



A Guide to The Modern-Day Immigration RFP

Introduction

Today, immigration is no longer an afterthought or a side task for human resources professionals. For many mid- to large-size organizations that require high-skilled talent, it is a core function of the HR department, and has a significant impact on important talent acquisition KPIs—such as time to hire, quality of hire and candidate experience—that affects organizational effectiveness and corporate bottom lines.

With so much at stake, choosing the right provider is imperative for organizations that sponsor foreign talent.

Traditionally, organizations partnered with employment law firms, where immigration represented a small portion of their practice but was never the focal point. Immigration specialty law firms had more specific experience and focus, but relied on traditional, manual and paper-based practices with any technology focused on creating efficiencies primarily for the attorneys.

But as immigration has evolved, so has the means of service delivery. There are more options available than ever for organizations looking at vendors, and procurement departments today aren't evaluating an immigration service provider solely on price or law firm size—they're examining a multitude of traditional and hybrid models to find which delivers best on service, technology, employee experience and more.

This breadth of choices has led to the rise of the immigration request for proposal (RFP). An increasing number of companies recognize that global talent is critical to their competitiveness, and that a streamlined immigration process can only be achieved through the right partner. Going through the RFP process can help you ensure that your immigration vendor meets the unique needs of all stakeholders in the process and sets your organization up for future success with a modern approach to immigration.

A Primer on The RFP Process



Requests for Proposal (RFPs) put structure around the purchase consideration process. The goal of an RFP is to closely evaluate candidates across a consistent set of criteria to determine which business relationship will be most beneficial and successful for all stakeholders. This includes an organization's employees, its HR and talent acquisition team, as well as the vendor itself.





What is the difference between an RFP, RFI and RFQ?

During the procurement process, you may see the following terms used: RFP, RFI and RFQ. While all of these requests seek information about a vendor, they are not interchangeable.

RFI

RFI: A Request for Information

This is a formal request for general information from a potential vendor. This can help organizations get a better understanding of what solutions are available to them. RFIs can also be put together faster at the early stages of the decision making process.

RFQ

RFQ: A Request for Quote

This request asks for specific pricing information for scope of services offered or requested by the customer. This allows vendors to provide a structured breakdown of the costs associated with their services.

RFP

RFP: A Request for Proposal

This is a comprehensive method of gathering information that outlines the goals of an organization's department or program as well as specific issues it would like the vendor to address. It is often used during a bidding process between multiple vendors, and takes longer to put together.

