Conducting Market Research

Procurement Excellence Network Training

November 30, 2022

HARVARD Kennedy School
Government Performance Lab

Icebreaker

In the chat:

Share your name, what government you represent, and your most frequently used method of conducting market research.

Agenda

- *[15 min]*   **Market Research Overview**

- *[15 min]*   **Requests for Information**

- *[10 min]*   **Concept Papers**

- *[10 min]*   **Prototypes/Competitions**

- *[5 min]*   **Additional Resources**

Why conduct market research?

Market research activities can help governments achieve three important tasks ahead of releasing their solicitation:
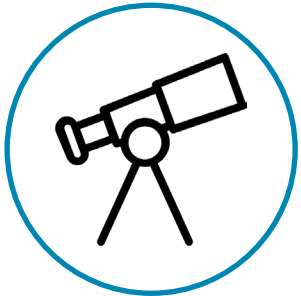
Scoping the government's needs and goals to be addressed by the contracted good or service
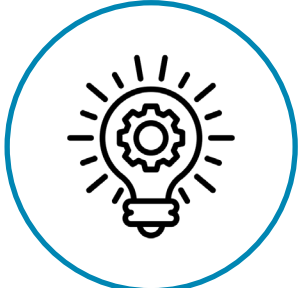
Exploring potential solutions to the identified need(s), including new approaches that may not have been previously considered by the government
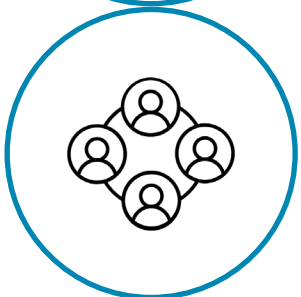
Engaging the vendor community to prepare the marketplace to respond with bids that best meet the agency's goals

Market Research Strategies: Overview

Effort	Technique
Low/ Passive ↑ ↓ **High/ Active**	**Internet research** to discover what firms exist and what solutions they offer.
	Subscription services that publish white papers on IT vendors, market segments, and trends.
	Calls with associations or peer governments/agencies that have recently implemented similar products or services for lessons learned and to obtain sample RFPs and contracts.
	Expert interviews on a contractual basis either directly or through a service.
	Vendor demos, focus groups, surveys or town halls to gather information in a consistent manner or in an open public setting (depending on procurement rules) about products, services, vendors, and trends.
	Requests for Information (RFIs) to solicit ideas, solutions, or recommendations from vendors in an organized and consistent way to support the development of an RFP. This may also include release of a draft RFP for comment.
	Industry days to seek input concerning current industry practices from members of the vendor community.
	Concept Papers to announce you're an upcoming project, describe the vision and goals, and provide a high-level plan.
	Prototype competitions with vendors where competing teams develop prototypes during early stages of a project. This may be part of the design phase for smaller projects or a qualifying step before or during an RFP process.

How to ask good questions

Overall:
- Consider a mixture of big picture, open-ended questions & specific, targeted questions.
- Be mindful of maintaining interest, focus, and energy when building out your list of questions.

Residents/End Users

- Respect experience as expertise
- Center the experiences of marginalized communities
- Prioritize consent and transparency
- Use a trauma-informed approach where necessary

Vendors

- Use creative, targeted outreach methods
- Engage community-based and entrepreneur support organizations to assist you

Government Peers

- Don't limit your research to your own government or nearby neighbors
- Leverage the PEN community to ask questions and conduct research:
  - Community Conversations
  - Member Directory

What might be good sources of market research for an RFP for a software developer to build a new citywide HR portal?

Market Research To-Do List

- What sources and techniques should we consider?
- Suggest them out loud or in the chat!
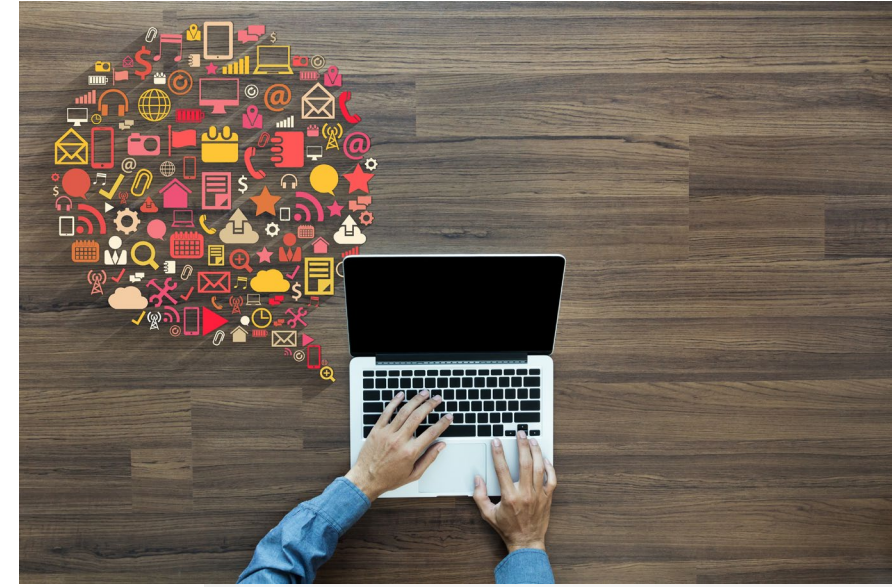
Requests for Information

