

# Procurement Practices and Principles for GIS Practitioners: *Tips and Recommendations from a Proposal Writer's Perspective*

Tom Harrington Jr., PhD  
Director of Marketing



# Introduction

- Applied Geographics, Inc. ([www.AppGeo.com](http://www.AppGeo.com))
- With AppGeo for ten years as Director of Marketing
- In charge of preparation for major proposals and formal RFP responses
- Perspective of an RFP reader and proposal writer

I  PROPOSALS

# Topics

- Why Procurement?
- Things to Think About in the Procurement Lifecycle
- Focus on the Written Request
- When You Need Help
- Top Ten List

# Why Buy Outside (at all)?

1. COTS Products and Support
2. Staff Augmentation
3. Expertise
4. Speed of Delivery
5. Cost-effectiveness
6. Objectivity/Opinions/Fresh Ideas

# Procurement is:

- ☐ Complicated, Painful
- ☐ Challenging, Interesting
- ☐ Objective, Rules-based
- ☐ Judgment Required
- ☐ A lot of Work
- ☐ Worth the Effort
- ☒ All of the Above

# Procurement Path

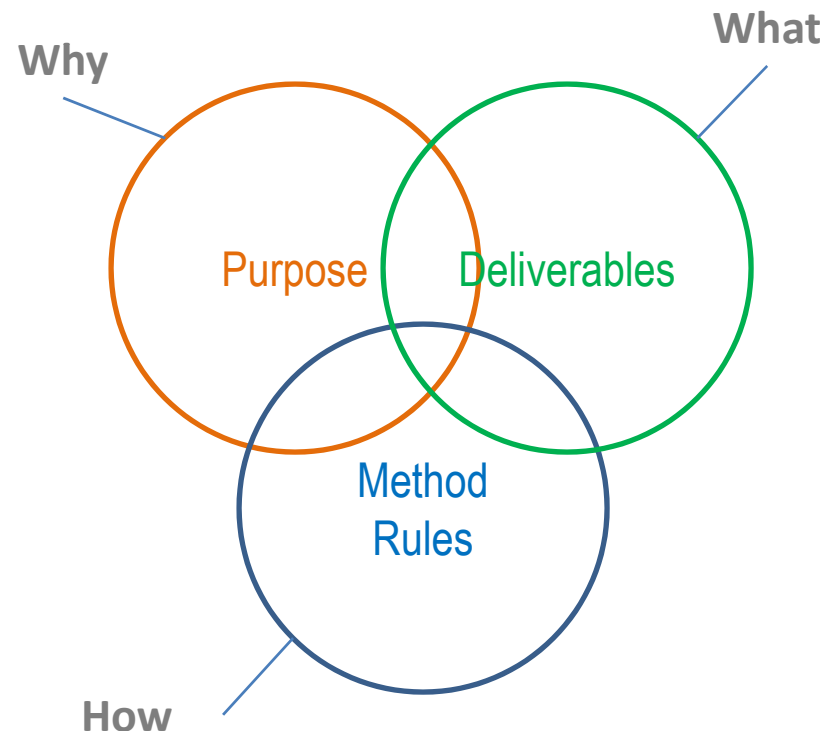


# Identifying the Need

- Statement of Purpose
- Identify users and use cases
- Include stakeholders/IT staff in defining requirements
- Identify specific benefits of/justification for
- Check compatibility with current HW/SW, ways of doing business
- Consider the larger context

# Scope and Specification

- Defines the deliverables you require
- Defines how you want it done
- Provides examples
- References standards
- Quantifies
- Qualifies