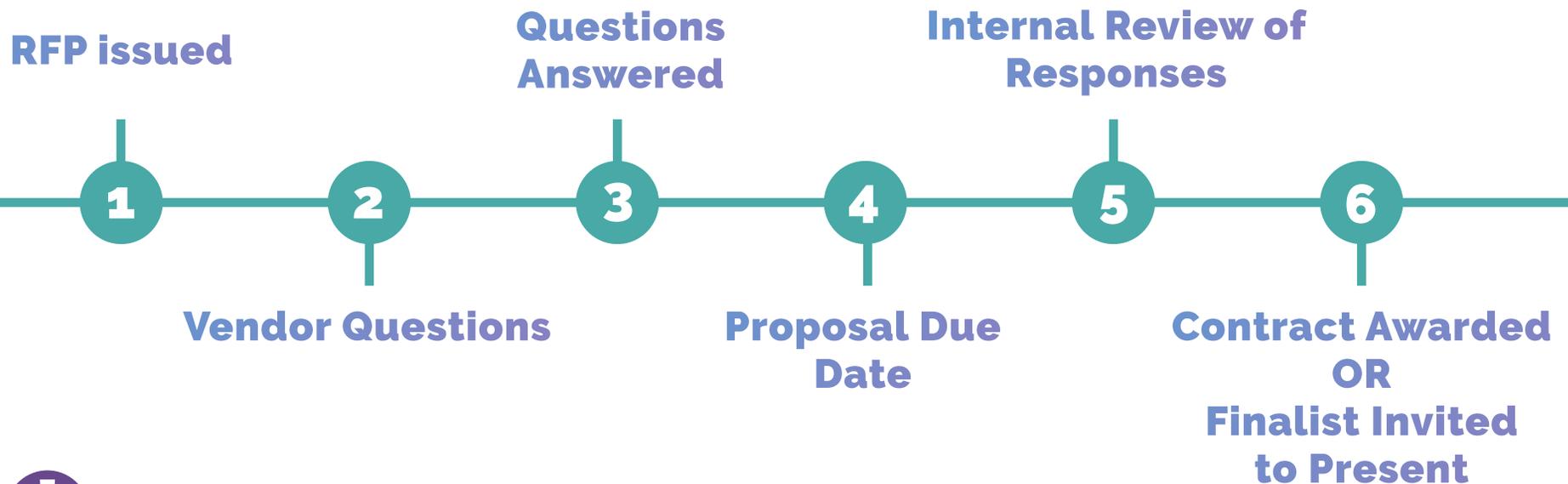


An organization may use just one, a combination or two or all three during the decision making process, depending on their familiarity with vendors, pricing needs and the scope of the process. For organizations that have a general idea of the vendors available but are open to new information and ideas, the RFP process may be the best option.



A Timeline of the RFP Process

The exact length of an immigration RFP process, and the steps involved, may vary based on the organization, the number of vendors being evaluated and other factors. Typically, the process involves the following steps:



When communicating with potential vendors, be sure to set specific deadlines for vendors to submit questions, as well as dates for an expected response and a strict due date for final proposals.



Who should consider an immigration RFP?

Most companies can choose or switch to a new immigration provider without needing an RFP. However, those that choose to do so need to make sure that they are using a modern RFP that **encompasses the true scope of the best offerings available**. When evaluating immigration providers, the key decision makers involved in the process may include the immigration manager, HR manager, VP of human resources or a designated procurement manager, depending on the size of the organization.

Companies who hire or rely on a high number (75+) of sponsored employees each year:

The right immigration provider can ensure future scalability of a growing program that will eventually need to support a larger number of foreign nationals.

Companies that sponsor many of the same visa case types:

The RFP process can ensure that a provider has experience with specific sponsorship options.

Companies that have not gone through the RFP process in 2-3 years (or ever):

Companies who want to stay competitive with the immigration program, policies, support for foreign nationals and budget can benefit from evaluating new service options.

Companies where the decision maker has already taken the time to research options and wants further details:

A proposal from a provider can give additional insight into its qualifications that may not have been previously available to the decision makers(s).

Companies where potential vendors have been identified and the decision maker wants to compare certain aspects of service or delivery:

Vendors can provide customized insight about their services in comparison to other providers.

Companies where the decision maker has seen a demonstration of technology that may be used in case processing:

Receiving multiple proposals can allow the decision maker to compare and contrast technology to decide which best benefits their organization.

Companies should not consider an RFP if:

- They intend to choose a vendor based on one or a few factors exclusively
- They have zero or little familiarity with providers and cannot provide specific questions on an RFP
- They sponsor less than 50 cases per year
- They have concerns about abilities of current provider and/or a decision needs to be made quickly



Goals of the RFP Process

When starting the RFP process, the first step should be to **identify what the goal of the RFP is**. As mentioned previously in this guide, the decision making process can involve HR professionals as well as procurement departments or other stakeholders at the organization. Understanding what matters most to immigration teams and sponsored employees can help all of those involved narrow down their questions and avoid information overload. Organizations can do so by posing the following questions.

5 Questions to ask your team:

1. Are there gaps in your current process or provider, and are your service level expectations being met?
2. Are you fully aware of what the market has to offer?
3. Do you want to illustrate goals and initiatives of your immigration program to company leadership?
4. What are your company's general standards or processes when selecting new vendors?
5. How big of a role does cost play versus the relative value of the return on investment? Are you trying to find better pricing alternatives or a more comprehensive solution?

Outline your immigration program's immediate and long-term needs

Crafting the right immigration RFP also involves evaluating what an organization's immigration program aims to accomplish. This can be broken down into short-term and long-term goals.

Short term goals for an immigration program may include time savings for HR and talent acquisition teams; the ability to digitize current processes and employee information to improve accessibility and security; the need for better analytics and reporting on the sponsored population and immigration spend and an overall improvement to the experience of the employees who are going through the visa or green card application process.

Long term goals for an immigration program could include ensuring the future scalability of the program as an organization's sponsored employee headcount grows or as the business looks to expand into new markets, the ability to respond to future immigration and mobility changes (depending on the regulatory environment), and an overall desire to decrease organizational risk that may arise from the program.

