



Tips & FAQ&A

Important: Hold the “Ctrl” key on your keyboard while clicking the “F” key to search this document.

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Tip 1. Top Tips

A. Preparation Your Meeting Resume

- See specific examples on the [Create New Project Instructions](#) document. The meeting resume is critical for a hotelier to understand your needs and expectations. A great resume leaves little room for misinterpretation. See the free Meeting Resume Template we offer at ([Meeting Resume Template \(MS Word\)](#)) or under “Support Documents” on the Support Page. You can use it as your own or just take the nuggets out that will make your RFP float to the top, and get the responses you expect.

B. Sending Your eRFI

- **VERY Important:** DO NOT allow hotels to email you their responses...indicate that “ALL responses must be on the eRFI Form in order to be considered”. **(If they do try to respond by email see the Communications examples below for suggested responses)**
- Include your CVB (<http://www.sourceyourmeeting.com/CVBSearch.php>) & Hotel National Sales contacts on the distribution (ask SourceYourMeeting.com for contacts if you need one).

Tip 2. When should I send my RFP?

This question often creates a great discussion. Is the ideal date relative to when the meeting will occur (ex. 12 months prior to the check-in date), relative to decision date (1 month prior to when we will sign a contract), relative to when I have my meeting with the decision maker, committee, board etc (Ex. 1 week prior to that meeting) or does it matter.

Everyone wants a simple answer but a strategic planner knows that there are many considerations.

Quick answer: The most important considerations relate to the size of your meeting and the attractiveness of your business to the markets you wish to consider. Also your rates, dates and space flexibility. The more flexible you are, the more lead time you can afford.

If you have a meeting that is space intensive or small it might benefit you to wait until as short a lead time between when you send the RFP and the date of the actual meeting to increase your options. Of course that can create an issue if you then learn there is no availability so a balance needs to be found.

The larger the footprint of your meeting (room block, meeting space, venues) the more lead time you will likely require. For self-contained meetings (room block under one roof) the same considerations come into play but you can now look at the ideal situation is to have the shortest window between when you send the RFP and when you will make your short-list and final decisions. A short lead time can be great leverage in negotiations. Primarily because a large window in a sellers’ market can mean availability and rates that were offered may not be there when you come back to negotiation.



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Comprehensive Answer:

There are so many factors and as every answer in our industry should start, "It depends". It depends on what your goal is and the limitations that are imposed on the procurement process. The two greatest factors are flexibility and communication. The more flexible you are the more lead time you can afford. Hoteliers today put a significant weight on your willingness to talk to them, the quality of your RFP data, and the credibility of your timeline. You will reduce any negative impacts of your RFP distribution by focusing on these items. For instance, the hotel is much more likely to hold it longer if you are in good communication.

There are also multiple dates that come into play with the process and building credibility. All have a different impact on the procurement process and both the quantitative and qualitative parts of the negotiations.

1. Date you send the RFP.
2. Dates you will be able to review options with your stakeholders, influencers, and decision makers.
3. Date you will create your Short-List.
4. Date you will be willing to discuss your program and flexibility.
5. Date you will request a hotel contract draft.
6. Date your legal council will be able to provide you with contract adjustment requests.
7. Date you will make a final decision.
8. Date you will be able to sign a contract.

Other aspects that impact the answer is the size of your meeting, attractiveness of your business, market conditions (buyers market' vs sellers' market, compression in the city or comp set), rooms to space ratio of your program, type of hotel you are considering (whether your meeting particulars match their ideal target business or how your business impacts displacement of other options), the projected RevPAR, RPI and Yield, and how the Comp Set is performing or projected to perform over the dates you are considering.

In a sellers' market availability is scarcer and hotels have more options. Also sales is are not able/willing to hold space or guarantee the rate they offered for as long.

The marketability of your program also has a huge impact. If you have the data about your meeting that will allow you to sell the value of your business (room revenue, pickup and rate history, F&B spend, etc) then you are in a more favorable position.

Your decision process needs to be taking into consideration as well. If you are the decision maker then a shorter lead time will work but if you have a committee or board that needs to be involved it might extend that window.