# Cost Estimation and Budgeting

## Fit the Project to the Budget

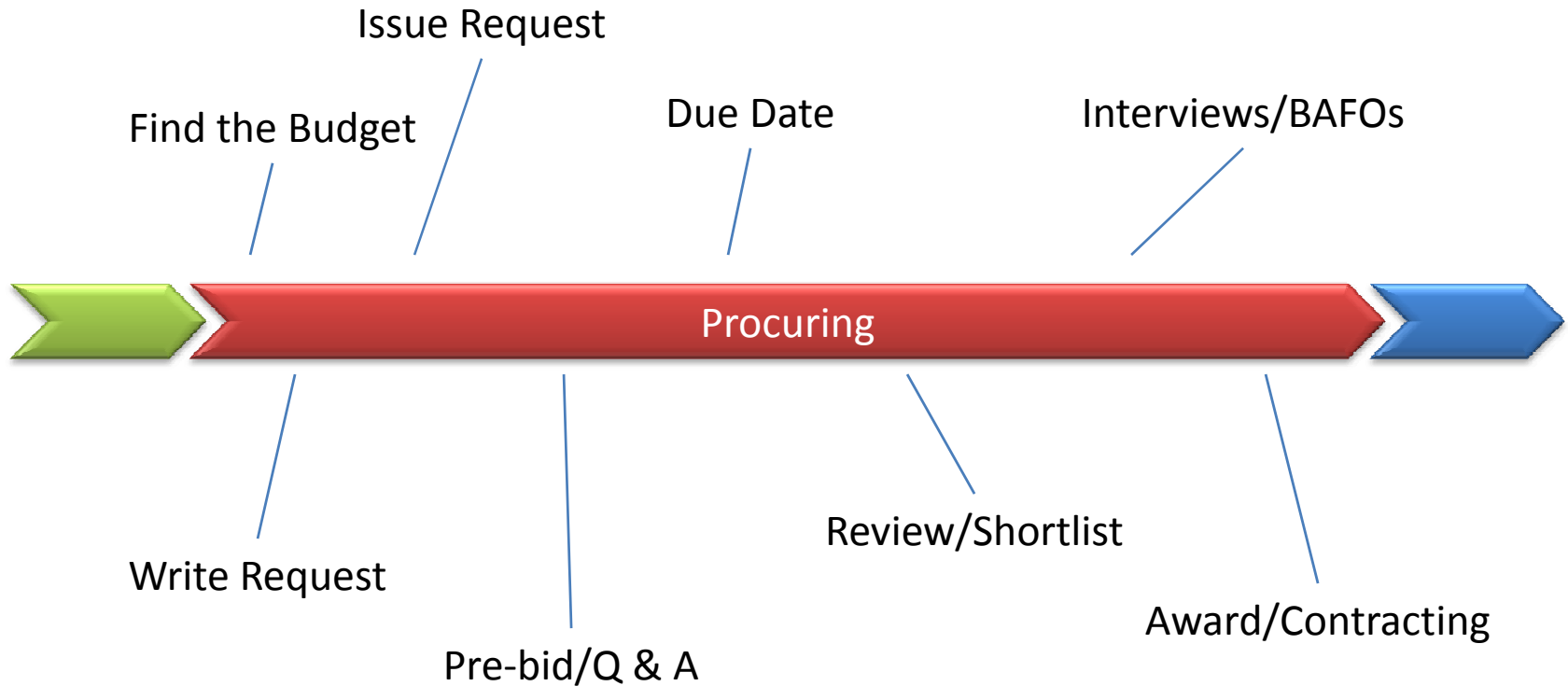
- Limit on Available \$
- What You Can Afford
- Market Prices



## Fit the Budget to the Project

- Cost estimation from vendors or peers
- Itemized costs
- Opportunity cost
- Value of end result

# Procurement Path




# “Show me the money”



- Federal and State Grant programs
- State purchasing programs and license agreements for software/hardware
- Unspent funds
- Budget proposals
- Piggyback on other projects

