

# Frequently Asked Questions

## ***What is the purpose of the Request for Proposals (RFP) process?***

- The Department of Labor and Industry is required by law to use the Request for Proposal process to solicit for and secure Professional and Technical Service contracts with electrical inspection service providers.

State agencies must comply with certain laws and rules to ensure that:

- 1) Contracting with qualified professionals is necessary to accomplish the intended task;
- 2) Contracting will result in greater cost efficiency;
- 3) There is opportunity for all base-qualified entities to participate in the RFP process, and;
- 4) The agency will maintain the capability to prescribe, monitor and evaluate the work performed by the contractor.

An RFP is a formal invitation to a potential contractor to submit a proposal to provide a service to an agency. The RFP is also a procurement process where the agency can judge if the prospective contractor's experience, qualifications and work plan will provide the best service.

## ***Is there a cost associated with submitting a proposal?***

- Other than time, there is no cost, fees or charges of any kind.

## ***The packet does not contain an application form - did I get all of the documents that I need to submit a proposal?***

- This is a Request for Proposal, not a job application.

## ***What should the proposal content include?***

- See the *Proposal Content* and *Proposal Instructions* of the detailed Request for Proposals (RFP) document included in the information packet.

## ***How does a responder know if their proposal is complete enough?***

- The RFP packet that is provided to prospective responders outlines all of the department's requirements and expectations. If a responder reviews the *Proposal Content and Proposal Instructions* and includes each of the items listed the proposal would be very complete.
- Proposals should include information and detail that will enable the department to make a clear distinction between competing proposals. Responders that are, or have been under contract should not assume that their response will be given priority or preferential treatment.

## ***Can I submit more than one proposal?***

- Yes. There is no limit to the number of proposals that a responder may submit.
  - When submitting multiple proposals for a single District, list the District Area numbers with your name and license number on the Technical Proposal. A separate Cost Proposal will need to be completed for each District Area.
  - A separate proposal must be submitted for each District in which electrical inspection service is proposed. It is very common for responders to submit multiple proposals.

## ***How do I submit a proposal to provide electrical inspection service in other than a defined geographical area? For example, what if I want to provide service part-time, such as certain days of the week or for selected months? What if I want to provide service across the entire Twin Cities metro area on an as-needed basis?***

- Part-time inspection service is identified as "supplemental" inspection service in the RFP as described below.
- In addition to seeking proposals for designated inspection areas, the department routinely seeks proposals from responders who are able to provide supplemental inspection service. Contract electrical inspectors who provide such supplemental inspection service are informally referred to as "floaters." Unlike primary inspectors who are responsible for the daily management of a designated inspection area, floaters provide a broad range of service from part-time to full-time, in concentrated geographical areas or larger regional areas.
- Although there is no guarantee of work under contracts to provide supplemental inspection service, inspectors in this category are typically provided with work that meets or exceeds their proposal.

***If I don't participate in the RFP process during the current window of opportunity and I don't submit a proposal, will there be additional RFP's published throughout the year?***

- The RFP process is costly, time-consuming and normally occurs only once a year. It's likely that not everyone that submits a proposal will be initially selected because the number of qualified responders usually exceeds the number of opportunities that are available. However, situations occur during the course of the year where additional inspectors are needed to provide service in vacated areas, newly created areas or when there is increased workload. Proposals submitted by all responders are kept on file until a subsequent RFP is published. If inspection service opportunities become available during the year the department can refer to the proposals on file (from the responders who were not initially selected to receive a contract offer) and can contact responders who previously expressed interest in providing inspection service.

***How will the proposals be evaluated? (How are points awarded?)***

- You will find this information in the section entitled 'Proposal Evaluation' on page nine of the detailed Request for Proposals. A three-person committee evaluates all proposals. A 100-point scale is used with the following breakdown:
  - 35 Points - Qualifications/Experience
  - 20 Points - Statement of Understanding / Detailed work plan
  - 15 Points - References
  - 30 Points - Cost Detail

An additional 6 Points is awarded to Targeted Group Business which may increase a respondent's total score over 100.

***What exactly is the "cost proposal" portion of the proposal and how it should be proposed?***

Responders must include a cost proposal for providing inspections service Refer to the Compensation/Cost Proposal page in the RFP packet to see the compensation percentage rate estimated for the inspection area published. Unlike a Request for Bid in which the bid amount is not disclosed until the bid opening, the department has an estimated compensation rate for the identified geographical areas. The cost proposal is expected to include a percentage value.