Reality:



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All of the above are important and don't discount the market conditions or value of your business but your ability to have a window of time from when you send your RFP to when you get to the short-list is critical. And probably one of the most important factors is being a great communicator with the hotel sales contacts. These position you for the best results. The great news is that whatever works best for you, by using SourceYourMeeting.com you eliminate the traditional negatives of RFP distribution and lead time. You also get a quick way to keep your supplier partners up to date with your decision process. All of which work in your favor.

Tip 3. Share your projects with co-workers

On the Project Details page you can share (Link Users) your Project with other Users.

- Linked Planner Users shows Users that you've shared that project with. Those other Users have all the same access to the Project as you do.

Linked Planner users  [Link Planner users](#)

- Linked Guests gives Guest Users access to see the Quick Grid report for the projects you've shared with them.

Linked Guests  [Link Guest](#)

Tip 4. Error creating your project or changes in details after creating it (but before distribution). See Tip 3 if you already sent it out.

If you made an error or have a change after you created your project Copy the project and archive the old one.

1. Use "Copy Project" option from the Actions Menu. "-Copy" is appended to the project name. For best results replace that with v1YYMmmDD, v2MmmDD etc
2. Upload your new Meeting Resume and you will receive a new "eRFI" Link to distribute
3. To Archive the old project:
 - a. Select "Extend Hotel Response Date" for the project. Enter Yesterday's date so it will close the project and hotels will no longer have access the old meeting specifications and old eRFI
 - b. Archive Project from the Actions menu

Tip 5. Dates or specifications change after creating a project or distributing the eRFI Link

If after creating your project you realize you made an error or have changes to your preferred dates or meeting specifications you should archive the project then recreate it using the "Copy Project" option. If you already distributed the project to hotels, CVB or National Sales (NSO) contacts then you need to communicate to them that the project has been closed and you have a new project (and hence a new eRFI Link) for them to respond on (Use the Communications Report email function and email those hotels that responded Yes or Maybe)



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- Change the Hotel Response date to yesterday's date so it will no longer be able to access the older meeting specifications and old eRFI
- Archive that old project from the Actions Menu next to that project
- Recreate the project with Copy Project (Change "Copy" in the name to v2YYMmmDD)
 - Use the eRFI email template from the Support page to distribute the new eRFI and be sure to communicate that you have closed the old project since you had new information for everyone to consider
- If hotels have already bid on the old eRFI Link, use the Communications Report for that project and provide them with the "new eRFI Link
- Use the email eRFI Template (.oft file) and send out the new eRFI Link. In the email be sure to indicate the following:
 - Find the email you originally sent in your Sent Items folder.
 - Select "Reply to All"
 - Add the word "UPDATE" to the beginning of the subject
 - In the body start with "Due to changes in the program dates we have closed the original project and below is the new "eRFI Link" colored in green. Regardless of whether you bid on the previous RFP and dates we need for you to use the new eRFI Link to respond. Thank you for your understanding.

Tip 6. Provide an accurate due date

We highly recommend you are realistic. Don't expect too short a period of time if you aren't going to do anything with the information for a while. Availability and rates change in real-time. So, don't give too much lead time or it will fall to the bottom of the hotels priority list. If you really don't need a response for more than two weeks, don't send the Meeting Resume out until no more than a week prior. Also, let the hotel know your decision process.

Use the eRFI Process to get market conditions, check dates, rates and space to help you get to the short-list faster. Let them know if you will be making the decision based on their initial bid, or will you be making a short-list from the initial bid or are you just checking whether you can afford that market and if anyone can accommodate your needs on the first round.

The fewer the number of hotels a hotelier feels you have bidding will greatly enhance their interest and the attention they pay to your Meeting Resume. The SourceYourMeeting.com eRFI process helps you get to the short-list faster. It shows respect for the hotelier's time, give them a chance to get considered and gets you responses faster.

Tip 7. Include meeting history in your Meeting Resume



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Meeting history is critical for hotels to help understand whether your meeting will be a good fit for their property. Do you take advantage of off-season rates, for example, using desert properties in the summer, or beach venues in the winter? If you always go to the beach, but are now looking at a mountain resort, explain the change.