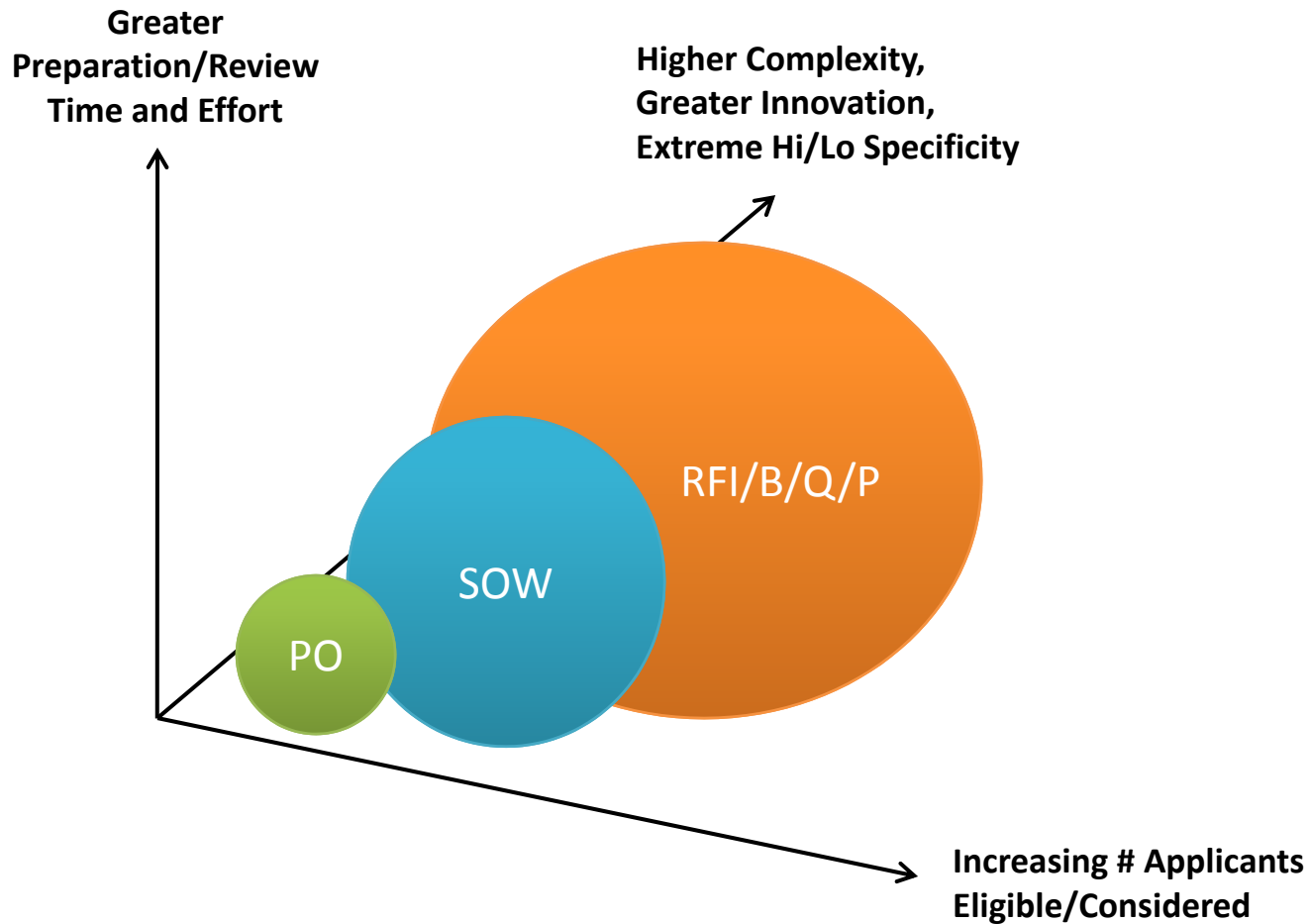
# Know the source(s) of the money

- 
- Spending limits and rules
  - Timeframes for completing projects
  - Reporting and Accounting Requirements
  - Deliverable Type and Scope
  - Matching Funds
  - Publicity/Attribution/Transparency

