

Find and Respond to RFPs

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Introductions



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**Why is Raymond
here?**

Who is this guy, anyway?



Outline

What an RFP actually is (and isn't)

Where to find them

The 5-minute qualifying filter

Anatomy of a winning response

Problem statement

A hand holding a pen points to a flowchart on a document. The flowchart consists of several rectangular boxes connected by dashed lines, illustrating a process flow. The background is a teal-tinted image of a desk with a computer monitor and a glass.

Think about where your last client came from.

The problem with referral-only pipelines is that you have no control over them.



RFPs represent a
different
possibility.

With an RFP:

- The client has already decided they're spending money
- The scope is at least partially defined before you start talking
- The budget is often disclosed up front
- You know exactly who is making the decision and how they're evaluating responses



What an RFP Actually Is (and Isn't)

The basics

An RFP (Request for Proposal) is a formal document that an organization publishes when they need to hire an outside vendor for a defined project.

Common formats you'll encounter:

- **RFP** (Request for Proposal): the full version; asks for your approach, timeline, and price
- **RFQ** (Request for Quotation): they know exactly what they want, just need a price
- **RFI** (Request for Information): they're still scoping; more exploratory, less commitment

For web design work, you'll mostly see **RFPs** and occasionally **RFQs**.

What an RFP is NOT

- An RFP is not a cold lead. The organization has already decided they're spending money. Your job is to convince them to spend it with you.
- It's also not a guarantee of work. Some RFPs are issued to fulfill a procurement requirement when they already have a vendor in mind.





Who issues them

- **Government entities:** cities, counties, school districts, water districts, transit authorities. Required by law to publish RFPs for projects over a certain dollar threshold. That means the budget exists and the process is transparent.
- **Nonprofits:** especially those with grant funding. Grants often require competitive bidding.
- **Mid-size businesses and associations:** especially when a new CMO or marketing director comes in and wants to vet vendors.
- **Healthcare and education:** hospitals, university departments, private schools.



What organizations actually want

What's behind an RFP from the issuing organization's perspective?



Where to Find Them



Government procurement portals

Every state has a centralized purchasing portal.

- **Texas:** Texas SmartBuy / Electronic State Business Daily (ESBD), esbd.texas.gov
- **Federal:** SAM.gov, for federal contracts (higher bar to entry, but worth knowing)
- **Municipal:** Most cities and counties post RFPs on their own websites, usually under "City Hall > Purchasing" or "Finance > Procurement"

Tip: Search for "website" or "web design" filtered to your state. Set up email alerts where the system allows it.

Local sources you're probably ignoring

- **Your city and county:** Google "[your city] RFP website design 2026"
- **School districts:** prolific RFP issuers with federal funding to spend
- **Local nonprofits:** check GuideStar / Candid for organizations with revenues over \$500K
- **Chambers of commerce:** many circulate RFPs to members or post publicly
- **Economic development corporations:** frequently need websites and marketing materials