Tip 8. Quick communication updates to your suppliers:

It is critical that you communicate with your vendors. It builds better relationships and secured your credibility. An Industry issue and one of the biggest complaints by hoteliers, NSOs and CVBs about meeting planners and the RFP process is their failure to communicate. This is why at SourceYourMeeting.com we have implemented functionality that makes it easy for our Meeting Professionals to keep their suppliers current on the decisions status, changes in your process, and sharing Meeting Resume clarification with all properties being considered. You will not only realize an increased respect by your supplier peers but you will find that your Meeting Resume will float to the top and you will get more detailed responses, faster responses, and responses from an increased number of properties by using this functionality.

Two simple Steps:

1. From the Communication Report select the rows for whom you wish to send the communication (See filtering examples later in this section), then click “Bidders & Referrers”

	Hotel	Brand/Flag	Availability	CheckInDate	CheckOutDate	Space Held	Held Until date	Rate	F&B
1	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hotel 1	Boarders Inn and Suites by	YES	2016-01-01	2016-01-02	Yes, with ROFR	01/01/2016	100.00
2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Marriott Marquis Hotel 1	Marriott Hotels	YES	2016-01-01	2016-01-02	Yes, with ROFR	04/15/2015	100.00
3	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Marriott Marquis Hotel 1	Marriott Hotels	YES	2016-01-01	2016-01-02	Yes, with ROFR	04/15/2015	100.00

2. Fill in the subject and Message and click send.



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Emailing Hotel (Bidders) & CVB/NSO (Referrers) Tip

1. Recipients DO NOT see the distribution list you are sending too.
2. Highly recommended to always put the ProjectID in the Subject line.
3. See the SYMTips on the Support page for sample communication language.

From
pete.hanley@outlook.com

TO
'hotel1@yourmeeting.com,jdoe@sourceyourmeeting.com,jdoe2@sourceyourmeeting.com,referr1@yourmeeting.com,copy1@yourmeetin

Subject
subject We recommend putting the ProjectID in the subject

Message

File Edit View Format

Formats B I

For sample email language see:
www.SourceYourMeeting.com/SupportUsers/SYMTips.pdf

p

Send

Below are some examples of how this Communication Report functionality can be used. Note that selecting “Bidders” only sends the email to the Hotel Sales Contact. Selecting “Bidders and Referrers” sends the email to the Hotel Sales Contact as well as the NSO and CVB Contacts who they are working with (This is the suggested option):

- 1. Email all hotels in a particular city that you have made a final decision and that they can release a hold they might have on rooms and space;**
 - a. Select “Yes” from the “Availability” column
 - b. Check the boxes in the second column, for each row you want to include (or “select all”)
 - c. Click “Bidders & Referrers” and an email form will appear with the hotel sales, CVB and NOS contacts in the “To” line.
 - d. Type your message and each recipient will receive an email with that message...and they do not see the distribution list.
- 2. Email all hoteliers whom submitted alternate dates to let them know will be selecting a hotel who had the Preferred Dates;**
 - a. Select “Alternate Dates” from the “Availability” column
 - b. Check the boxes in the second column, for each row you want to include (or “select all”)
 - c. Click “Bidders & Referrers” and an email form will appear with those Click “Bidders & Referrers” and an email form will appear with the hotel sales, CVB and NSO contacts in the “To” line.
 - d. Type your message and each recipient will receive an email with that message...and they do not see the distribution list.
- 3. You’ve decided on a meeting date based on the number of “YES” responses you received to your RFP and wish to notify hotels that offered other dates of this decision so they can release holds;**