The STATE has provided an estimated compensation rate range for each geographical inspection area, which is found on the attached District Area Report in the column labeled Estimated Compensation Rate.

- Example of cost proposal: "Inspector proposes a compensation rate for inspection services of \_\_\_% of the electrical fees submitted by permit applicants."
- Example of inspection fee payment: Inspector contracts for a compensation rate of 95%. This means that after providing inspection services, the inspector will receive 95% of the permit inspection fees paid by the permit applicant. For this example, a typical new single family home permit amount is \$135.00 and will require two inspection trips to the site. The Inspector performs the rough-in inspection, enters the required inspection information for the rough-in in eTrakit then the Inspector receives \$33.25 (95% of \$35.00) from the STATE. The second trip to the inspection site results in a final inspection; inspector enters the final inspection information into eTrakit and receives \$95.00 (95% of \$100.00), the balance of the inspection fees on the permit.

***For the category of Targeted Group Business, how are the 6 points scored?***

- Certified Targeted Group Businesses and individuals submitting proposals as prime contractors are automatically awarded 6 additional points. These additional points are added to the total of the initial score. Additional information can be found at <http://www.mmd.admin.state.mn.us>

***Are responders interviewed during the selection process?***

- Yes – interactive, interviews provide opportunity for the department to meet responders, ask questions and outline the department's expectations. Interviews also provide opportunity for responders to ask questions and demonstrate their knowledge, skills and abilities. Most interviews are conducted in St. Paul. The results of this interview are used in addition to the proposal evaluation to further determine those responders that would provide an overall "best value" level of service to the department and its clientele. Interview sessions may also include basic competency evaluations. They are an important opportunity for responders to learn more about the details of providing electrical inspection service.
- Not all responders are interviewed. Only those responders that score highest on the proposal evaluation for a specific inspection area will be interviewed. The interview becomes the final step in determining "Best Value" and selecting an inspection service provider.

**What does “Best Value” mean?**

- "Best Value" describes an intended result in the acquisition of all goods and services. Price must be one of the evaluation criteria when acquiring goods and services. However, other combined evaluation criteria is more important and may include, but not be limited to, knowledge, skills, abilities, experience and performance.

**What are some important “Best Value” factors?**

- A complete, concise and professional proposal
- Good educational and training background
- Professional demeanor, attitude and perspective
- Accredited certification(s)
- Sincere interest in promoting electrical safety
- Demonstrated knowledge, skills and abilities
- Demonstrated performance that meets or exceeds the professional and technical service contract and the Department of Labor and Industry’s expectations
- Extensive and diverse electrical industry experience
- Proximity to designated inspection area
- Reasonable cost for providing the inspection service

**Are electrical inspectors state employees? What is a contract electrical inspector?**

- No. The department provides electrical inspection service across the state using individuals and companies that are under a Professional and Technical Services Contract to provide such service. The state of Minnesota does not employ any individuals to provide electrical inspection service.
- Contract electrical inspectors are independent contractors - they are separate and distinct business entities or enterprise operators that are under contract to provide electrical inspection and related service to the state. There is no compensation guarantee for individuals that provide inspection service. The compensation for completed inspections is based on a percentage of the inspection fee submitted by electrical contractors and other installers of electrical wiring. This is the compensation mechanism for all of the work covered by the contract, including inspections and investigation of violations of electrical licensing and inspection laws.
- There is an investigation fee that is part of the inspection fee schedule and applies where an electrical contractor or other installer violates electrical inspection laws by not filing a Permit Application at or before the commencement of the electrical work. Where an investigation verifies the violation, the investigation fee for each investigation is \$70, or equal to the required inspection fee, whichever is greater, not to exceed \$1,000. The electrical inspection fee schedule is found in Minnesota Statutes Section 326B.37 and can be accessed at <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=326B.37>

