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DEFENCE INDUSTRY & INNOVATION

Defence Innovation Hub Hints and Tips for good RFP Submissions

The following hints and tips should be used in conjunction with the guidance notes for submissions, which take precedence. The questions posed within this guide are intended to provoke thought in relation to the information requested. For further information on the RFP process and the official evaluation criteria, please see the RFP Pack you were supplied with.

RFP submissions are a more detailed chance to persuade the Defence Innovation Hub of the merits of both your idea and the ability of your organization to develop it successfully.

Request for Proposal (RFP)

The RFP gives you the chance to expand on an idea submitted and set out your development approach in more detail. You get to tell us how you are going to:

- Develop your idea;
- Manage the risks;
- Demonstrate your capability to Defence; and
- Demonstrate that you can successfully deliver a Defence product and/or service.

To give yourself the best chance of getting your RFP progressed, consider the following:

- The story that has got you to the point of this RFP. Show Defence that you have committed your own time and energy, that you have faced some difficulties, but that you have found a way to overcome them. Provide what you can to give us the confidence that you can be resilient in the face of technical or schedule pressure; that you can find a way to overcome problems and deliver against the contract. You might want to think about:
    - What work have you done, what challenges have you overcome, what progress have you made in understanding the idea and refining your proposed solution?
- Help us to understand how your idea differentiates itself from similar systems, or similar technologies that perform the same function or deliver the same capability; and in doing so help us to establish “Why this idea?”. Some questions to assist you are:
    - Give us the detail – what does it do?
    - How does the innovation do this?

- What is your unique selling proposition or unique selling point? You need to explain what is unique and why that unique feature is something that Defence should be interested in.

- Describe the unique systems or sub-systems in as much detail as you can. Is there a unique function it performs or capability it delivers? Or does it perform an existing capability in a unique way?

- The people within your organisation have skills and experience but don't just list qualifications or years of experience. You need to connect their previous successful work to this work plan. Some questions to assist you are:

  - How is what they have done previously relevant to the idea you're proposing?

  - Someone may be a mechatronics engineer, but have they ever contributed to designing a robotic control system for an autonomous vehicle? If they have – tell us. If they haven't, tell us how you will manage the limited specialist knowledge you have and reduce the technical risks.

  - What is your mix between senior or junior people?

  - Do you have the right mix?

  - How will this contribute or affect the amount of staff development possible during the development effort?

  - How does the resource mix affect your technical risks?

  - What does you resource mix mean for your costs?

  - Could you create a more compelling development budget if you had a better mix of senior and junior staff?

- To achieve the desired outcome, you may need to develop relationships with others like academia and suppliers. Make sure the connection and information is specific. Some questions to assist you are:

  - How is the development of a relationship going to benefit the development or commercialisation of this idea?

  - Are you using that relationship to advance your development effort, provide some niche capability or insight, or provide facilities?

  - If the project is a Phase 3 or 4 significant more details are required in terms of the system and how it might integrate into a Defence platform. Do you have the skills, experience or relationships to provide this greater detail?

- How does that relationship contribute to the development of the idea you are proposing?

- Upon completion of the development of your innovation project, Defence may seek integration of the capability into a platform. That could mean modifications to vehicles or infrastructure, unique storage or transport needs, connection to the Defence network, integration with existing soldier or personnel systems and equipment. For a Phase 3 or 4 activity in particular you should show that you understand what that might look like, the challenges, the actions you might need to perform to aid integration. Have you thought about what that might mean? You don't have to solve it at this stage – but we'd like to know that you understand the risks and can provide Defence with that information now, rather than later. Some questions to assist you:

  - Can you progress the design without access to that vehicle or facility? If you can do without, then you should.

  - Do you really need that GFX for your development and demonstration? Note:

    - GFX is the preferred nondescript cat all for anything that Government provides in which the 'X' could be anything. Government furnishing describes equipment, facilities, information, material, property and/or software required that the participant requires from Defence for the purposes of achieving the goals of the project. Some examples are:

      - GFF – Government Furnished Facilities

      - GFM – Government Furnished Material

    - Defence must agree and will not always accept/support GFx requests.

  - What significant benefit would you gain from GFX in assisting your development and demonstration?

  - Do you need to connect it to the Defence's information and communications technology (ICT)?