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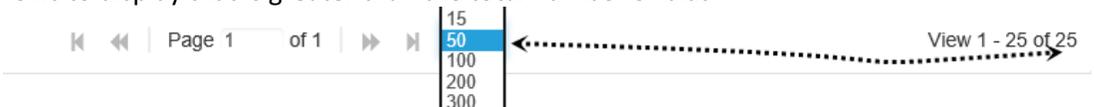
- a. Sort or filter the “Check-in date” column and select the rows that correspond to the hotels you want to notify
 - b. Check the boxes in the second column, for each row you want to include (or “select all”)
 - c. Click “Bidders & Referrers” and an email form will appear with the hotel sales, CVB and NSO contacts in the “To” line.
 - d. Type your message and each recipient will receive an email with that message...and they do not see the distribution list.
- 4. You’ve decided on your Short-List and want to notify all the other hotels of your decision so they can release any hold they might have;**
- a. Select “Yes” from the “Availability” column
 - b. Click to select ALL the rows on the grid (2nd column)
 - c. Uncheck the rows that are associated with your Short-List decision and quickly email the remaining properties
 - d. Click “Bidders & Referrers” and an email form will appear with the hotel sales, CVB and NSO contacts in the “To” line.
 - e. Type your message and each recipient will receive an email with that message...and they do not see the distribution list.
- 5. You can even use it to ask an individual hotel a simple question;**



- 6. For more effective meaningful dialog, further reducing unnecessary phone calls and emails, add your CVB & NSO to all the communication (Referrers) options above by clicking “Bidders & Referrers”;**
- a. Instruction: click the box called “Bidders & Referrers” to include both in the email thread. Note that when sending to multiple recipients each person only sees their name in the To field...they do not see the distribution list.



- 7. Tips and Additional Information:**
- a. In the next Tip we provide sample template language for these types of emails
 - b. When emailing multiple recipients the recipients do not see the distribution list
 - c. Make sure you are displaying ALL responses on the page by selecting the number of rows to display that is greater than the total number of bids



Tip 9. Sample Email Communication

A. Welcome Message to CVB, and Natl Sales (NSO)



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I am very pleased to let you know we are now using SourceYourMeeting.com (SYM) to improve the RFP process.

One of the key reasons for using SYM is that I can work more efficiently with you and their eRFI approach means your hotels can respond faster.

If you are not familiar with SYM here are a few things I would like to share with you about who they are and what they do.

- SourceYourMeeting.com is not a Hotel Search Engine. It is software designed so it is easy for me to continue to work with you, my valued CVB and NSO contacts.
- Neither you nor your hotels pay to receive or to bid on my RFPs. SYM is software and does NOT get paid commissions or fees.
- SYM provides me with a simple way to email you with updates, changes to my timeline, and final decisions.
- SYM hosts webcasts for you, our CVB and Hotel NSO Contacts, to provide you guidance and with usability tips at no cost (See www.SourceYourMeeting.com)

Bottom line-We all win!

You can also check out this 1-Minute Intro at:
www.SourceYourMeeting.com/IntroVideo.php

- B. Sending the “eRFI Link”– See Outlook Email Template on Support page.**
- C. Hotels Responding via email and not through the “eRFI Link”.**

Thank you for your email and interest in our program. I cannot receive email responses because reports viewed by our internal and external clients will NOT contain your response unless you’ve responded using the “eRFI Link”.

Regardless of whether you have availability or need to turn-down the business we need your response (not to mention that even No responses puts your hotels name in front of us for future opportunities).

We really appreciate your support. As an alternative to a turn-down we encourage you to propose alternate dates on the eRFI Response Form if you cannot accommodate our preferred dates.

- D. Notify hotels when you make decisions that remove them from consideration**

Thank you for bidding on this program. As you can imagine selecting short-listed properties is not easy or a perfect science. We evaluate your initial dates, rates and space in conjunction with references and your web site to make an initial evaluation, just like you'd do when purchasing an airline ticket.



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In this initial stage of the decision making we have short-listed properties that presented a value proposition that fit our needs. Though we know you'd have preferred to hear we selected you, we do hope you appreciate this communication informing you of our decision so you can release any rooms or space hold. There really isn't anything you could have done differently to have changed the outcome on this particular bid but we can suggest you attend a SourceYourMeeting.com webcast if you wish to hear tips that will increase the likelihood you would be selected in the future. Thank you and we look forward to considering you again.

Tip 10. Upload a standard contract addendum (if applicable) when you create your project
Upload it in the second field on the Create New Project page when creating your project. This allows the hotelier to know what they need to agree to right up front and avoids wasting everyone's time if key terms and conditions are unworkable. Upload (attach) your addendum in the Additional Documents field.