# What's the "Write" Approach?

- PO - Purchase Order
- SOW – Statement of Work
- RFR – Request for Response
- RFI – Request for Information
- RFB – Request for Bid
- RFQ – Request for Quotation OR Qualifications
- RFP – Request for Proposal

# Comparing Options



Procuring

The art of getting what you want –  
when you know what you want



You

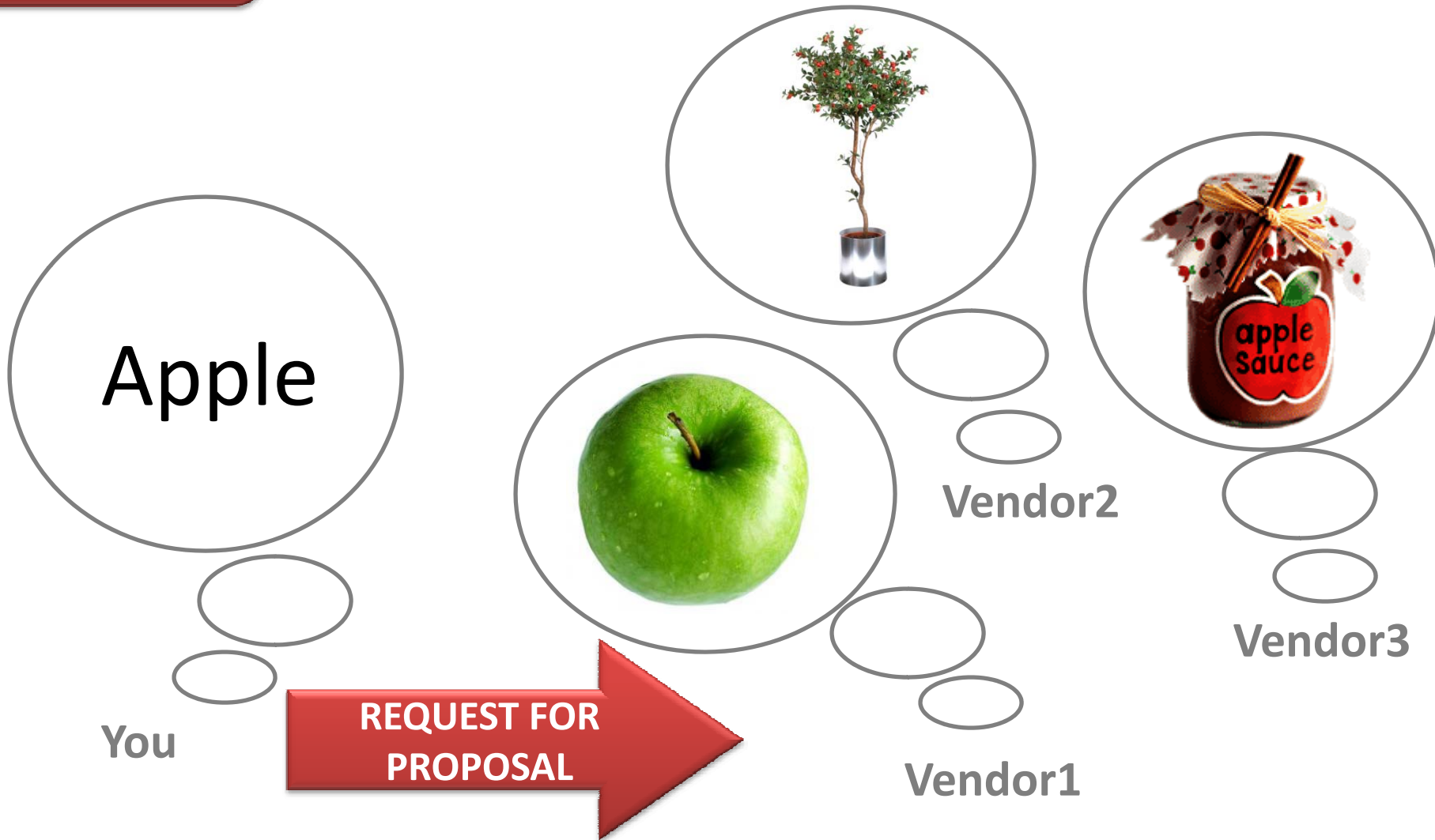


Vendor

**REQUEST FOR  
PROPOSAL**

## Procuring

The art of getting what you want –  
even when you are not sure





# Do Include These Essentials

- Project Summary Page
  - Title, Number, Contracting Agency
  - Dates – Due, Q&A, Review/Decision, Award
  - Synopsis
  - Cost/Budget Information
  - Point of Contact & Rules of Engagement
  - Submittal Instructions
- TOC
- Detailed Requirements
- Proposal Submittal Guidelines
- Evaluation Criteria
- Required Forms, Sample Contract

# Specification Guidelines

- Do provide context or background
- Do state problem and end result
- Do provide standards, examples
- Do provide details, requirements, methods
- Do set expectations for project management
- Consider including details of project plan, task breakdown, phases, milestones
- Consider risk management

# Response Guidance

- Do outline proposal sections and titles
- Do provide content instructions, page limits (if you must)
- Do provide specific guidance on what constitutes qualifications, staff skills, prior experience, references
- Do specify level of detail, itemization of technical proposal elements from specification
- Consider providing a checklist for required proposal contents

## Response Guidance, cont.

- Do Not require complicated “specific language” requirements in response to each section
