

AirPlus

INTERNATIONAL



A guide to a
successful request
for proposal (RFP) for
your corporate cards



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Requests for proposals, or RFPs, are created by companies for multiple reasons. The acquisition of a new supplier, a new product or a change in a service almost always results in RFPs.

They might sound simple, but some services require an important phase of reflection and preparation – such as a corporate card RFP.

The purpose of this white paper is to support companies in the following areas in the creation of their RFPs and to find the supplier that best meets their economic and efficiency needs for products and services.

Many companies think they are already using the right RFP method, yet mistakes are common. This guide will help you avoid them and set up a methodology to focus on the main steps in preparing and executing a corporate card RFP.

Keywords

RFI (Request for information) means all requests for information prior to sending the official tender document.

RFQ (Request for quotation) is the tender document with a request for cost estimates for the project.

RFP (Request for proposal) is the tender document.

As a reminder:

Following a methodology best facilitates the creation of the RFP and the analysis of the suppliers' answers, in four steps:

- Vision of the real needs of the company
- Clear supplier understanding of customer expectations
- Easy analysis and comparison
- Simplified validation of suitable suppliers

The three steps in the process for your RFPs

1

Understanding the value of an RFP

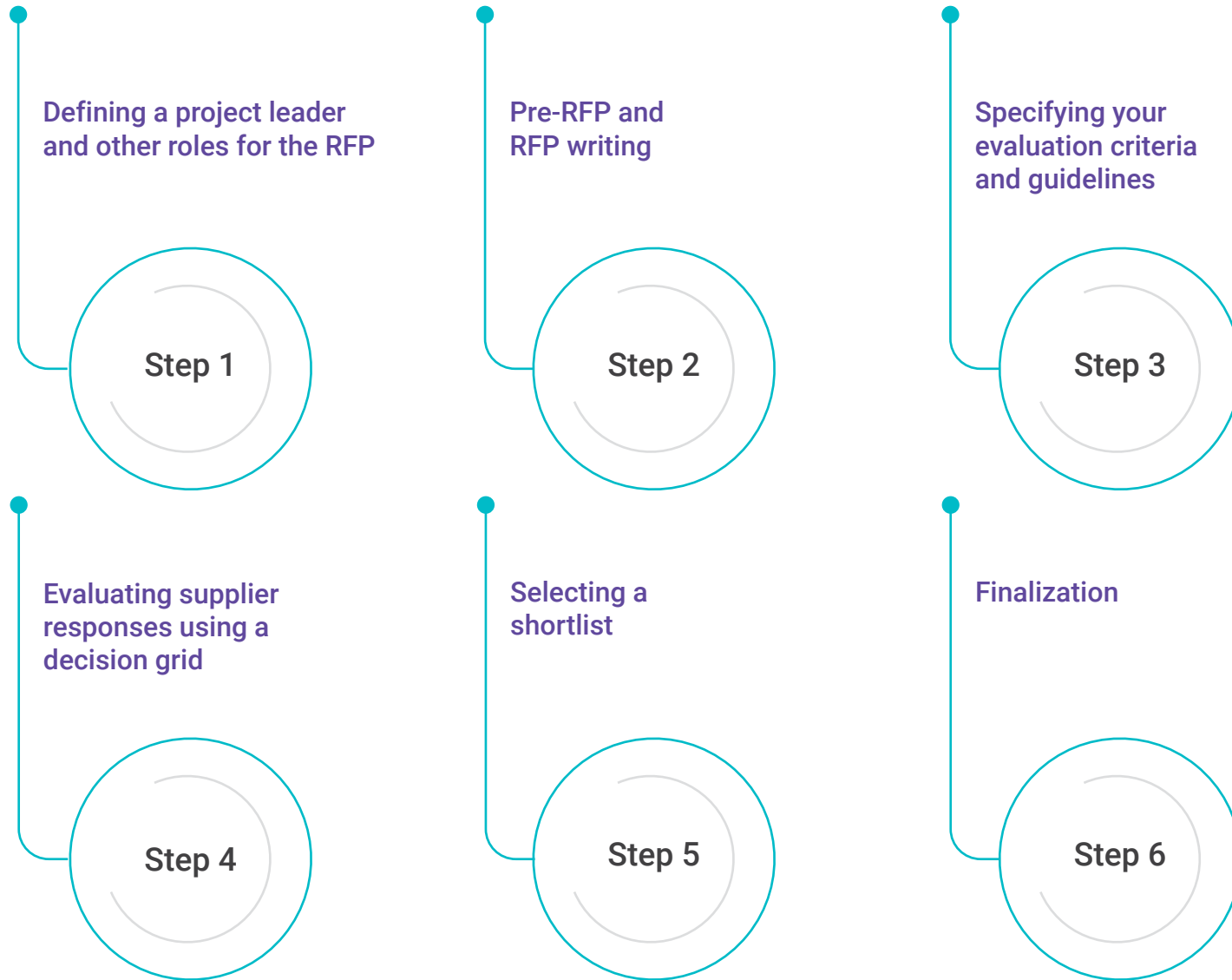
2

Updating your to-do list before and during the project

3

Facilitating the tendering process with a pre-made template





Defining a project leader and other roles for RFPs

For a first glimpse of the whole of the future project, it is important to define who's going to be involved.