**Who is a "good fit" as a contract electrical inspector?**

- Persons looking to start a small business enterprise
- Persons who are highly motivated to succeed
- Persons who project a professional demeanor
- Persons who can provide professional electrical inspection service to a broad range of installers with a balanced, fair and reasonable attitude
- Persons who are self-disciplined and hard-working
- Persons who can enforce the applicable laws and rules in a professional and reasonable manner
- Persons who are independent, demonstrate confidence and willingly accept the concept of self-employment
- Persons who are not intimidated when dealing with difficult or challenging people
- Persons who are effective, clear, self-confident and professional communicators
- Persons who continuously expand their knowledge, skills and abilities as they relate to the laws, rules and codes that are enforced in Minnesota

***How do contract electrical inspectors provide uninterrupted service if they are ill, on vacation, at a conference, or are otherwise not available to provide inspection service?***

- Contract electrical inspectors network with other adjoining contract electrical inspectors to ensure uninterrupted inspection service. Some contract electrical inspectors have one or more employees that are in place to ensure uninterrupted service.

***Do I need to show proof of inspector bond and inspector insurance in order to submit a proposal?***

- No. The professional liability insurance and electrical inspector bond would be obtained by the responder only when the responder has received and accepted a contract offer from the department. Verification of liability insurance, inspector bond and other insurance coverages would be required before the contract would receive final approval by the department.

***Do I need to complete the Affirmative Action Data Page when submitting a proposal?***

- Responders are required to submit the form for contracts estimated to be in excess of \$100,000. However, responders are requested to complete and submit this form regardless of initial contract value in case the contract is increased by amendment at a future date.

***Why is there a "sample" contract in the packet and what do I do with it?***

- The sample contract is an example of the Professional and Technical Services contract (electrical inspection service) that the State of Minnesota uses when contracting such services. It is informational only.

***What is the term of the contract - when does the contract expire?***

- The contract term is July 1 through June 30 - this coincides with the state's fiscal year. The contract expiration date can be repeatedly extended with annual amendments (the combined contract and amendments cannot exceed a total of five years).

***How long does my proposal(s) stay on file at the department?***

- Responses to the Request for Proposals are held on file until the next Request for Proposals is published. The department normally only publishes an RFP once each year.

***Can I fax or e-mail the completed proposal?***

- No. The proposal packet will consist of several documents. All proposals must be uploaded to the SWIFT Supplier Portal not later than the event end date. Late, faxed, mailed or emailed proposals will not be considered!

***Where can I obtain the required professional technical errors and omissions insurance and electrical inspector bond?***

- Your insurance agent will be able to suggest insurance companies for the PT Errors and Omissions Insurance and Bond

***In addition to Professional Liability insurance, do I need General Liability insurance coverage?***

- Yes. Review the RFP for specific insurance requirement information. Contract inspectors must provide general liability insurance that includes coverage for premises and operations bodily injury and property damage, personal and advertising injury, and other coverage.

***What is Extended Reporting Period Coverage and when is it required?***

- Extended Reporting Period Coverage is required to be provided for all claims-made policies. Claims-Made coverage is generally a type of insurance that responds only to claims that are brought during the policy period or for a limited period of time after expiration. Extended reporting period coverage provides protection from claims for an extended period of time after the policy has expired.

***Can a person who is employed by the State of Minnesota be employed by a contract inspector?***

- No. Minnesota Statutes Chapter 16C does not allow the contract inspector or agents of the contract inspector to be employees of the state. An agent of the contract inspector would be an employee performing services on behalf of the contract inspector. This restriction applies only to professional and technical service contracts.

***Does the Department of Labor and Industry provide customized training for all contract inspectors?***

- No. However we will work with the inspector and the inspector's personnel to ensure that data entry into the department's inspection database is performed correctly.

***What is expected of me as a contract electrical inspector?***

- The RFP details the department's expectations for a contract electrical inspector. The primary expectation is the accurate enforcement of the National Electrical Code. In addition, contract electrical inspectors are expected to enforce electrical licensing and inspection related laws and rules and provide initial investigation of violations. Contract electrical inspectors are also expected to utilize and enter their inspection data into the department's inspection database (TRAKiT).

***When is the deadline for submitting a proposal?***

- See the Event Details of this RFP located in the SWIFT Supplier Portal for the Event End Date and Time.

***If I don't understand part of the RFP, how do I ask questions?***

- Any related questions regarding the Request for Proposal should be directed to Robin Geiger via email to [dli.electricity@state.mn.us](mailto:dli.electricity@state.mn.us). Questions will be accepted via email until 10 days prior to the end date of the Event.