- Do Not impose specific formats for project descriptions or resumes
- Do Not require lists of all current project activity or all work for last X years, etc.

# Possible Proposal Outline

1. Project Understanding
2. Approach
  1. Technical
  2. Project Management
  3. Schedule
3. Project Team – Staff roles and bios
4. Qualifications
  1. Corporate Capabilities
  2. Reference Projects/Experience
5. Cost Proposal (can be separately bound)
6. Appendix A. Required Forms
7. Other Appendices – Resumes, Example Work, etc.

# Cost Proposal Guidance

- Do align cost categories with main tasks
- Do clarify whether FFP, T&M, or ...
- Do Not mix FFP and hourly cost estimation reporting for same task
- Do describe payment and invoicing expectations/requirements
  - Timing
  - Details
  - % hold back, if any
- Do consider Pre-formatted Cost tables

# Evaluation Guidance

- Do include eligibility criteria
- Do present explicit evaluation criteria
- Do assign specific weight/points to each
- Do clarify how cost is evaluated
- Do identify evaluation team

# Distribution

- Direct – email, telephone
- Posting
- Online Bid services
- List serves



# Clarifications and Questions

- Do issue amendments as needed
- Do schedule for Questions and Answers
- Do use a set script when checking references
- Consider a Pre-bid Meeting
- Consider interviews
- Consider BAFO

# Award Decision

- Do schedule review team in advance
- Do establish method for making decision – voting, scoring, discussion, etc. – note rules related to source of funds
- Do explicitly follow evaluation criteria set forth in RFP
- Do notify all applicants of result ASAP
- Do provide for debrief, but know rules governing level of information obligated to provide

