



Writing a Statement of Work

Presented by the
Department of General Services
Bureau of Procurement

Rev. June 2015



Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

- Define a Statement of Work (SOW)
- Identify the purpose and importance of an SOW
- Determine the difference between a well written SOW and a poorly written SOW, and how a poorly written SOW can negatively impact a procurement
- Compose a professional SOW



Topics for Discussion

- What is a Statement of Work (SOW)?
 - Why are SOWs Difficult to Write?
- Importance of a Well-Written Statement of Work
 - Benefits of a Well-Written SOW
 - Negative Impacts of a Poorly-Written SOW
- Development Phase
 - Data Gathering
- Writing the SOW
 - Organizational Flow
 - Areas Typically Addressed in an SOW



Topics for Discussion

- Tools for Writing an SOW
 - Tips and Writing Skills
 - Things to Avoid in the SOW
 - Tools for Writing an SOW
- Examples of Well Written SOW
- Glossary of Terms
- Knowledge Check
- Survey



What is a Statement of Work?



What is a Statement of Work (SOW)?



- An SOW is a formal document that captures and defines the objectives to be achieved or a solution to be sought, including: work activities, deliverables, measurements and reporting requirements to be accomplished within a specified timeline.
- The SOW for a Request for Proposal (RFP) will ask for a solution to an identified problem, whereas the SOW for an Information for Bid (IFB) will state the exact needs of the procurement.
- A well-written SOW is the cornerstone of an effective solicitation and is essential to the management of a sound contract.



Why are SOWs Difficult to Write?

Complexity

- Each SOW is unique because they can vary significantly depending on the level of detail needed in order to achieve the desired result of the procurement.

Time

- Limited resources, including a lack of planning, can lead to unanticipated time constraints in the development of your SOW; therefore, a timeline is beneficial to facilitate the progression of any procurement including drafting of the SOW.

Knowledge Base

- Lack of expertise and adequate training diminish the ability to develop a well written SOW.

Collaboration

- The inability to reach a compromise or consensus of what the end result is, and can have a negative impact on the entire project



Importance of a Well-Written Statement of Work



Benefits of a Well-Written SOW

- Clear requirements which ensure a quality service and on-time delivery within the specified timeframe at no additional cost
- Serves as a guideline of the agreements on performance between a purchasing organization and a supplier of services
- Establishes expectations in regard to the contractual relationship
- Ensures all parties are on the same page by communicating effectively
- Increases the probability of receiving responses that meet the needs of the issuing office
- Allows suppliers to clearly understand the scope of the project and to better estimate their costs
- Eliminates or reduces the need for Addendums, Change Orders and Amendments



Negative Impacts of a Poorly-Written SOW



- May cause an excessive number of supplier questions
- May cause a time delay – extension of solicitation
- May discourage suppliers from responding
- May reduce the likelihood of obtaining the most qualified supplier
- Legal Risks - Inability to establish sound and defensible arguments (contract controversy, supplier litigation, dispute resolution, increase in protests)
- Operational Risks (i.e. contract failure, administrative burden and delays)



Negative Impacts of a Poorly-Written SOW



- Financial Risks (cost escalations, amendments, unnecessary expenditures, poor value-for-money)
- Reputational Risks (negative media coverage, negative audits, diminished public trust/confidence)



Development Phase



Data Gathering

- Perform Brainstorming Sessions
 - What is the user trying to achieve?
 - What is the needed functionality, or required outcome?
 - What is the existing environment or framework that must be considered?
 - See Statement of Work Guidelines for additional information
- Research the Marketplace/Industry Trends
- Utilize Request for Information (RFI)
- Gather Historical Data
 - Previous SOW/Contract Requirements
 - Best Practices/Lessons Learned from previous procurements



Writing the SOW



Organizational Flow



- SOW should be in a logical order
 - Ensure that there is a logical flow from sentence to sentence and from paragraph to paragraph
- Utilize descriptive titles or headings
- The topic of each paragraph should be introduced in the first sentence
- Ideally, each paragraph should be limited to a single topic
- Use complete sentences; not fragments
- Never omit detailed information on the assumption that a supplier already “knows” your intentions
- SOW should be written like a brand new project – as if the project has never been done before



Areas Typically Addressed in an SOW

- **Objectives:** Defined in the simplest terms, the objective of the project (These should be statements of the results to be achieved in order for the overall project to be accomplished.) They can be broken into two separate categories.
 - **General:** State in general terms the Issuing Office's objectives in initiating the project. They should reflect what the Issuing Office expects to gain from the study or service.
 - **Specific:** List specific objectives of the proposed study or service.



Areas Typically Addressed in an SOW

- **Nature and Scope of the Project:** Describes why the issuing office is seeking to contract required services and the detailed goals of the project.
 - **Background:** Describes why the issuing office is seeking to contract required services and the detailed goals of the project.
 - **Scope:** Describes the work that must be accomplished and clearly defines the nature of the work.