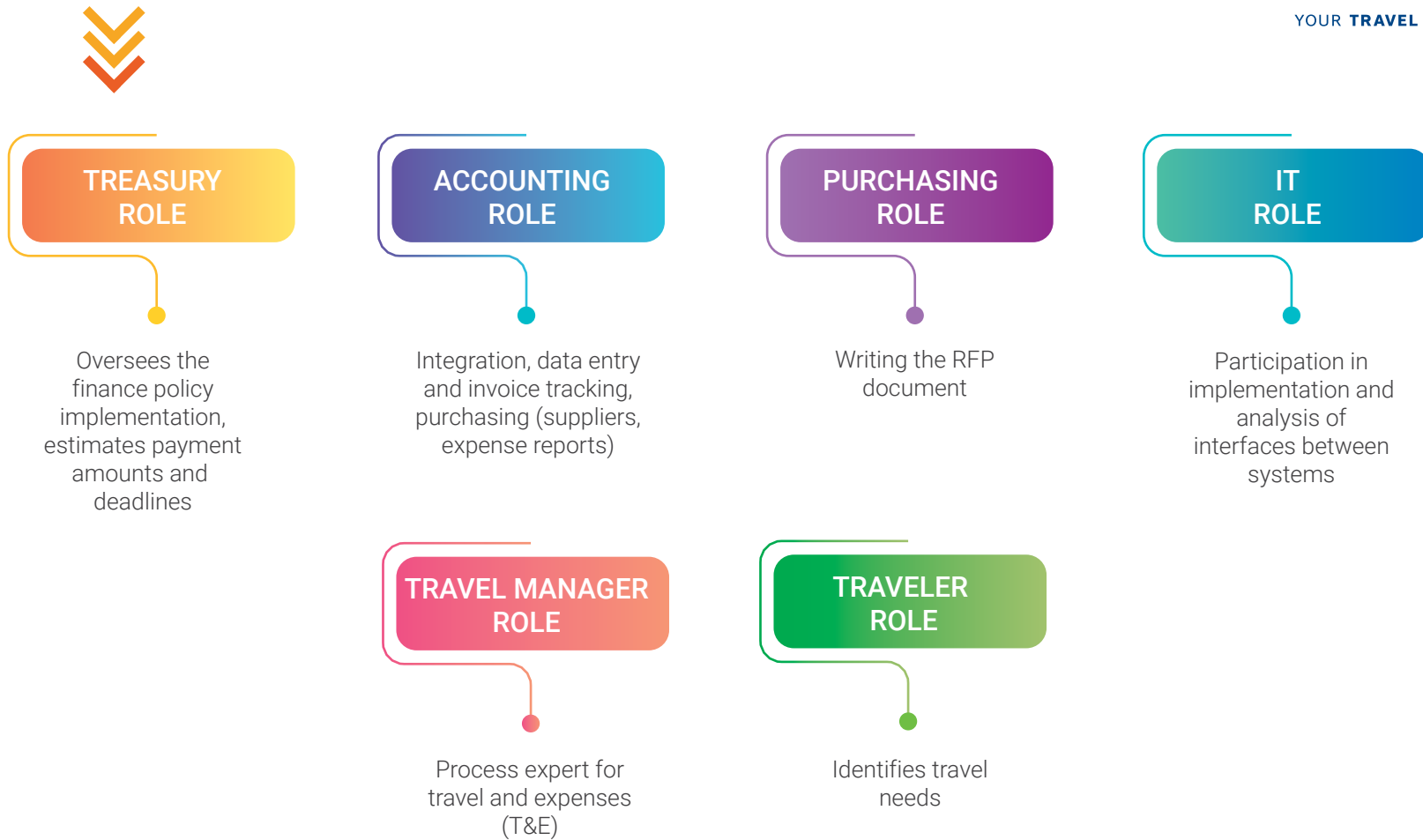
LEADERSHIP ROLE

Provides context and primary constraints, appoints the project manager

FINANCE ROLE

In charge of control management, provides data and analyzes performance in the process





Important recommendations

- Consider the needs of your business
- Communicate with stakeholders and employees to avoid delays and to ensure that needs and constraints are properly identified
- Familiarize yourself with potential suppliers before sending out the RFP
- Have the most accurate information possible to guide suppliers
- Estimate the desired corporate card program, the exact number of cards required, etc.



Pre-RFP and RFP writing

Questions to ask yourself when choosing a potential supplier

Once roles have been defined, ask yourself the following questions before choosing a supplier.

<p>?</p> <p>Reliability</p> <p>Do similar companies use this supplier and are references available?</p>	<p>?</p> <p>Core business</p> <p>Is the corporate card the supplier's main activity?</p>	<p>?</p> <p>Volume management</p> <p>Can the supplier maintain the level of growth and hold to defined implementation deadlines?</p>
<p>?</p> <p>Price</p> <p>Is it good value for the money?</p>	<p>?</p> <p>Services</p> <p>Is the service offer comprehensive? Does it meet your needs? What are the gaps?</p>	<p>?</p> <p>Response time</p> <p>Does the supplier respond quickly to requests for information? Does the SLA (service level agreement) meet internal deadlines and standards?</p>
<p>?</p> <p>Risk factors</p> <p>Analyze the supplier's financial reliability, its products and services in the context of your project implementation, its operational capacities and especially its data protection security standards.</p>		



Internal questions