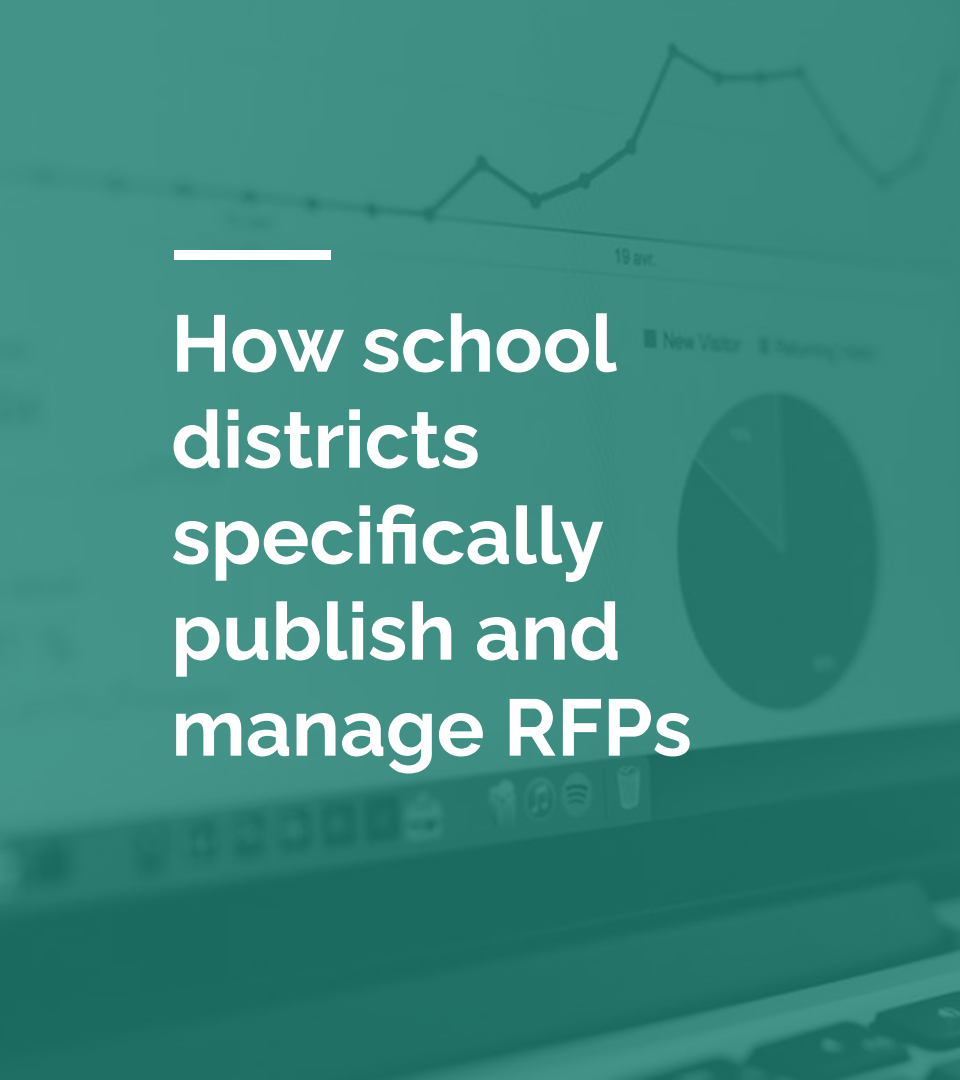


Industry portals and Google Alerts

- **DemandStar:** aggregates government RFPs nationally
- **BidNet Direct:** strong state and municipal coverage
- **eBid Systems:** popular with municipalities and school districts

Tip: Google Alerts: set up searches for "request for proposal" "website" "[your city]" and check them weekly. Organizations publish RFPs in press releases, community bulletin boards, and local business journals.

