More bids, same crew.

RFP volume keeps rising and proposal teams are not growing. How to use approved content and AI to cut setup and first-draft time, so experts spend their hours on the answers that win.

PRODUCTION	Proposal bandwidth
DIRECTOR	You
CREW	AI
SCENE	07
TAKE	01

Every new RFP starts the same way: set up folders, find old answers, chase experts and merge drafts written in different styles. **Much of the effort goes into work that happens before anyone writes a winning answer.**

AI helps most when it works from approved content and a set structure. I built a workspace that turns a new RFP into a branded first draft, 80 to 90% complete, in about 30 minutes, replacing 1 to 2 days of setup. People still review everything.

01 Where proposal time goes

Setup

SETUP

BY HAND
Folders, templates and trackers built for every bid.

WITH AI
Generated from the RFP in minutes.

Finding answers

SEARCH

BY HAND
Hunting through old bids for the latest approved text.

WITH AI
Drawn from one approved content library.

First drafts

DRAFT

BY HAND
Several authors writing in different styles.

WITH AI
One draft in house style, with gaps flagged.

Expert input

EXPERTS

BY HAND
Experts asked to write sections from scratch.

WITH AI
Experts review and fill named gaps only.

Tracking

STATUS

BY HAND
Status chased by email until the deadline.

WITH AI
A status report that updates itself.

The proposal lead

THE LEAD

KNOWS
The buyer's priorities, and where the bid will be won.

ASKS
"Which answers need an expert, and which are standard?"

02 A manual bid versus an AI-assisted bid

A MANUAL BID		AN AI-ASSISTED BID
Answers copied from the last bid	→	**Drafts from one approved content library**
Templates rebuilt by hand	→	**Structure generated from the RFP**
Experts write whole sections	→	**Experts review and fill the gaps**
Status tracked by email	→	**A status report that updates itself**
Bid decisions by instinct	→	**A short go or no-go briefing note**

WHY IT MATTERS

Loopio surveyed 1,533 proposal professionals for its 2026 report. For the first time, 50% ranked bandwidth as a top challenge. About 80% already use generative AI in their RFP work, and RFPs influence 40% of company revenue.

Loopio, 2026 RFP Trends and Benchmarks Report

03 Set up an AI-ready bid library

A draft is only as good as the content it draws from.

The bid library	5 STEPS
01 · COLLECT	Gather answers from your best recent bids.
02 · APPROVE	Keep one current version of each answer, with an owner.
03 · TAG	Label answers by topic, service and client type.
04 · TEMPLATE	Set one branded response template and a house style.
05 · TEST	Redraft a past RFP and compare it with what you sent.

From my work: the RFP workspace I built and use on public-sector bids.

FROM MY WORK

INPUT	A new RFP arrives.
SETUP	Folders, branded templates and a tracker are created.
DRAFT	An 80 to 90% complete first draft in about 30 minutes.
GAPS	Missing answers are flagged for the right experts.
REVIEW	People review everything before it is submitted.

04 Five habits of teams that keep up

Count the ones in place. 0 to 1: build the library first. 2 to 3: try AI drafting on one bid. 4 to 5: track hours saved per bid.

01

Decide early

Skip bids you cannot win.

TRY IT
Write a one-page go or no-go note.

02

One library

Approved answers in one place.

TRY IT
"Where is the latest version of this answer?"

03

Experts on gaps

Their time goes to hard answers.

TRY IT
Send each expert only their questions.

04

House style

One voice across every section.

TRY IT
"Rewrite this section in house style."

05

Learn from results

Record what won, what lost and why.

TRY IT
Ask for the evaluators' scores.

05 Ready for AI drafting

Check these before you draft a live bid with AI.

BEFORE THE BID

- [ ] Answers are approved.
- [ ] The template is set.
- [ ] Owners are named.
- [ ] Reviewers are booked.

Use AI for

- **Setup and structure.** Folders, templates and trackers.
- **Standard answers.** First drafts from approved content.
- **House style.** One voice across every author.
- **Summaries.** Briefing notes and bid decisions.

Keep people on

- **Pricing and commitments.** Accountable people decide.
- **Client strategy.** Your team knows the buyer.
- **Legal terms.** Counsel reviews them.
- **The rule of thumb.** AI drafts, people decide.



Spend expert hours where bids are won.

David Martin. I have led 30+ public-sector bids and built an AI workspace that drafts RFP responses from approved content. If this guide helps your team, I would love to hear about it.

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Guide 1: Take the director's chair
All eight guides in the series