Should you issue an RFI?

1. Is your **scope of work** realistic? Does it include sufficient detail?

2. Are there **innovations** in the field you don't know about?

3. Is the planned procurement process **feasible and inclusive**? Do any aspects of the procurement process make it difficult for vendors to participate?

4. Do vendors (especially small, local, and/or minority-owned businesses) **perceive** that your government gives **unfair preference** to large companies or certain contractors?

5. Can **community groups** or **subject matter experts** share important information about client population, appropriate scope, or desired program details?

6. Do vendors use common **industry-specific metrics** to track their work?

7. Do contractors require a **high level of support, data or information** from you to provide the scope of services?

Glendale Afterschool Programming RFI

- Goal to gather information about the marketplace of afterschool education programs and to determine interest in partnership.

- Sought feedback on the City's planned business model – City provides facilities free of charge and covers utilities/landscaping. Community partner provides free or low-cost afterschool programming to residents.

- Specific questions around proposed programming, preferred locations, organizational capacity, funding sources, and desired contract length.

- Followed by RFP to request proposals to operate afterschool centers.

GLENDALE

Community Partnership Opportunity

Please Respond By October 6, 2017
(First Review September 25, 2017)

The city of Glendale has an exciting opportunity to partner with mission-driven community organizations to provide youth programming at select city-owned community and recreation centers.

This is a request for information to assess community interest in a partnership of this nature.

Boston Capital Program & Project Management Software RFI

- The RFI shared the draft Scope of Work and solicited feedback around whether the City's requirements for a tool were described in sufficient detail for a thorough response

- Received general feedback on the draft RFP, pricing structure, and whether certain components were standard for the industry

- Collected responses via a Google form

Capital Program & Project Management Software RFI Feedback Form

Please use this form to provide feedback on the City of Boston's RFI for capital project management software.

Note that this RFI takes the form of a draft RFP, as the City is committed to ensuring vendors have the ability to respond thoughtfully and efficiently when the final RFP is circulated.

Please respond by 5 PM on Thursday, 08/23. Thank you for your feedback!

* Required

Please submit your full name *

Your answer

NH DCYF Service Array Redesign RFI

DCYF Request for Information (RFI)

Questions focused on:

- What are the needs of families in NH that lead to involvement in the child welfare system when left unmet?
- What services will best enable children to safely stay with their families at home?
- What is the capacity of local service providers to deliver new services? Are there out-of-state service providers interested in providing services in NH?

To inform

Community-based voluntary services

New program designed to enhance NH DCYF's capacity to serve families who are at-risk of subsequent CPS involvement in a community-based and voluntary support

Home-based service array

Elevate the quality and expand availability of services available to CPS-involved families, with a primary focus on "in-home" services that prevent children from entering foster care

NH DCYF Service Array Redesign RFI

N.H.'s DCYF Wants Public Input on How to Improve

By JASON MOON · OCT 4, 2019

Share Tweet Email

CREDIT SARA ERNST / NHPR

The state agency tasked with investigating allegations of child abuse is issuing a sweeping request for public input on how it could better do its job.

The Division for Children, Youth, and Families has struggled for years through funding cuts, growing number of calls, and lawsuits that allege the agency failed to act to protect children.

The formal Request for Information issued by DCYF on Friday is unusually broad in its scope. It calls on everyone from behavioral health providers to foster parents to advocacy groups to academia to put forward ideas on how the agency can better achieve goals including reducing the number of families with repeated reports of maltreatment and decreasing the number of children removed from their families.

Results from the RFI process:

- Significant local and regional press coverage, including NHPR and the NH Associated Press, and Concord Monitor

- 38 responses from 50 organizations from across the child and family serving system *broke records for a request for information New Hampshire*

- Strategies used to generate this response included:
  - Clear strategic vision in RFI
  - Clear, opened ended questions
  - Easier to read RFI template
  - Respondent conference
  - Concerted press strategy

Discussion

- Where have you seen RFIs come up in your work?