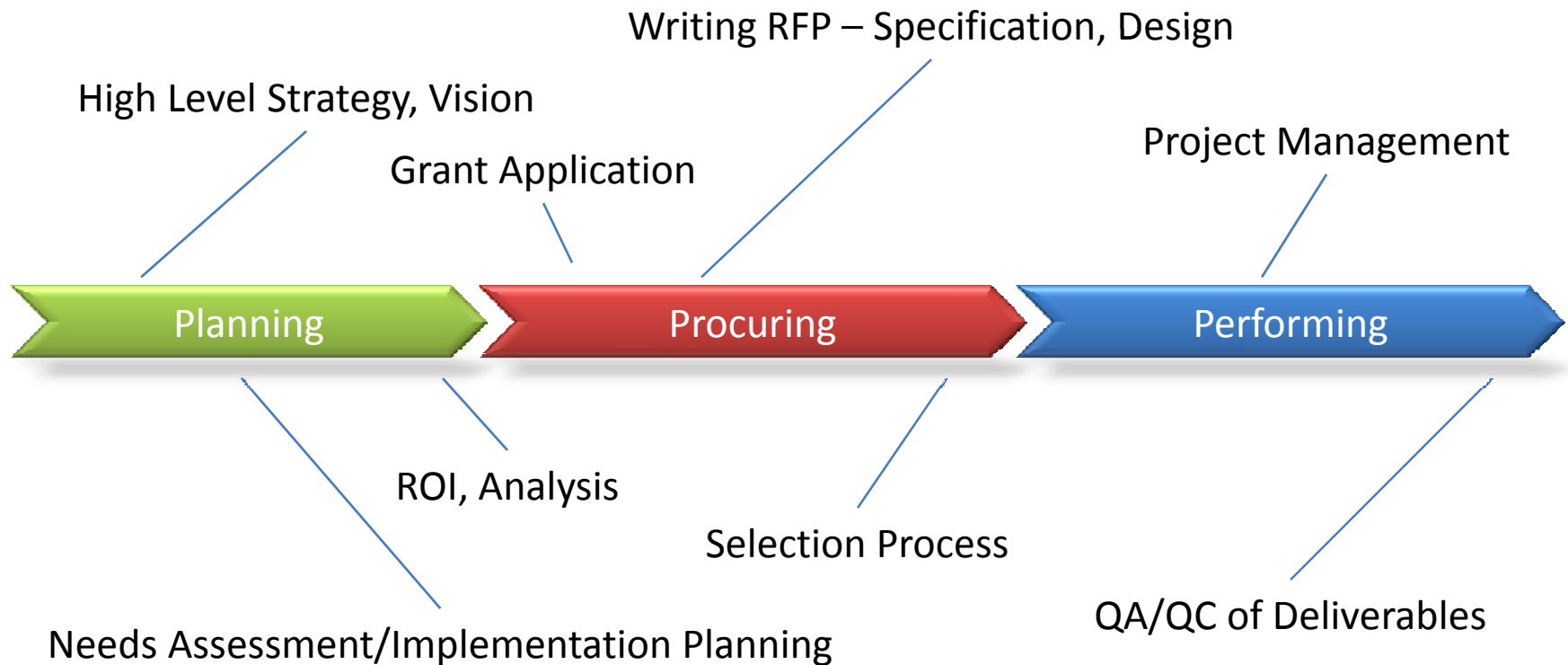
# Increasing procurement success and project performance

- Do designate POC and agree to regular informal communications
- Do not overburden project with formal reporting
- Do include pilot or prototype projects
- Do treat planning or design phase as deliverable
- Do schedule time and resources for you to review deliverables (intermediate and final)
- Do use modern communication technologies, e.g., online meeting, document sharing, project website

# When you need help

- Colleagues
- Peers
- State agencies
- Vendors have been through it before and offer direct support

# Types of Vendor Support



# Top Ten Things to Think About

1. Clear idea of what you need, desired end state, and timeframe
2. Know how much you have to spend, or want to spend based on cost to benefits ratio
3. Research the market – what's available and reasonable in terms of price, features, quality, etc.
4. Don't be afraid to ask for help
5. Use the procurement process to spark innovation or gather information

# Top Ten Things to Think About

6. Strive to share information with the vendor community (before, during, after)
7. Scale the effort to available resources, management capacity, time frames
8. Distinguish guidelines versus specification, desirable versus “must have” outcomes
9. Use clear language, examples of end results, reference standards
10. Avoid procurement “gotchas”, provide clear evaluation criteria and weightings

# Thank You

If you have any questions:



Tom Harrington Jr., PhD  
Director of Marketing

[tharrington@appgeo.com](mailto:tharrington@appgeo.com)  
617-447-2488 (direct)