The questions above are key elements prior to action. They will allow you to define your objectives, weigh the pros and cons and more. In addition, you will be able to see the costs associated with the change and assess its benefits.

Below you will find a table comparing your current situation with that of your target strategy.

Note that payment solutions such as corporate cards should not be considered a simple product. It is important that companies as well as suppliers collaborate over the long term to achieve the defined objectives – not merely during the implementation of the project. The best potential suppliers will be able to demonstrate their ability to best meet your expectations.

Use the RFI to validate your strategy, evaluate the costs and benefits and create a dialogue with suppliers.



To be completed by your company

Note that you can share this table with potential suppliers: the more details you give, the more suppliers will know what to base their answers on.

Current status	Items	Future/desired status
SUPPLIERS		
	Number of supplier payments	
	Contract	
	Partner travel agency	
ORGANIZATION		
	Breakdown of expenditures	
	Interfaces to other management systems (ERP/expense reports)	
	Policies and processes	
	Corporate/employee responsibility	
	Card administration	
	Loyalty programs	
	Statutory dimension	



Current status	Items	Future/desired status
MANAGEMENT		
	Expense advances	
	Use of personal cards	
	Acceptance/coverage	
	Reporting	
	Level of data quality	
	Account management	
	Billing cycle	
	Invoice currency	
	Payment method (e.g., direct debit)	
	Ceilings, restrictions and control	
	Preferred integration mode (e.g., XML, CSV)	
	Associated costs	
SECURITY		
	Data protection and access	
	Passenger insurance	

Last recommendations before the RFP

Before writing the document, it is recommended that you have as much information as possible on how your company uses (or wishes to use) corporate cards.