When looking at the above factors, all may hold importance to your organization, but it is essential to determine which factors matter most to stakeholders involved in the immigration process and make those the centerpiece of your RFP.



Structuring Your Immigration RFP

Once the goals of an immigration RFP are clearly defined, it is time to structure and draft the RFP. Immigration services are very different from typical vendors, and a successful RFP should look into very specific criteria. Organizing an RFP into specific “buckets” or areas of vendor expertise can help lead a more successful process.

These buckets include:

Legal Expertise:

Evaluate the credentials of the firm, their case volume, familiarity with your company’s industry, and the responsiveness of attorneys. In addition, if your company handles non-U.S. (outbound) immigration, evaluate whether the provider can support these cases as well.

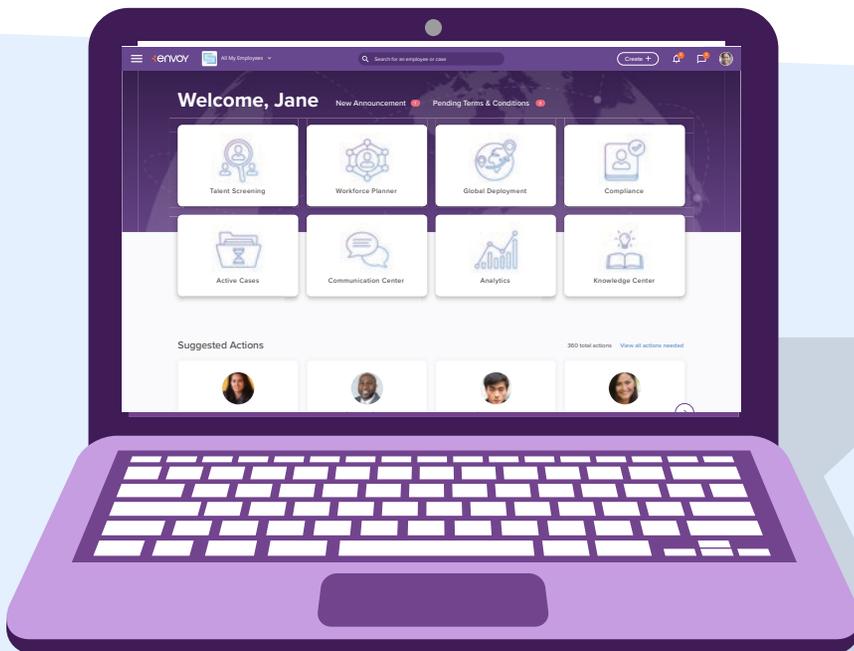


Technology:

Compare technology platforms from companies for ease of use and agility. Do only HR users and attorneys have access to the platform, or can hiring managers, employees and their dependents access information through it as well?

Other questions to ask:

- How easily can the provider’s processes and offerings adapt to a remote work environment?
- Can an organization demo the technology ahead of time? Organizations should not consider vendors who cannot demo their technology.
- How does the vendor evaluate and invest in technology improvements? Ask about their development roadmap to ensure continuous innovation.



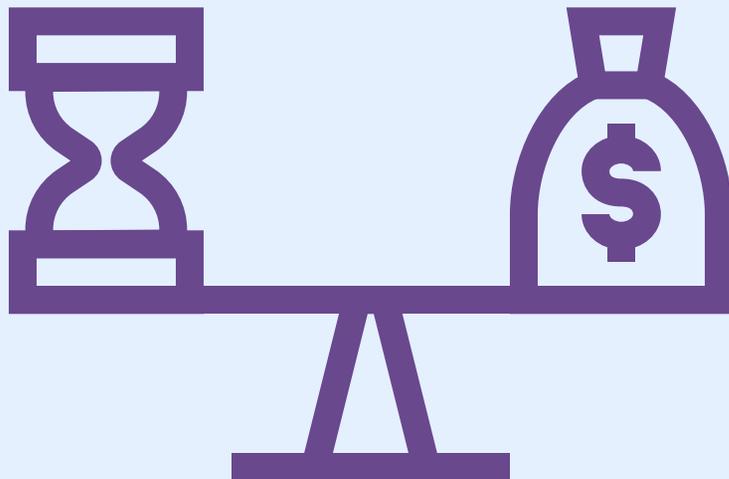
Structuring Your Immigration RFP (continued)

Security:

Security is a vital concern often omitted from immigration and other service RFPs, but it is crucial to protect personal employee data and privacy and should be taken into consideration, especially with regard to their adherence to some of the newer regulations like GDPR and CCPA.

