including details of project plan, task breakdown, phases, milestones
- Consider risk management

Response Guidance

- Do outline proposal sections and titles
- Do provide content instructions, page limits (if you must)
- Do provide specific guidance on what constitutes qualifications, staff skills, prior experience, references
- Do specify level of detail, itemization of technical proposal elements from specification
- Consider providing a checklist for required proposal contents

Response Guidance, cont.

- Do Not require complicated “specific language” requirements in response to each section
- Do Not impose specific formats for project descriptions or resumes
- Do Not require lists of all current project activity or all work for last X years, etc.

Sample Proposal Outline

1. Project Understanding
2. Approach
 1. Technical
 2. Project Management
 3. Schedule
3. Project Team – Staff roles and bios
4. Qualifications
 1. Corporate Capabilities
 2. Reference Projects/Experience
5. Cost Proposal (can be separately bound)
6. Appendix A. Required Forms
7. Other Appendices – Resumes, Example Work, etc.

Cost Proposal Guidance

- Do align cost categories with main tasks
- Do clarify whether FFP, T&M, or ...
- Do Not mix FFP and hourly cost estimation reporting for same task
- Do describe payment and invoicing expectations/requirements
 - Timing
 - Details
 - % hold back, if any
- Do consider Pre-formatted Cost tables

Evaluation Guidance

- Do include eligibility criteria
- Do present explicit evaluation criteria
- Do assign specific weight/points to each
- Do clarify how cost is evaluated
- Do identify evaluation team



Procuring

Distribution

- Direct – email, telephone
- Posting
- Online Bid services
- List serves

Clarifications and Questions

- Do issue amendments as needed
- Do schedule for Questions and Answers
- Do use a set script when checking references
- Consider a Pre-bid Meeting
- Consider interviews
- Consider BAFO

Award Decision

- Do schedule review team in advance
- Do establish method for making decision – voting, scoring, discussion, etc. – note rules related to source of funds
- Do explicitly follow evaluation criteria set forth in RFP
- Do notify all applicants of result ASAP Practical or Allowed
- Do provide for debrief, but know rules governing level of information obligated to provide

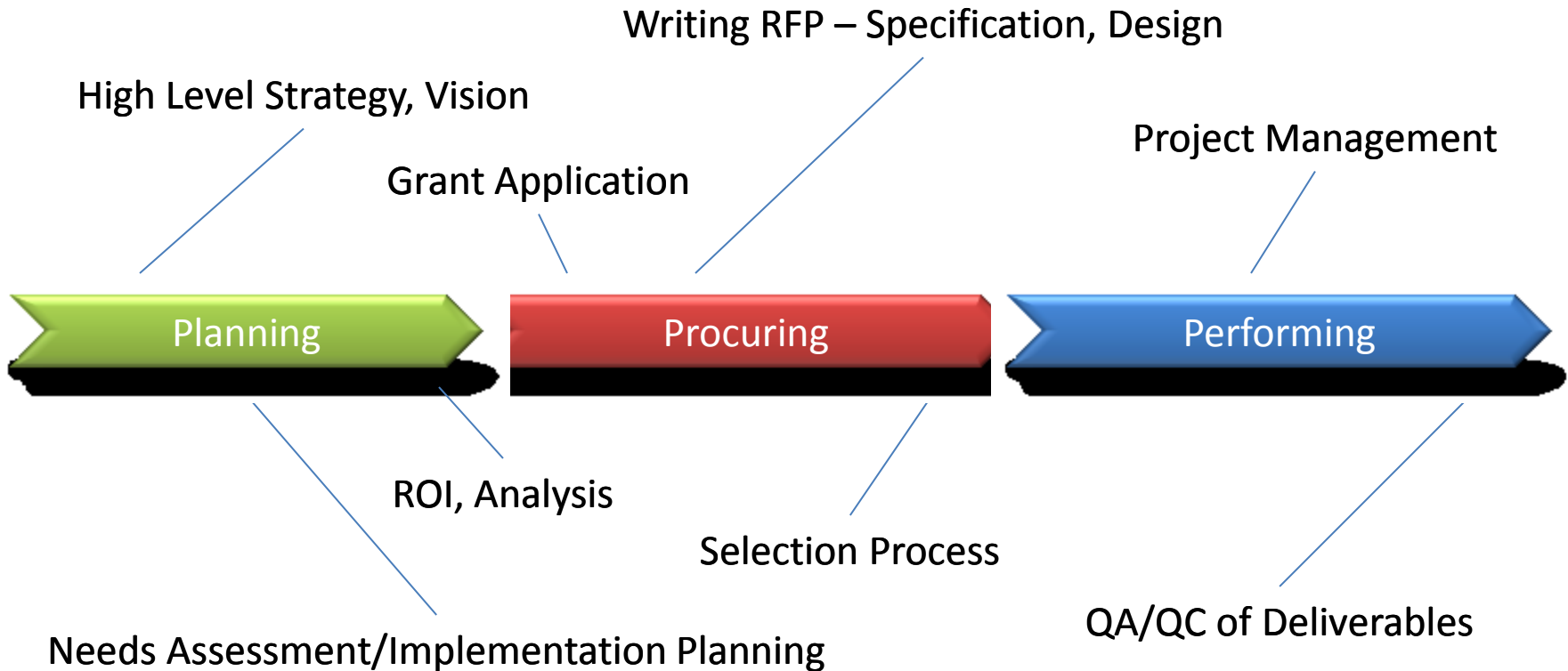
Increasing procurement success and project performance

- Do designate POC and agree to regular informal communications
- Do not overburden project with formal reporting
- Do include pilot or prototype projects
- Do treat planning or design phase as deliverable
- Do schedule time and resources for you to review deliverables (intermediate and final)
- Do use modern communication technologies, e.g., online meeting, document sharing, project website

When you need help

- Colleagues
- Peers
- State agencies
- Vendors have been through it before and offer direct support

Types of Vendor Support



Top Ten Things to Think About

1. Clear idea of what you need, desired end state, and timeframe
2. Know how much you have to spend, or want to spend based on cost to benefits ratio
3. Research the market – what's available and reasonable in terms of price, features, quality, etc.
4. Don't be afraid to ask for help
5. Use the procurement process to spark innovation or gather information

Top Ten Things to Think About

6. Strive to share information with the vendor community (before, during, after)
7. Scale the effort to available resources, management capacity, time frames
8. Distinguish guidelines versus specification, desirable versus “must have” outcomes
9. Use clear language, examples of end results, reference standards
10. Avoid procurement “gotchas”, provide clear evaluation criteria and weightings

Thank You

If you have any questions:



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