Areas Typically Addressed in an SOW

- **Requirements:** Describe the volumes that a proposed system must accommodate as well as any specific quality control requirements, performance standards, time constraints, and other factors.
 - **Applicable Standards:** Describe any industry specific standards that need to be adhered to in fulfilling the contract.
 - **Special Requirements:** Specifies any special hardware or software, specialized workforce requirements, such as degrees or certifications for personnel, travel requirements, and anything else not covered in the contract specifics.
 - **Emergency Preparedness:** Supports continuity of operations during an emergency, including a pandemic, the Commonwealth needs a strategy for maintaining operations for an extended period of time.



Areas Typically Addressed in an SOW

- **Requirements (continued)**
 - Federal, state, or other governing mandates
 - An overall project timeline or expected timeframe for completion
 - Commonwealth standards to which the supplier must adhere
 - Commonwealth support in terms of equipment, staffing, computers, software, or subcontractors, as applicable
 - Specific quality control requirements
 - Performance standards



Areas Typically Addressed in an SOW



- **Tasks:** Identifies the work that needs to be accomplished for the successful completion of the project.
 - Any information that helps the supplier determine the specific project size, which may include:
 - The business model (including the descriptions of business processes)
 - Organizational units and their hierarchical structures that will be involved



Areas Typically Addressed in an SOW

- **Tasks (continued):**
 - Any related documents, data or technical exhibits, if applicable, including the specific type of media in which documents will be made available:
 - Drawings
 - Mappings
 - File Formats
 - Methodology
 - Historical Data
 - Additional specifications



Areas Typically Addressed in an SOW



- **Tasks (continued):**
 - **Location of Work:** Describes where the work must be performed
 - **Implementation Period:** Describes any requirements for start-up / implementation, knowledge transfer, and transition including a ramp-up period, if applicable
 - **Period of Performance:** Specifies the allowable time for projects, such as start and finish time, number of hours that can be billed per week or month, where work is to be performed and anything else that relates to scheduling
 - **Turn-over Period:** Describes any requirements for transfer of knowledge and/or transition from an existing contract to a successor supplier



Areas Typically Addressed in an SOW



- **Tasks (Deliverables):** Deliverables are key to measuring successful work requirements. The requirements should:
 - Describe each task and deliverable
 - Be quantifiable
 - Identify when the deliverable must be met
 - Describe the method in which the work/deliverables will be accepted
 - Use *acceptance criteria* to specify how the purchaser or receiver will determine if the service is acceptable, and what objective criteria will be used to state the work is acceptable
 - *Acceptance testing* can be conducted to determine if the requirements of a specification is met, such tests are chemical tests, physical tests, or performance tests.



Areas Typically Addressed in an SOW



- **Reports:** Define expected or required reports, while specifying:
 - The schedule upon which reports are to be provided
 - To whom the report shall be addressed
 - Data to be included in report and identify the specific media format

Note: Only request the reports that will be used, as too many reports will increase the cost of the contract.



Areas Typically Addressed in an SOW



Examples of some reports include:

- **Status Report:** Demonstrates status of individual tasks as they relate to project deliverables and/or milestones
- **Task Plan:** A work plan for each task that identifies the work elements of each task, the resources assigned to the task, and the time allotted to each element and the deliverable items
- **Problem Identification Report:** Identifies and describes specific problems encountered within the project and potential risks
- **Deliverables Report:** Demonstrates status of contract deliverables
- **Final Report:** Single report at the closure of the contract to present the outcome of the contract



Areas Typically Addressed in an SOW



Examples of some reports include (continued):

- **Spend Detail Report:** Details the actual items procured within a given time period, potentially including Purchase Order (PO) Number (open and shipped), Material Number, Item Description, Unit of Measure (U/M) List Price (catalog only), Cost U/M, Quantity Ordered, Total Cost, Request Date, Commit Date, Ship Date, and PO Receipt Date
- **On Time Performance (OTP)/Delivery Report:** Demonstrates deliverables/tasks and how they are accomplished relevant to agreed upon dates
- **Response Time Report:** Details how well a service level agreement/acknowledgement is met specific to on-time performance



Tools for Writing an SOW



Tips and Writing Skills

Developing a clear SOW ensures that the expectations of the resulting contract are adequately described and understood.

The following tips and writing skills will assist in writing your SOW:

- Objectives should be well-defined
- A work objective must be **SMART**:
 - Specific;
 - Measurable;
 - Attainable;
 - Realistic; and
 - Time-limited;



Tips and Writing Skills

- Be clear, use plain and simple language
 - Avoid jargon, vague terms and rambling sentences
- Be very careful when copying and pasting from other procurement's criteria not meant for the current procurement; this language may cause confusion, be overlooked or may not be relevant, and be included in the solicitation by mistake
- At the risk of contradiction, avoid writing repetitive statements
- Avoid wording that can be confusing (using the words: *each* and *any*, *immediately*, and *reasonable* are asking for trouble)
- Be consistent in your terminology (supplier vs. vendor vs. contractor)