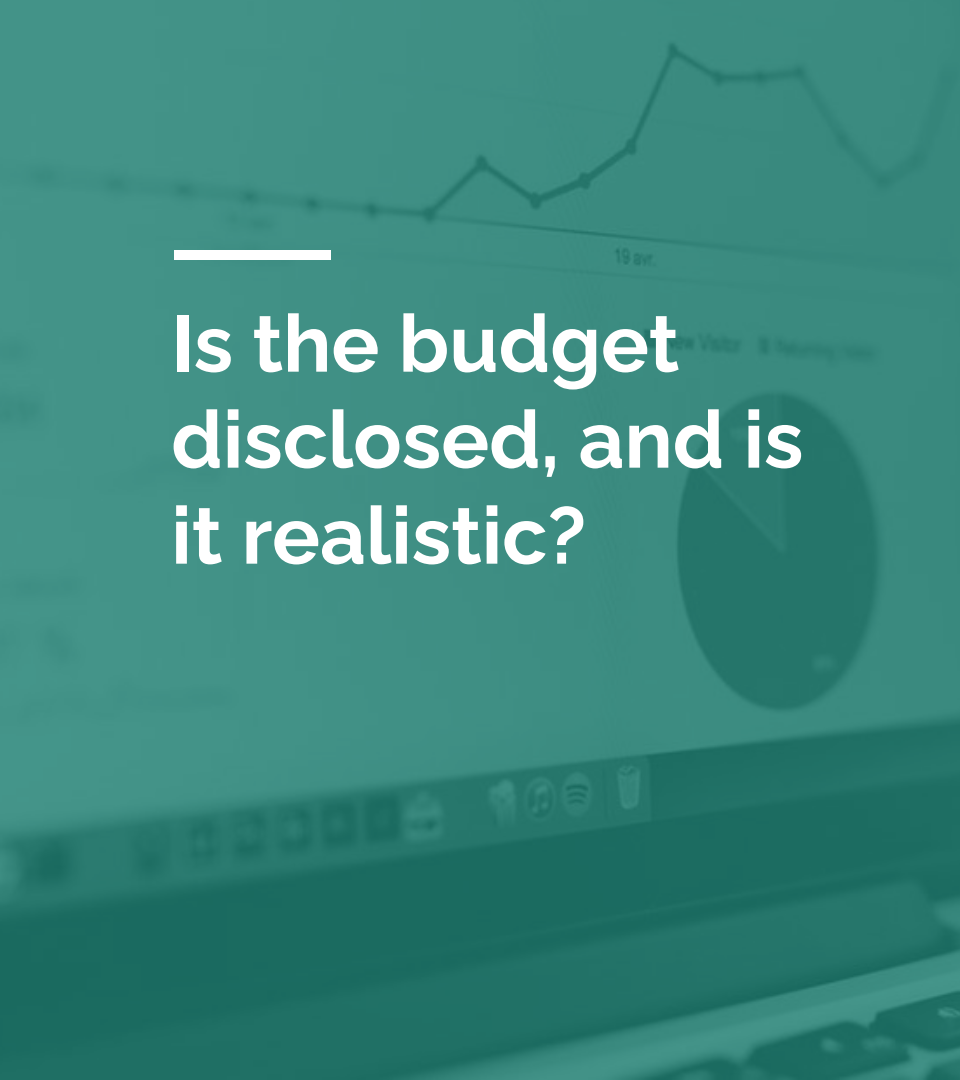
How school districts specifically publish and manage RFPs





The 5-Minute Qualifying Filter

Not every RFP is worth your time. Writing a proposal takes real hours. You need a fast way to decide "yes, pursue this" or "no, move on."



Is the budget
disclosed, and is
it realistic?

