You're an educator, not an RFP writer.

1 START EARLY, TAKE YOUR TIME

A quality Request for Proposals (RFP) takes time to put together. Like a project, the best RFPs come from considerable preparation and editing. If you know that your school will need a technology services partner, a good rule of thumb is to release your RFP at the beginning of the calendar year.

This timing allows your school to review responses to your RFP and consider your options while planning out the budget for the following years. Start building your RFP piece by piece to stay ahead of schedule and allow for time to collaborate with others in your school. As you bring in additional stakeholders - building leaders, curriculum leaders, etc. - always ask what they think your school needs, what expectations they have, and what resources can be contrbiuted.

2 LEARN FROM OTHER RFPs...

When it comes to RFPs, reinventing the wheel doesn't offer much value. That's why it's worthwhile to review requests put together by other schools. This helps you organize your own request while also helping you avoid pitfalls and find the best EdTech services partner for your school.

3 ...BUT MAKE IT YOUR OWN

While looking to other RFPs for inspiration or reference is a great way to start, following the lead of others too closely can lead to disappointing results. All too often districts make the mistake of simply copying and pasting bits and pieces of different RFPs together. This may seem like a good idea, but district names and end goals are always different, requiring additional attention to detail and editing. To avoid this mistake, work to make your RFP unique to your district.

4 MAKE YOUR END GOAL CLEAR

You know better than anyone else what your end goal is, but bidders don't. Whether you're interested in resolving your technology problems, updating your technology environment or improving your IT leadership, your objective should be apparent in each section of the solicitation. Without your end goal, vendors are unsure of what they're working toward and, in turn, are likely to provide general, non-specific responses.

5 INCLUDE VISUALS

As in the classroom, visuals can help to get your point across in a clear and concise way. Whether it's a chart, table or picture, small visuals are a great way to supplement the text you've already written. Read through your RFP to ensure that everything is clear. If it's not, don't be afraid to add in a chart that explains your district's current technology capabilities, where the gaps are and what your district needs.

ONE CAVEAT : When working with visuals, make sure to use high quality images. A low-quality image can confuse, making its use worse than no image at all.

6 CONSIDER YOUR AUDIENCE

When compiling your educational technology RFP, consider your audience and what you expect from them. While the bidding vendors have experience, it's important to clearly state your district's expectations so that there are no misunderstandings. Make sure that the essentials, such as timeline integration, budget specifications and the basic framework, are clear. They can take it from there.

7 BE FAIR WITH THE DEADLINE

RFP documents are often voluminous. It takes time to review an RFP and even more time to respond to it. Establish a realistic deadline that allows providers to think through their responses, ask questions as necessary and send back quality responses that meet your district's unique technology needs.

8 HOLD A MANDATORY BIDDERS CONFERENCE

While you no doubt want to move through the RFP and bid process as quickly and efficiently as possible, take the extra time to hold a bidders' conference. Yes, it may mean devoting additional time to the RFP, but by making the bidders' conference mandatory, you can meet potential bidders and answer their questions about RFP expectations.

ONE MORE THING… at the bidders' conference, allow the bidders to submit additional questions. Afterwards, collect the questions, put together answers and send them to every bidder. This may seem like extra work, but it's the best way to ensure quality responses, and a completely fair bid process.