- Have you seen your government face any challenges when releasing RFIs? Was there a time when the resulting responses were not as expected?

Concept Papers

Should you release a concept paper?

1. Is this a **new offering** that the government has never purchased before?

2. Is this an **experimental service** that may not have been tested or scaled before?

3. Does this represent a **big change in the service array** or the way the government is purchasing/managing it?

4. Do you have questions about the **feasibility** of the service?

5. Has your government served the **target population** before? Does this population have **unique challenges** that make engagement difficult?

6. Do you need to **build buy-in** from the vendor community and foster a more **inclusive design process**?

NYC Supportive Housing Concept Paper

- In early 2016, the New York City Human Resource Administration (HRA) issued a [Concept Paper](#) seeking input from providers before issuing an RFP for supportive housing in the summer of 2016.

- In addition to soliciting written comments, the City convened a taskforce, held pre-bidders conferences for feedback and participated in external committees to promote awareness.

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION ("HRA")
CONCEPT PAPER on the
Provision of Supportive Housing for Homeless and At-Risk Persons with
Clinical Conditions under the NYC Supportive Housing Initiative
EPIN: 09616I0009

A. Purpose of the Intended RFP

In November 2015 Mayor Bill de Blasio announced the NYC Supportive Housing Initiative to fund and develop 15,000 new units of supportive housing in New York City over the next 15 years. This far reaching and comprehensive initiative targets the most vulnerable homeless New Yorkers in need of supportive housing. The City's 15,000-unit plan is comprised of a projected 7,500 newly-developed congregate units and a projected 7,500 scattered-site units. Supportive housing combines affordable housing with appropriate social services to help special populations, including individuals and families with serious mental illness, substance use disorders and/or disabling medical conditions, and young adults aging out of foster care, and other special populations as determined by the City in the future that are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless achieve housing stability and independence in the community. It is a proven solution to homelessness for individuals and families with special needs, and less costly and more appropriate than expending resources on institutional and temporary settings such as shelters, hospitals, jails and prisons. HRA will begin the procurement of 500 scattered site units immediately. The populations targeted for this procurement will continue to be categories described in the NY/NY III agreements, as the Mayor's Supportive Housing Task Force is currently developing recommendations which will be incorporated in the procurement of the remaining scattered site units and congregate units subsequently released after this concept paper and Request for Proposals. These populations are:

1. Chronically homeless single adults with a serious mental illness or with a mental illness and a co-occurring substance use disorder.

2. Chronically homeless families, or families at serious risk of becoming chronically homeless, in which the head of the household has a serious mental illness, a substance use disorder, a disabling medical condition or HIV/AIDS .

3. Young adults (aged 18-25 years) leaving or having recently left foster care or who have been in foster care for more than one year after their 16th birthday and who are homeless or at-risk of street or sheltered homelessness.

Contractors will be permitted to propose to serve one or more target populations delineated above and/or to propose programs in more than one borough. Proposals may include sub-

Discussion

- Would your government be open to issuing a concept paper now? How might you select which procurement to issue one?