Other questions to ask:

- How strong is their encryption?
- What other tools are used to ensure security (i.e. two-factor authentication)?
- What sort of tools are available to ensure compliance, PAFs, I-94, etc.



Cost:

Find out whether organizations are billed for services on an hourly basis or flat rate, as well as what services are included under current costs and what might cost extra. An RFP may also ask whether billing is consolidated or if the organization will receive separate invoices from different providers (global partners, translation services, education evaluations, etc.).

Structuring Your Immigration RFP (continued)

Employee Experience:

This area is often not considered by organizations but is becoming increasingly important as companies put a premium on their employees' experience. Ask for proposals to specify how the provider communicates with employees, their family and HR, and where employees have insight and access to attorney and staff communication.

Other questions to ask:

- Is there dedicated support for the foreign nationals going through the immigration process?
- Is there a platform available for employee use, and if so, is it mobile friendly?
- Do product demos specifically show how foreign nationals can work with the platform?



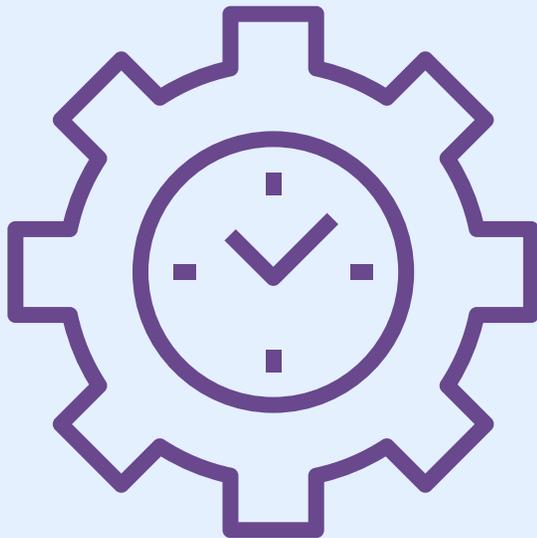
Comprehensive Overview of Company:

When evaluating a service provider, it's important to find a company that can grow with yours. Ask about how long the vendor has been operating and what its year-over-year growth looks like, as well as how they have improved their service delivery and offerings over time.

Structuring Your Immigration RFP (continued)

Structure of Service Delivery:

Ask for details about what the case process will look like in terms of communication and collaboration. How are expectations and timelines set and communicated between attorneys and HR, and how are documents and paperwork sent between parties during the application process?



Cadence of Service Delivery:

A final question to ask is how often an organization can expect updates from their service provider about case status, action items and deadlines. Is this information provided in real-time or in regular intervals?

Conclusion

The RFP is a valuable tool that organizations can use to make the process of switching immigration providers more structured and effective, but to deliver on these benefits, an RFP needs to represent what matters in modern-day immigration. With so many offerings available, putting together a precise RFP can help your team make the right choice.



About Envoy

Founded in 1998, Envoy is a global immigration service provider offering the only immigration management platform that makes it seamless for companies to hire and manage an international workforce. If you're ready to learn how Envoy can transform your organization's immigration program, [contact us today](#). We combine access to top-tier legal representation and proprietary technology to bring efficiency and transparency to the immigration process for employers and employees.

Envoy's platform features include auto-populated forms, budgeting and forecasting tools, real-time collaboration between HR, attorneys, hiring managers and the employees being sponsored, secure document storage as well as compliance monitoring. These technologies offer scalable efficiencies in the immigration process and a better experience for all involved.

Through our platform and services, we empower companies to acquire the best talent regardless of where they live, manage their entire global workforce and enable employees to take advantage of business opportunities around the globe. Envoy serves over 1,000 customers ranging from fast-growth startups to Fortune 50 corporations.

If you're interested in learning more about how our technology can help you more efficiently manage immigration processes at your organization, contact us today for a demonstration.

Content in this publication is not intended as legal advice, nor should it be relied on as such. For additional information on the issues discussed, consult an Envoy-affiliated attorney or another qualified professional.

© 2020, Envoy Global Inc., All Rights Reserved