

# REFERENCE CHECKS



Solving the Procurement Puzzle



2016  
State Bureau of Procurement Conference  
Wisconsin Department of Administration

# INTRODUCTIONS

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# Reference Checks

1. Why was this session included?
2. Is there/should there be a method for standardization?
3. State Procurement Manual references
  - PRO-C30
  - PRO-C40



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# Section - PRO-C30

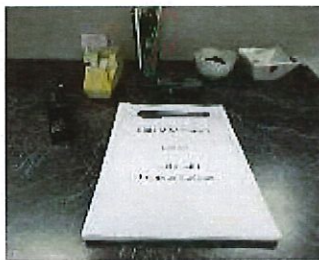
## State Procurement Manual

DOA-3449 N(R06/94) Formerly AD-P-12

		Number PRO-C-30
		Effective 5-1-92
Section THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS	Agencies Affected ALL	Replaces 12-1-83
Title COMMUNICATIONS WITH PROPOSERS (REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL)		Page 2 of 2

C. Opportunities to make changes, presentations, or submissions will be given equally to all remaining proposers in the evaluation process. The agency may consider the reference checks, oral presentations, demonstrations, etc. of these proposers only.

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**VendorNet System**



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# Section PRO - C40

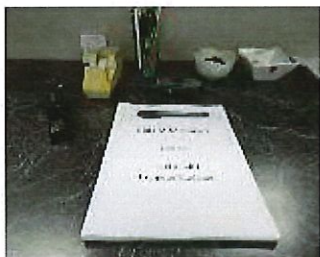
## State Procurement Manual

DOA-3449 N(R06/94) Formerly AD-P-12

		Number PRO-C-40
		Effective 3-27-07
Section THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS	Agencies Affected ALL	Replaces NEW
Title EVALUATION COMMITTEE REPORTS		Page 2 of 3

- E. A concise summary of each component of the evaluation process (evaluation of the written proposals, oral demonstrations, best and final solicitations) must be included in the report.
- F. Any anomaly in scores must be identified and explained.
- G. An abstract of the final technical evaluation and cost scores must be attached to the report.
- H. The results of reference checks on the recommended proposer must be attached to the report.

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# EXAMPLES of RATING Questions

Rating 1 = poor to 5 = excellent. *You may provide any comments in the box provided after each item.*

Rate operational errors (late reports or reporting errors, invoicing errors, etc.)

Check One:  1  2  3  4  5

*Note for Rating item b: 1 = poor (many errors) to 5 = excellent (no errors or insignificant amount of errors)*

Please enter comment here:

Rate staff retention and service coverage/backup

Check One:  1  2  3  4  5

Please enter comment here:

Rate contract issue resolution

Check One:  1  2  3  4  5

Please enter comment here:

How would you rate this company's ability to learn new processes and/or adapt to changes?

Check One:  1  2  3  4  5  Not applicable

Please enter comment here:

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# Examples of open ended questions

1. What would you describe as this company's key strengths?
2. What is this company's greatest weakness or area needing most improvement?
3. If this company is awarded a contract by DOC, what would be a key piece(s) of advice you would share with us based your experience with this company?
4. Does this company have qualified staff assigned to work on your contract with them?
5. Are there any other comments you would like to share?

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# UNIQUE/OUT OF THE NORM EXAMPLE

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DOC and DOR cafeteria services

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# DOC Cafeteria RFP

- Cafeteria in DOC and DOR buildings
- Operate the Cafeteria with no subsidy
- Cost was not a factor
- Evaluation of proposals
- Demonstrations from four vendors
- Site Visits Conducted
- Top two vendors .65% difference in points

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# Reference Check Process

- Performance Survey
  - Sent to three references for each vendor
  - Identifying information redacted
  - Twenty questions and a comments section for the vendors
- References Scoring
  - Surveys given to the RFP committees
  - Value of 50 points (total for the RFP is 1050)
  - Made the variance even smaller, .2
- Did not get a protest
- Good process but should have given it more weight

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# Reference Checks

- References are used to validate the information you have received, similar to references used in a job search.
- They can affirm the decision or if they are negative, can cause you to go in a different direction.
- Consistency is important, need to ensure that references are all asked the same questions.
- Recommend asking service questions, as that will be important in assessing how the vendor will treat your end users.
- Evaluators can adjust scores for references based on the sections that are affected.