  - Do you need live or real Defence data?

  You are not expected to develop your idea to a point that it can be immediately adopted by Defence. Focus on maturing your idea to a state sufficient to demonstrate what it is capable of in a way that is credible and relatable to Defence. That's a TRL 7 outcome; aiming for anything further will add risk without increasing the value of your demonstration. Just show us what it can do.

- Organisational capacity to achieve the project and a Defence procurement. Some questions to assist you:
    - What other work are you doing, or hoping to do?
    - If you were to be given a contract, can you actually commit your resources at the level of effort in your budget calculator?
    - How realistic is your schedule in that case?
    - How much contingency have you factored in?
    - If you've put in a number of submissions to the Innovation Hub what would happen if you were contracted to deliver all of them?

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Project Execution Plan

The Project Execution Plan (PEP) is not just a regurgitation of the RFP key information. It talks to the practical execution of the development activity. It lets you define the project, risk, engineering and safety management frameworks that will contribute to the successful delivery of your activity.

Rather than talking in generalities and vague terms, be specific:

- Describe your project management approach which could be in terms of your corporate Project Management framework. Questions to assist you are:
    - How would you see it being applied to this activity?
    - What type of communication and engagement will you have with Defence?
    - How are you going to manage sub-contractor risks?
    - What meeting rhythm would you see being applied?
- Describe your risk management approach and any frameworks that you have developed or use. Questions to assist you are:
    - What are you doing about risk management?
    - What will you do to ensure that Defence are involved in risk discussions where necessary?
    - Have you thought about what you will resolve internally and what will need to be escalated?
    - Do you have trigger points for escalating the management of the risk?
- Describe your engineering approach and any frameworks that you have developed or use. The draft Contracts are very specific in what they ask for. Use the PEP to talk to them. You have a systems engineering framework in place, but how will these tools you have be applied to this particular development? Questions to assist you are:
    - How will your systems engineering framework be applied?
    - What roles will the key stakeholders play in progressing the development effort?
    - How will you use key systems engineering milestones to manage your own development risk, and provide visibility to Defence that both capability and development are going to meet their expectations?

- Describe your safety approach and any frameworks that you have developed or use. You may have an ISO45001 certified WHS Management System, but you have to adhere to relevant government legislative requirements on WHS. Some questions to assist you are:
    - Do you understand the broader safety risks associated with the development and demonstration of your idea?
    - Do you need systems to operate in close proximity to personnel?
    - What are the risks of your systems operating in proximity to personnel?
    - What are you doing to understand the hazards, eliminate or mitigate So Far As is Reasonably Practicable (SFARP)?
    - How will the demonstration be not only effective, but safe?
- You should explain why Defence should feel confident in your scheduling approach and thinking together with why Defence should feel confident that you have scheduled correctly. Be realistic about the amount of development you can achieve in a given timeframe so use the Phase descriptions as a guide. Your program should demonstrate how you can progress your idea within a specific Phase. The tasks, the sequence of events, the timeline for key milestones, and your risk and contingency. Some questions to assist you:
    - Have you done what you can to maximise parallel development activities and minimise serial activities?
    - What is the critical path and what are you doing to manage the risks associated with that?
    - Have you included the mandatory review activities on your schedule?
    - How confident are you that you can **actually** meet your development outcomes?
    - Are you trying to do too much or try and do it too quickly?
- You should explain why Defence should feel confident in your Technical Performance Measure (i.e. performance goals) approach and thinking together with why Defence should feel confident that you have stated them correctly. Provide measurable outcomes but be realistic. This is an innovation activity so you may not reach your ideal outcome, and that is ok. Some question to assist you:
    - What are the performance goals you are targeting for the development activity? What is your ideal outcome?
    - What would be an acceptable outcome?

- What level of performance would still demonstrate the capability whilst providing confidence to Defence that continuing to invest provides value for money?

General tip, if you're trying to mature several technologies in parallel, perhaps take a step back and reset your expectations. Aim for a lower TRL for each of the technologies or focus on maturing a specific element.

Maybe focus on the element that you think is the most persuasive and only get the other elements to the minimum necessary to support. An alternative is to consider Commercial off the Shelf (COTS) products for the non-essential components. Anything that might reduce the risk of developing the most innovative, desirable elements.