This includes:

- Number of cardholders required by category: domestic, international, occasional travelers, etc.
- The breakdown of expenditure by country, the different categories of expenditure (hotels, taxis, etc.) and the means of payments used today (bills, cash advances, personal cards, etc.)
- The expenditure management and finance systems involved: ERP, accounting and expense report tools, etc.
- The claims process
- Other involved parties: travel agencies, online platforms, hotel reservations, etc.

Don't lose sight of your goals!

- These should be noted in your RFP
- What elements of the current situation would you like to change?
- What are your deadlines?
- What are your goals and requirements for the future?

Have you considered final recommendations prior to the call and have you obtained all the necessary information from suppliers? Now you can easily assess your future corporate card program.

It is important that you are precise and define a table of questions. The supplier must be able to answer them easily and quickly.

To find out what's relevant and what's not, ask yourself: **Will this question influence my decision or not?**

Specifying your evaluation criteria and guidelines

1

Be as clear as possible and establish a ranking in **order of importance with weighted coefficients** according to your expectations.

2

Be specific by providing details about the overall tendering process for your suppliers and your internal decision-makers, **specifying the key steps and points of contact**. It is important to be clear on the **format of the document** you wish to receive and the **deadline for submission** of the offer, and don't forget to **specify the timeframe**.

3

Leave **at least three weeks**, preferably four, for your suppliers so they can send you well-prepared answers. Accompany this evaluation grid with a **confidentiality clause**. This is important because the supplier could possibly disclose confidential information if they mistake it for public knowledge. The objective is to protect you while providing clarity for suppliers.



Evaluating supplier responses using a decision grid

If you state your needs clearly and you ask simple questions, suppliers' answers will be easily comparable.

A grid, created with criteria and weighted coefficients, will help you to make a decision.

Important

- Focusing on concrete issues rather than open-ended ones saves time and is more organized.



Selecting a shortlist

After you have analyzed all the answers, you can make an initial selection. It is best to determine a list of two or three candidates.

At first glance, one supplier might seem more expensive or cheaper than a competitor. But what may look like a good price may turn out to be more expensive once the questions and detailed costs are taken into account.

Some companies immediately eliminate the most expensive and cheapest candidates – but don't just focus on price. Make sure you compare offers carefully. It is always possible to talk with suppliers for a more thorough look at their positioning (functionalities, price...).

Important

- Don't choose a supplier only for their price.



Finalization

It's time to proceed with the second part of the evaluation. For this step, companies usually invite two to three candidates for a face-to-face presentation where they will hear a defense of the proposals in person.

Once the presentations have been made, you can classify suppliers on the list using the same weighting system as before.

CONGRATULATIONS: You have chosen your winner!

Don't forget the suppliers you haven't chosen!

Send them a summary of your decision and a short explanation as to why they have not been selected.

This will help them to improve their services and respond to the needs of their clients in a more adequate way for future RFPs.

Attention!