- Can you think of an instance when a concept paper would have been useful? What would it have helped you learn?
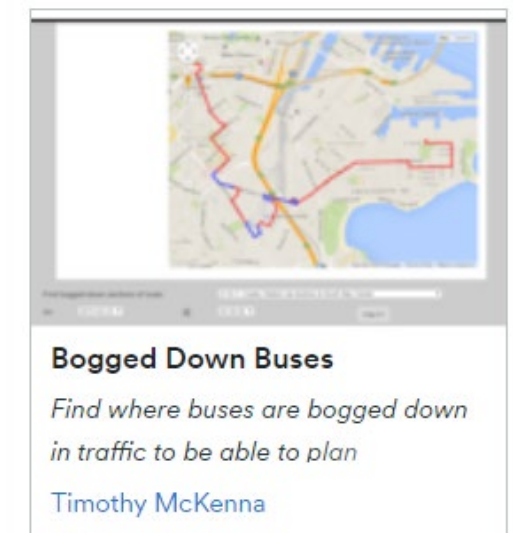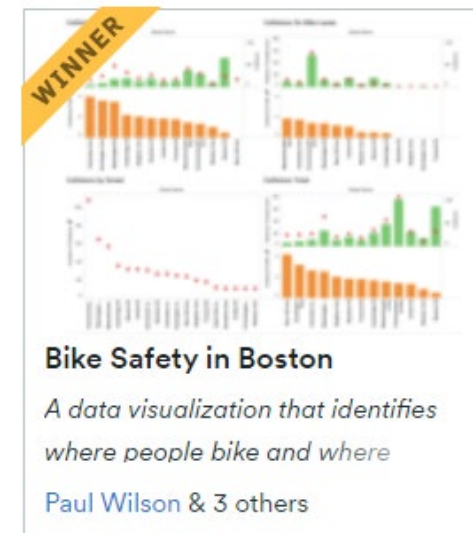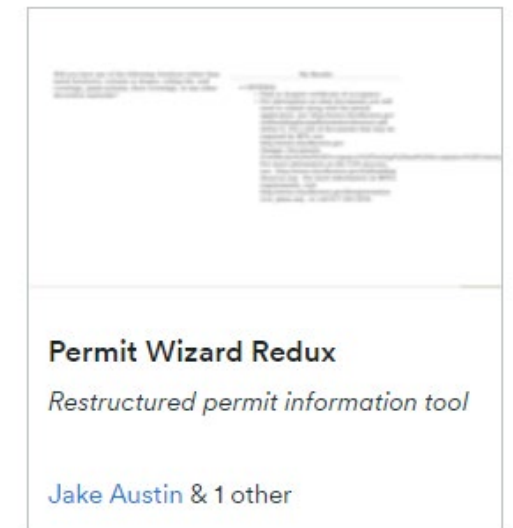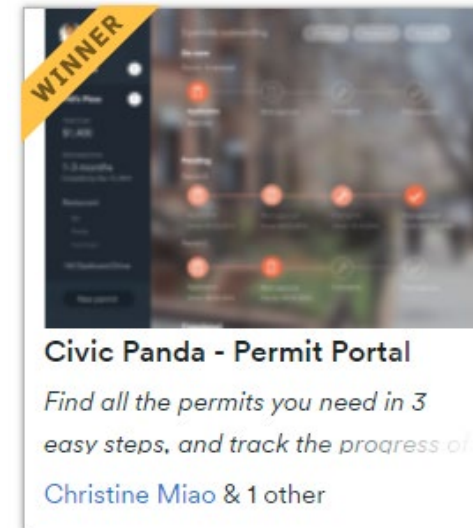
Prototypes and Pitch Competitions

Should you run a prototype or pitch competition?

1. Is this a **new problem** that requires new solutions?

2. Are there a **variety of possible solutions** that might address your problem?

3. Do you want to work with **small, local, minority-owned businesses**, but aren't sure whether they will respond to traditional solicitations?

4. Is **community engagement** and **vendor/industry outreach** a priority for this project?

5. Can you release a **minimum viable product** and then add or enhance functionality in later builds? Do you have time to **iterate**?

6. Does your government have the **capacity and resources to pilot** projects?

Boston's Civic Hackathon

- In 2014, Boston invited developers to an in-person Hackathon, where they worked together to attempt to solve a series of challenges around pain points for those seeking permit applications.

- At the second Hackathon in 2015, developers were invited to find new insights in urban data and show them in inviting, understandable, and thought-provoking ways.

- A panel of judges selected by the city evaluated the submissions and selected which teams would present their projects to community leaders and City officials. The panel of judges then selected the winners based on these presentations.

- Winners received prizes provided by sponsors, such as Chromebooks, GoPro cameras, and HP tablets.

WINNER

Civic Panda - Permit Portal

Find all the permits you need in 3 easy steps, and track the progress of

Christine Miao & 1 other

Permit Wizard Redux

Restructured permit information tool

Jake Austin & 1 other

WINNER

Bike Safety in Boston

A data visualization that identifies where people bike and where

Paul Wilson & 3 others

Bogged Down Buses

Find where buses are bogged down in traffic to be able to plan

Timothy McKenna

Contracting pilot projects in Long Beach, CA

Now in its fourth year, the **Smart City Challenge** invites staff from all City Departments to identify and develop technology projects.

Past pilots have included:

Air quality monitoring

Public permit dashboard

Mobility data collection sensor

Public dashboard of development projects

Pitch Long Beach! invites vendors to propose innovative new projects to meet legitimate City needs, flipping the script for government contracting.

Since launching in February 2022:

Over 70 pitches have been received

1 pilot is in progress (remote tire sensing)

2 are out to RFP

Discussion

- Can you think of an instance when a prototype competition like Boston's would have been useful? What kinds of problems might it help you solve?

- How might you structure an idea feedback channel like Long Beach's in your own jurisdiction?

Additional Resources

PEN Market Research Resources

- **Quick Read**
  [Market Research: the Key to Your Next RFP's Success](#)

- **Quick Read**
  [Transforming IT Procurement: Understanding the Marketplace](#)

- **How-to Guide**
  [How to Write a Request for Information (RFI) that Vendors Want to Respond To](#)

- **Template**
  [Request for Information (RFI) Template](#)

- **Community Conversations**
  Ask a question or answer someone else's!