

E-BOOK

RECOMMENDED RFP PROCESS FOR SELECTING CLOUD PROVIDER

Great! Finally, you have decided to take cloud advantage for transforming your organisation. Stop! You haven't brought RFP for your cloud services provider. Let us help you out through this guide.

While writing your RFP, you need to be specific but must not restrict yourself or the RFP respondents from the opportunities you may not have considered yet. Cloud is a platform which is constantly evolving. So, on one hand it is providing you unlimited scope to expand but also bringing hordes of security and compliance concerns. These concerns need to be in mind while writing the RFP.

The first and foremost essential while writing an RFP for your cloud provider is

Deciding the business outcome or the objectives you want to attain. Emphasise on the deliverables for performance and how you would measure the deliverables. Frame questions to your respondents accordingly. With focus on the business objectives, you would elicit solutions to business challenges that may not have been considered by you. The RFP should be as thorough as possible and you need to

Timelines for your RFP

Set realistic timelines that would help you accelerate deployment on cloud and yet not create unrealistic expectations from your provider



Activity Timeline

- Develop your RFP in 30-50 days
- Share and discuss with stakeholders (Cross-functional) in 30 days
- Share your RFP to provider in 30-60 days
- Review the responses against well set metrics in 30 days
- Allow RFP responders to present their proposal in 30 days
- Narrow down the fields in 4 days
- Negotiate and set the pricing and KPIs in 12 days
- Review and sign agreements in 30 days

Forming the RFP

For developing your RFP

- You need to identify who from the company hierarchy and team will be involved. It may be the CIO himself or someone from his office
- Get information from the onboarded officer about how to deal with sensitive data
- Involving your CFO in some questions regarding the CAPEX or OPEX considerations or tiers of depreciation for shifting to cloud is also advisable
- You can also include the Director of IT infrastructure, Director of Compliance or CTO in the team
- Include someone from the project management team who would be questioning about the timelines, SLA, KPIs set and others
- Conduct weekly session with objectives and issues to resolve
- Try to write and review your RFP within a set timeline
- Entrust someone from the team to screen out top vendors who can address your concerns or publicly post proposals for inviting the vendors
- Have your team work on a single shared document of the RFP so that the concerns of the individual members are visible to the entire team

Some of the important items that should be deliberated and discussed in your RFP involves

- Business objectives /goals for cloud adoption
- Current state of the cloud adoption program
- Current state of your IT infrastructure and technical state
- Preference for platform
- Staff expertise and skill gaps so that the respondent is apprised of the skill sets and personnel they need to bring in
- Already existent workloads in the cloud (DIY projects)
- Showcasing of the vendor's expertise



Questions to include in the RFP

Security Area

- Do you have agreements in place with all the vendors who deal with your sensitive data?
- How have you screened the vendor and why have you chosen them
- Are you equipped with security operation centre, working 24*7?
- What security measures are employed and are to be employed?
 - Vulnerability Scanning
 - Antivirus/ Firewalls
 - Penetration Testing
 - Monitoring of applications
 - Monitoring of availability
 - SIEM
- Event and application logging
- OS and patch upgrading
- Device Management
- What is your security response clauses in SLA?
- What are the data encryption solutions employed for data at rest and in-transit?
- Is there cloud service registry along with risk assessment

Confidentiality

- What is the incident management process employed? (docs to be attached to explain)
- What is the average resolution time?
- What is the protection measure employed for sensitive data within the usage logs?
- Is the analysis of usage logs on-premise or off-premise?
- Is the ingestion of usage logs automatically done from the sources like firewalls, SIEMs, proxies etc?
- Is your solution equipped to identify data exfiltration?
- For how long you hold data from logs for analysis?
- Do you notify our organisation or consult us when you disclose our data to any other party?

Ensuring Compliance

- What are the compliance certifications your organisation has?
- Do you have SOC 2, SOC 2 Type II, HITRUST (other applicable based on use case like PCI) compliances?
- How much before these compliances were tested by any third party?
- What are the gaps you have identified in your compliance audits and how are you addressing them?
- Explain your business continuity, disaster recovery procedures, plans and outcomes?
- Does your solution include pre-built templates for our IT team to enforce the regulations like GDPR, HIPAA, PCI, HITECH and others?
- Can you mention the cadence of your 3rd party audit and who from your organisation is involved in such?

Service

- Provide the names of few clients who are employing your security, compliance solutions
- Please mention your response SLAs, depending on severity (ITL aligned)
- Please describe the staffing of your service teams. (Onshore/offshore)
- How are the tickets raised for starting the SLA clock?
- Which of the following services you provide?
- cloud migration, data ingestion, DevOps, CICD planning and build out, etc.
- What are the service tiers you offer to your customers?

The scope of activities to be taken by the bidder must be clearly stated.

Example – Sample scope of work

1. The Bidder will be responsible for provisioning of required IT infrastructure as IaaS for hosting Company application.
2. The proposed landscape for the deployment of MTS solution is a. Staging b. Production c. Disaster Recovery
3. The above environments are to be deployed on the virtual private Cloud/Government Community Cloud
4. The environment of virtual private cloud/Government Community Cloud shall comply with the respective Provisional Empanelment Compliance Requirements published by the company
5. Each of the environments mentioned above should be logically isolated, i.e., separate from the production environment in a different VLAN than the production environment and setup such that users of the environments are in separate networks.
6. The Bidder shall be responsible for provisioning required compute infrastructure (server/virtual machines), storage for hosting applications.
7. The Bidder shall be responsible for provisioning of adequate Internet Bandwidth and connectivity at the DC & DR, including termination devices, for end users to access application.
8. The Bidder will be responsible for provisioning of requisite network infrastructure (including switches, routers and firewalls) to ensure accessibility of the servers as per defined SLA's.
9. Geographical Location of the Disaster Recovery Environment shall be different location from the Data Center environment or at a different place other than the Primary DC based on the project requirements.)
10. The infrastructure provisioned by the Bidder must be scalable and shall allow the company to add/reduce cloud resources on demand basis through an user-friendly dashboard.
11. The bidder would be responsible for configuration and patch management, vulnerability scanning, disaster recovery, and protecting data in transit and at rest, host firewall management, managing credentials, identity and access management, and managing network configurations.”



The entire RFP process can be summarized into

Discovery

1. It includes deciding with the key stakeholders the following
 - (a) What would be included in the RFP
 - (b) The project Timelines, the boundaries to be set for the cloud project, the budget for cloud adoption
 - (c) Who would be handling the cloud program?
 - (d) What are the business outcomes to be achieved?
2. Drafting and issuing the RFP

Here, all the questions that would be required to be addressed by the cloud provider, pre, during and post migration to cloud needs to be addressed

3. Ranking and shortlisting the proposals

All the responses from the cloud provider needs to be populated, assessed by discussion with team members and finally the apt most proposal needs to be selected

4. Negotiations, price and SLA forming

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