

INNOVATION TEMPLATE

Problem Statement: The federal contracting community has become increasingly more vocal about the challenges to bringing forth meaningful innovation to address government missions/challenges. Industry complains about poorly crafted or “cut and paste” Statements of Work that leave potential offers guessing about what the government wants. Conversely, the government complains that industry proposals are “vanilla,” lacking innovative solutions or approaches, and as a result the government often defaults to using lowest-price technically acceptable evaluation criteria to buy what they view are “commodity” solutions. Ultimately, this scenario benefits neither the government nor industry. However, failure to capitalize on innovation can be overcome by improving the communication and understanding between all stakeholders.

Purpose: The Innovation Template below provides an approach for federal agencies to request, identify, and weigh the benefits of innovation throughout the acquisition process. This tool is designed to tie innovations to specific solicitation outcomes/ buyers’ objectives. Using this approach will enhance communication between government and industry regarding the priority for, the application of, and the return on investment from innovation. Via the template, the federal buyer is able to identify those areas in which they specifically would like to have industry offer innovative approaches to their needs, while the seller is able to offer solutions that may provide additional value for the agency.

Application: The Innovation Template is applicable to solicitations for goods and services across the spectrum of federal government needs. Regardless of the commodity or service being procured, this tool enables the offeror to identify explicit innovations that are imbedded within their approach. The government’s Source Selection authority evaluates the validity of the benefits claimed, and determines if they are indeed of value to the government. The Template is not intended to be scored as a standalone document within the solicitation. Rather, much like the more common compliance matrix used in solicitation responses, this tool should assist offerors in highlighting areas of their proposal where innovation can be or has been proposed, including how the offeror monetizes the innovation. The tool will also assist the Source Selection authority to identify and compare innovations proposed as part of a solicitation, and understand the associated costs and benefits to the government of the investment. While the template has application throughout the acquisition lifecycle, use at the Request for Information (RFI) stage will provide the greatest benefit to developing the Request for Proposal (RFP). If used at the RFP stage, the template should not introduce new information, but instead should signal the government’s desire for innovative proposals, and allow the offeror to highlight innovation solutions in its proposal.

Cost-Benefit Tradeoffs: For each solicitation, the contracting office or procuring entity should set qualitative thresholds for investment costs and benefits using “order of magnitude” estimation. The tool does not set prescriptive calculations for investment costs and savings. Risk reduction or avoidance, performance enhancements to mission impact, increased speed, improved quality, etc., may also result from innovative techniques. The Innovation Template is designed to identify areas where the government is seeking innovation and highlight the proposed innovations and any associated benefits offered by the vendor.

	Completed by Government			Completed by Offeror <i>If used at RFP stage, include references to proposal</i>		
#	Outcome/ Objective ¹	Associated Requirements from SOW ²	Desired Investment: Innovation/ Savings ^{3 4}	Approach Summary & Technical Proposal References ^{5 6}	Benefits of Innovation (Cost/Non-Cost, i.e. Risk Reduction/ Performance Improvement/etc.; Ranges & assumptions) ^{7 8}	Investment Cost/ Benefit to Gov't (\$, \$\$, \$\$\$) ⁹

*Offeror may also add additional Solicitation Outcomes/Objectives that are supported by the proposed innovation

¹ In what areas does the agency believe this solicitation lends itself to innovative proposals?

² In which specific elements of the SOW would the government like to see offerors propose innovative approaches?

³ To what extent is the government willing to make a higher investment to access innovative solutions on this instant procurement?

⁴ To what extent is the government willing to make a higher initial investment in exchange for longer-term savings? What is the desired timeframe for achieve such savings?

⁵ Describe any additional areas where you believe this solicitation lends itself to innovative proposals.

⁶ Describe areas where your proposal offers innovation, or innovative approaches.

⁷ Describe the value proposition to the government of the innovation you are proposing (including both monetary and non-monetary benefits).

⁸ Describe how your proposal will result in savings to the government, if any, and over what timeframe.

⁹ Summarize how the innovation offered may result in a higher cost to the government.

Potential Questions to Include in the Template:

For Government Buying Activities to Answer:

1. In what areas does the agency believe this solicitation lends itself to innovative proposals?
2. In which specific elements of the SOW would the government like to see offerors propose innovative approaches?
3. To what extent is the government willing to make a higher investment to access innovative solutions on this instant procurement?
4. To what extent is the government willing to make a higher initial investment in exchange for longer-term savings? What is the desired timeframe for achieve such savings?

For Industry Offerors to Answer:

1. Describe any additional areas where you believe this solicitation lends itself to innovative proposals.
2. Describe areas where your proposal offers innovation, or innovative approaches.
3. Describe the value proposition to the government of the innovation you are proposing (including both monetary and non-monetary benefits).
4. Summarize how the innovation offered may result in a higher cost to the government.
5. Describe how your proposal will result in savings to the government, if any, and over what timeframe.