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# Reference Check Example Questions

1. Does the contractor have staff that is dedicated to your account? Are they knowledgeable and responsive to your service needs?
2. Have you run into any problems with this contractor? How have they handled resolving those problems?
3. Have you encountered an event that the contractor was not able to fix; or a problem that was not properly addressed by the contractor?
4. Were workflow and timeframes met to your satisfactions?
5. Please rate the items below using the following performance scale:

5= Excellent, very limited service problems, hard to imagine much better

4= Good, limited service problems

3= Fair, more frequent service problems

2= Poor, frequent and significant service problems

1= Failing

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# Reference Check Examples

## RFP for Barbering and Cosmetology Examination Services for Department of Safety and Professional Services

- The team hadn't worked with the highest scoring vendor before, so we checked references to confirm their service levels.
- Discovered that references believed the company had grown too fast, and wasn't providing the level of services they needed: for example, Test Applicants had long wait time, were given incorrect information, etc.
- The team went back and re-scored questions based on the new information in areas that applied (customer service, proposer experience, etc.)
- The original highest scoring vendor wasn't awarded the contract, and protested, but it was resolved explaining the issues with the references.

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# Reference Check Examples

## Request for Bid for Coordination of Newspaper Publishing of Unclaimed Property Legal Notices for Department of Revenue

- One of the bid qualifications was that Bidders provide one reference that can verify the Bidder can meet all of the Technical Requirements.
- In the Bidder References section, added language, “Failure to obtain verification of previously performed work through references may be grounds for disqualification.”
- References were checked via e-mail, and the technical requirements were sent as a separate attachment. Also, the reference questions corresponded with the requirements.
- A vendor was disqualified based on the references. Since the language was clear in the Request for Bid document, there weren't any issues with the disqualification.

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# The value of a reference check

- WHO SHOULD DO IT?
- DETERMINING QUESTIONS



# The Value of a Reference Check

## Who?

The procurement agent or person conducting the bid/proposal is responsible for all components of due diligence.

## Due Diligence

- Functional evaluation factors
- Quality of equipment or service is critical
- Qualified and responsible



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# The value of a reference check

## Questions

- The questions should help you qualify the bidder to ensure they are responsive, responsible and provide quality
  - Questions should be developed with input of the program area that answer questions and concerns that they may have.
- Use open ended questions



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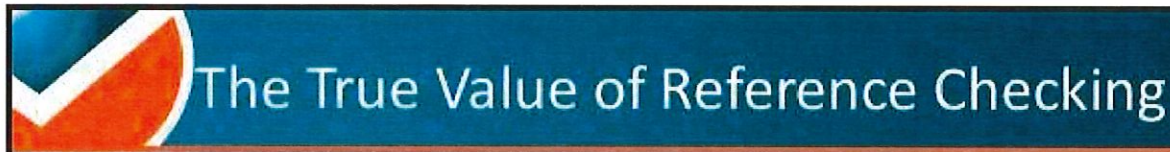


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# The value of a reference check

## - Examples:

- Did [vendor] fully meet your expectations? If yes, how and if no, why not?
- On a scale of 1 – 5, with 5 being the highest, how satisfied are you with the quality of the [product, people, etc.]? Why did you rate them or the product in this way?
- Was the [vendor] responsive to any issues that arose, how was their communications with you or the project team?
- Would you use [vendor] again? If yes, why and if no, why not?
- How did [vendor] handle conflict-resolution?



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# Wrap Up

- When scoring reference checks or using them to re-score evaluation criteria in an RFP, it is critical that only those requirements that pertain to references are scored/rescored.
- When references checks are required in an RFB, the bid language should stipulate that bidders may be disqualified based on the outcome.



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