



THE UNIVERSITY OF WINNIPEG

What is an RFP, RFQ or RFI and when do I use them?

1. Request for Proposal (RFP)

- **Purpose:** Used when requirements are not fully defined, or when creative solutions and flexibility in evaluation and negotiation are desired.
- **Typical Use:** Complex or high-value purchases where aspects like scope, schedule, or quality may weigh more than price alone.
- **Process Characteristics:**
 - May involve negotiation post-submission.
 - Evaluation is based on scoring criteria determined prior to issuing the RFP.
 - Contractual obligations may arise, but not always; the RFP process generally allows greater flexibility.
 - Proponents can usually withdraw their proposal at any time (unlike an RFQ).
 - Does not typically involve bid security or irrevocability.
- **Basis for Award:** Typically awarded to the highest-scoring and best overall value proponent, not necessarily the lowest-priced one.

2. Request for Quotation (RFQ)

- **Purpose:** To obtain price quotations for basic goods and sometimes services when requirements are well defined and low risk.
- **Typical Use:** Low-value, low-risk purchases where no complex negotiation is required.
- **Process Characteristics:**
 - Simpler and faster than an RFP.
 - RFQs do not legally commit the University to a contract unless a quotation is formally accepted (typically through a Purchase Order).
 - Generally used when the University has pre-defined specifications and is primarily comparing price.

For more detailed information on the full RFP and RFQ processes, review Section: 2.3.3 Selecting the Sourcing Mechanism of the [Purchasing Guidebook](#).

3. Request for Information (RFI)

- **Purpose:** To gather general supplier or product information when the University lacks a full understanding of available solutions or market capabilities.
- **Typical Use:** Early stages of procurement to help define requirements, plan the solicitation process, or assess supplier interest.
- **Outcomes:** Helps refine the scope and content of a future RFP; does not lead to a contract or commit the University to any supplier.
- **Key Points:**
 - Should not request proprietary information.
 - Responses do not influence the supplier's chances in later competitions.
 - Not legally binding; participation in an RFI does not pre-qualify or disadvantage suppliers.

For more detailed information on the RFI process, review Section: 2.2 Use of Formal Information-Gathering Mechanisms of the [Purchasing Guidebook](#).

Comparison Chart

| Method | When to Use | Key Considerations |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Request for Information (RFI) | Early stage — when the University is not sure what solutions are available, or how the market can meet its needs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Used to gather general information about suppliers, products, or services. ✓ No commitment, no contract awarded. ✓ Helps define future RFP or RFQ scope. ✓ Should not request proprietary info. ✓ Responses do not influence future award decisions. |
| Request for Quote (RFQ) | When requirements are clear and well-defined — typically for goods or straightforward services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Used for low-complexity, low-risk, price-driven purchases. ✓ University knows exactly what it needs and specifications are clear. ✓ Evaluation is based mostly or solely on price. ✓ Faster and simpler process than RFP. ✓ A binding contract is created when a quotation is accepted and confirmed via Purchase Order. |
| Request for Proposal (RFP) | When requirements are complex or outcomes-based, and creativity or flexibility is desired from suppliers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Used when scope is not fully defined or when evaluating a broad range of solutions. ✓ Evaluation based on best value, not just price. ✓ Allows for negotiation after proposals are submitted. ✓ Typically used for services, consulting, or projects where quality, schedule, and innovation are critical. ✓ More time-consuming but supports better long-term outcomes. |