Tips and Writing Skills

- Avoid the use of the phrases: “as required,” “as applicable,” and “as necessary”
- Remember to always use generic (non-proprietary) terminology and references in describing your requirements
- Remember to spell acronyms and provide definitions for any technical or unique terms used within your SOW. The use of too many acronyms can be confusing.
- Remember to use the present/active tense when writing your SOW, as the document becomes part of the contract



Tips and Writing Skills

- The words “will”, “shall”, “must”, and “may” have specific, legal meaning within a SOW
 - The word “will” is used to convey a declaration of future action by the Purchaser/Government (i.e. “The Commonwealth will provide the Supplier with...”), so be careful how those words are used in the SOW
 - The word “shall” or “must” is used to convey a binding provision on the Supplier (i.e. “The Supplier [shall or must] provide...”)
 - The word “may” is used to convey an unknown possibility (i.e. “Supplier may need to provide...”)
- Proofread your work or have someone else proofread it for you



Things to Avoid in the SOW

When writing the SOW, avoid:

- Using contradictory terms or statements, which may lead to confusion of SOW requirements
- Ambiguity in language, which can cause project delays, amendments, cost overruns, and/or less desirable outcomes
- Using phrases or words that have multiple meanings, which can lead to confusion and ambiguity (i.e. read; bow, etc)
- Reiterating the Standard Terms and Conditions in the SOW
 - Review the Standard Terms and Conditions (T&Cs) and when an item is covered in the T&Cs, do not include it in the SOW.



Things to Avoid in the SOW

When writing the SOW, avoid (continued):

- “Tying the Suppliers’ hands” by being overly descriptive of the work and the manner in which it is to be undertaken
 - While care should always be taken to describe your requirement, try to balance this by leaving suppliers with flexibility



Tools for Writing an SOW

Below are some resources to assist you with writing your SOW:

- [Statement of Work Guidelines and Template](#)
- [Statement of Work Checklist](#)
- [RFP Solutions SOW Writing Guide](#)
- www.naspo.org - Other State Procurement websites



Examples of Well Written SOW



Examples of a Good SOW

- Select the links below to view examples of a well written service Statements of Work

IFB – <http://www.dgsweb.state.pa.us/comod/Training/Accessibility%20Documents/ServiceExampleSOW-IFB.pdf>

RFP - <http://www.dgsweb.state.pa.us/comod/Training/SampleStatementofWorkRFP.doc>



Glossary of Terms



Glossary of Terms



Ambiguity - An unclear, indefinite, or equivocal word, expression, meaning, etc.

Deliverable - Quantifiable goods or services that will be provided upon the completion of a project. Deliverables can be tangible or intangible parts of the development process, and are often specified functions or characteristics of the project.

Methodology - A set or system of methods, principles, and rules for regulating a given discipline, as in the arts or sciences.



Glossary of Terms

Request for Information (RFI) - An opportunity to survey the supplier community for the latest technology, identify total cost drivers, obtain feedback on a draft statement of work, supplier interest and market landscape.

Solicitation - Documents to be used as a formal instrument to procure materials and/or services needed by an agency.



Knowledge Check



Knowledge Check

1. You can gather data by:
 - a. Performing Brainstorming Sessions
 - b. Researching the Market/Industry Trends
 - c. Utilizing Request for Information (RFI)
 - d. Gathering Historical Data
 - e. All of the Above



Knowledge Check

2. The SOW should be in a logical order
 - a. True
 - b. False



Knowledge Check



3. You should never omit detailed information on the assumption that a supplier already knows your intentions
 - a. True
 - b. False



Knowledge Check

4. When writing the SOW, what should you avoid?
 - a. Using contradictory terms or statements, which may lead to confusion of SOW requirements
 - b. Ambiguity in language, which can cause project delays, amendments, cost overruns, and/or less desirable outcomes
 - c. Using phrases or words that have multiple meanings, which can lead to confusion and ambiguity
 - d. Reiterating the Standard Terms and Conditions in the SOW
 - e. “Tying the Supplier’s hands” by being overly descriptive of the work and the manner in which it is to be undertaken
 - f. All of the above



Knowledge Check

5. Which of the items below are benefits of a well-written SOW?
- a. Clear requirements that ensure a quality service and on-time delivery within the specified timeframe at no additional cost
 - b. Serving as a guideline of the agreements on performance between a purchasing organization and a supplier of services
 - c. Establishing expectations in regard to the contractual relationship
 - d. Ensuring all parties are on the same page by communicating effectively
 - e. Increasing the probability of receiving responses that meet the needs of the issuing office
 - f. Allowing suppliers to clearly understand the scope of the project and to better estimate their costs
 - g. Eliminating or reducing the need for Addendums, Change Orders and Amendments
 - h. All of the above



Survey



Select the link below to complete an online survey

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/R8ZXGFH>



You will receive credit for completing this course within 24 hours. Please select the “Log Off” button in the lower right corner to close this course.

Thank You!