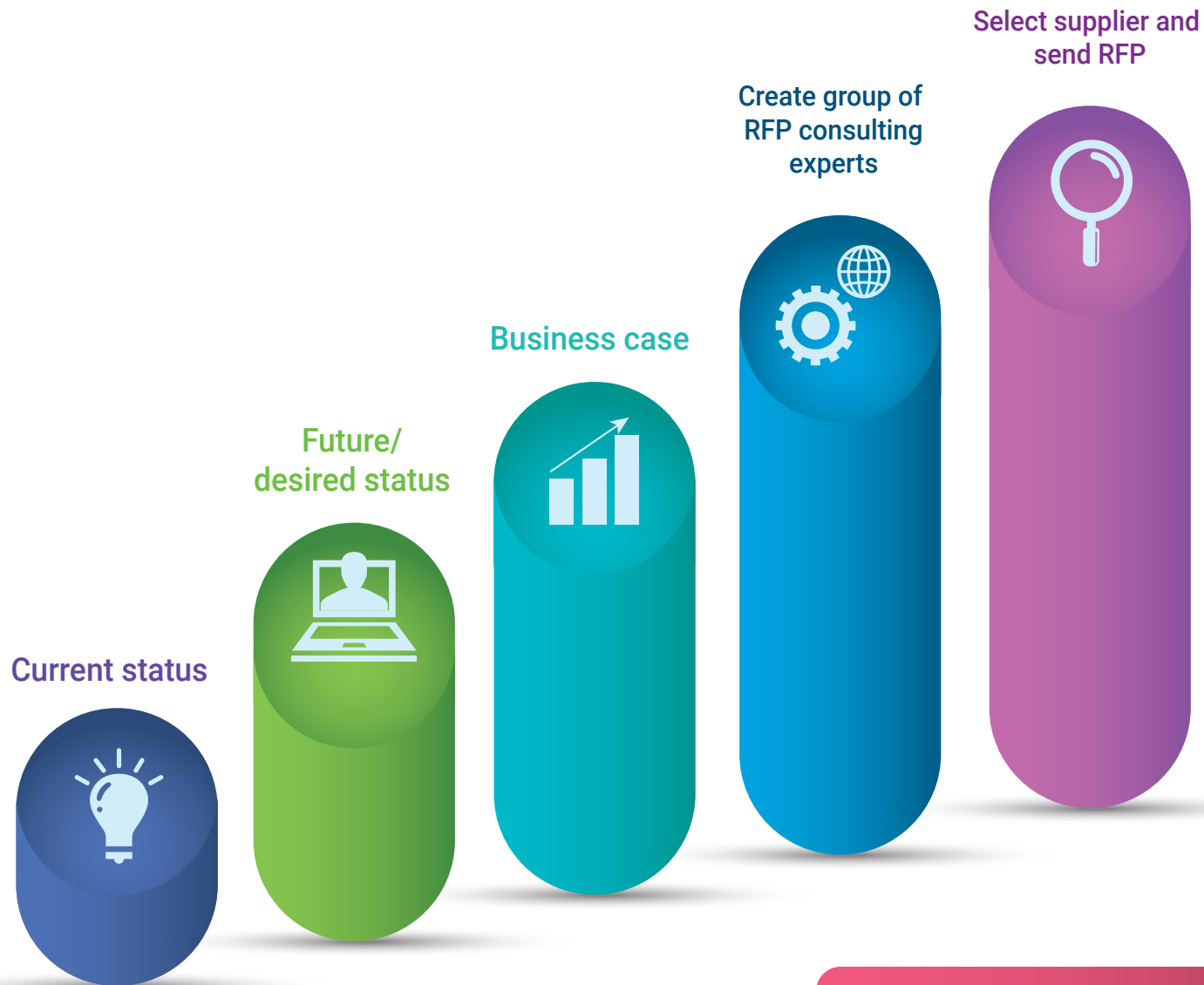
Key steps to avoid mistakes:

- Complete an assessment of your current status
- Define a forecast of the future following the changes
- Analyze for the best possible match among the suppliers

What you need to remember

Steps	Objectives	Deliverables
<p>Step 1 Defining a project leader and other roles for the RFP</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint the project manager and team members • Initiate and lead the project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written transmission of information to the team
<p>Step 2 Pre-RFP and RFP writing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight expectations and needs • Know the value of change and whether it's sustainably profitable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a look at the current status of the company and the future after the proposed changes • Specifications • Analyses • Supplier lists
<p>Step 3 Specifying your evaluation criteria and guidelines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weigh each need • Classify by importance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Response analysis grid • Synthesis/analysis reports
<p>Step 4 Evaluating supplier responses using a decision grid</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate quickly with closed questions • Rank by importance based on weight 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answers returned as requested and deadline met
<p>Step 5 Selecting a shortlist</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filter potential suppliers best suited to your needs and business expectations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplier lists
<p>Step 6 Finalization</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet the suppliers • Improve supplier offers • Select the winner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criteria weighting grid • Result of the selection in the form of an official document (contract type)

Toward success...



Important!

- Manage your own RFP – don't let the supplier do it for you.

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