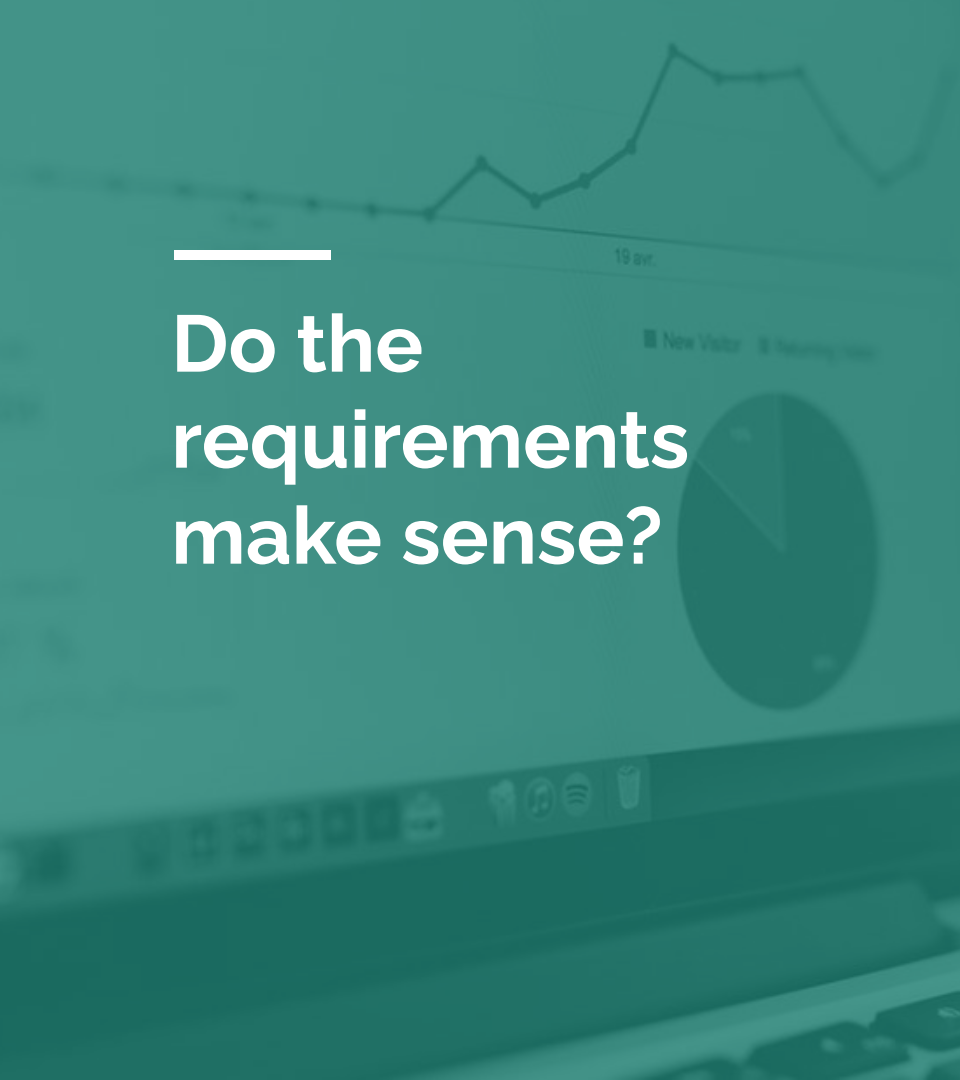
Yes!!.....?

No?.... Maybe.....?



**Do I have
relevant
experience I can
point to?**

They will ask for examples. The NISD RFP asked for K-12 or educational agency references. Think honestly about whether your portfolio has credibly similar work.



Do the requirements make sense?

Read the scope section carefully. The NISD scope was long -- 130-plus campuses, WCAG 2.1 AA, SAML via ClassLink, LDAP/Active Directory, Google Workspace, full content migration, role-based access, approval workflows, emergency alerts, a newsletter system, and SOC 2 compliance.



Are there
disqualifying
requirements
you can't meet?

\$20K - \$50K



Is the timeline workable?

Proposals have a deadline, an award date, and a project start date. Make sure you have enough lead time to put together a response you're proud of.



Anatomy of a Winning Response

The standard is low -- use that



Anatomy of a Winning Response

The standard is low -- use that



Cover letter

The standard is low -- use that



About your firm

One to two pages. What you do, who you serve, how long you've been doing it, the kinds of clients you work with.



Relevant experience and case studies

Three projects max. For each: what the client needed, what you built and why, and the result. Real quotes from past clients are worth more than anything you write about yourself.



Your proposed approach

Walk them through how you work. Be specific, not vague.



Timeline and pricing

A timeline visual -- a bar or a week-by-week table -- shows you understand the project and that you respect that it's a partnership, not a hand-it-over situation.



Make it look good

You are a web designer. Your proposal is a design artifact. A poorly formatted Word document is not a great signal from someone who is about to be trusted with a web presence.



Follow-up and Closing

Most RFPs have a formal Q&A period before the deadline.



--- The pre-submission question period

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Oral presentations

If they invite you to present,
accept.



When you don't win

Request a debrief. Many government agencies will tell you how your proposal ranked and what the winning score looked like.



Closing

The designers who will eventually win in this channel are the ones who take the process seriously.



Resources

- **Texas ESBD:** esbd.texas.gov
- **SAM.gov (federal):** sam.gov
- **Bonfire / Euna Procurement:**
gobonfire.com
- **DemandStar:** demandstar.com
- **BidNet Direct:** bidnetdirect.com
- **Candid / GuideStar (nonprofits):**
candid.org
- **Better Site Host:** bettersitehost.com