

# Your Procurement Process

Successful smart cities projects start with the right vendors. To improve your chances of a strong vendor match, evaluate the following:

**Experience:** How extensively has the vendor deployed smart cities commercially or demonstrated a proof of concept? The length of a customer list correlates to the depth of the vendor's experience and knowledge of how their product performs in various environments. Contact their references and ask about product performance, issues and ROI. Would they change any part of the process? Did they have a positive response from users after deployment?

**Security:** What experience does the vendor have with risk analyses and security certifications? The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) is an agency within the U.S. Department of Commerce devoted to promoting industry innovation. NIST has put together various cybersecurity and privacy standards and best practices for use by industry. To learn more about how your city can evaluate cybersecurity, risk and supply chain issues, NIST's resources, including their Cybersecurity Framework and Special Publications 800-161, 800-171, 800-30 and 800-37, may prove useful.

## Working together for interoperability

Smart cities projects are a team sport, so evaluate how well your vendors and their solutions play with others. How interoperable are the vendor's solutions with other smart cities offerings? Does your vendor have strategic partners? Often strategic partners working together can address interoperability issues and other challenges more effectively than a single provider on its own.

**Operational costs:** Ask about the estimated 10-year lifecycle cost for projects with a similar scope. Be sure to include installation, operations, support, upgrades and training.

Research competitors to compare capabilities and prices. Who are the vendor's biggest competitors? What is the vendor's unique value proposition? A strong value proposition can help you justify the vendor's costs, particularly if you need a unique solution for your needs.

## Tips for RFP success

Ready to start reaching out to vendors? To maximize the quality of the responses:

- Know your current situation, and make a clear ask.
- Consider a phased approach, starting with a high-impact area then deploying more widely in phase two.
- Consider distributing a request for information first. This will help you write a better RFP.
- Especially for more complex solutions, consider hosting open forums, roundtable discussions or Q&A sessions for vendors, city leaders and personnel.

Include in your RFP:

- Timeline and budget constraints. Ask for pricing, and consider asking for options within a certain price level if your budget is limited.
- Deployment expectations
- A list of current vendors whose services will be impacted
- A summary of relevant assets and the health of those assets
- Infrastructure you plan to leverage or need to replace