

Responding to a Request For Proposal

Occasionally you may be asked to submit a “proposal” to plan an event. A proposal is a written document, usually in the form of a letter, outlining what you propose to do for an organization.

Why Clients Ask for Proposals

Sometimes the request for a proposal may come “out of the blue” from a client you haven’t approached. The beginning event planner may think this is great news! After all, why would they ask for a proposal if they were not interested? Actually, there are a number of reasons companies ask for proposals:

It May Be Necessary for the Job

In some cases, a proposal is necessary for the job. For example, many government departments require written proposals from several different prospects before a contract is awarded. They will often have formal **RFP** (request for proposal) guidelines for you to follow.

It May Be a “Brush Off”

Some clients find it difficult to say “no” and want to avoid a confrontation. They can delay saying no by having you submit a proposal. The client can then say it is “under review” until you either give up or they finally work up the courage to tell you they are not interested.

It May Be Used to Confirm a Hiring Decision

The most common reason some clients ask for proposals is because they want to have written comparisons of several event planners. Often, they have a “preferred” event planner in mind, and the purpose of the written proposals is to help them confirm their decision, or show their supervisor or a hiring committee that they have “shopped around.”

TIP: A client who approaches you will not generally start off by asking for a proposal if they are seriously interested in working with you. They will usually want to meet with you first to discuss the event.

If you are the preferred event planner you will know it. The employer will have discussed the event with you in detail, and you will have reached a tentative agreement to do the work. They will likely explain that their regulations require them to review written proposals and may even assure you that it will be “just a formality.”

If you are the preferred event planner and you want the job, then it is worth your time to put together a proposal confirming the details you have discussed with the client. Other-wise, you could be wasting your time. Your time could be better spent focusing on employers who are seriously interested in you.

If you suspect that a prospective client is not serious, but don't want to miss out on what could potentially be a good opportunity, you might try what some other consultants do when asked for a proposal. They charge a "proposal preparation fee" such as \$150 which is deductible from their fee if they get the job. Note that you can't expect to get this fee if you are responding to a formal RFP.

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