



Developing a Quality Request for Bid

Once you have decided to invest in a challenge course, it would be wise to seek a design and a vendor that will serve your organization's programming objectives for many years to come. Over the years, Project Adventure has responded to many requests for course designs and vendor capabilities. We believe the following guidelines and questions can help you outline what information you want to gather before making your decision to work with a particular vendor:

Recommended Vendor Qualifications Information

- ◆ **Time in business**—qualified bidders will have been in business 10 years or more.
- ◆ **Experience developing Adventure-based activities and curricula**—qualified bidders will have extensive experience using challenge course elements to meet specific program goals.
- ◆ **Membership in Industry and Professional Organizations**—qualified vendors will be actively involved in the Association for Experiential Education and be a Level 3 or 4 Professional Vendor Member of the Association for Challenge Course Technology.
- ◆ **Scope of Services**—qualified vendors will provide comprehensive services for challenge course planning, program development, installation, staff training and skills certification, annual course inspection, and course maintenance.
- ◆ **Certification**—qualified bidders will provide a staff certification program for your Challenge Course Technician, Challenge Course Facilitator, and Challenge Course Manager.
- ◆ **Value**—qualified bidders will not be determined solely on the cost of goods and services, but also on ability to deliver, quality of the services delivered, and the vendor's track record of value delivered through successful program implementations.

Bid documents that are vague, poorly worded, or lack specific bidder qualifications risk allowing your organization to award a contract to a vendor who does not meet all of your needs or lacks adequate experience to ensure a successful completion of your course.

Recommended Bid or Proposal Information

Many bid documents require specific information to be included. Here are some of the most common and useful components to help you define what you are buying:

- ◆ A detailed design, showing course layout
- ◆ Element descriptions and pictures
- ◆ Training requirements and costs
- ◆ Pricing for additional equipment required to complete course construction (i.e., utility poles, lifts, generators)
- ◆ Annual inspection and periodic maintenance costs



Training

A challenge course proposal that does not include sufficient training for staff will not deliver the experiential and educational outcomes that your new course is capable of. We believe the most important component of a successful challenge course program is effective staff training. Your successful bidder should include a detailed description of the training that will be provided to your staff. Experience with successful programs over the years indicates that training costs will comprise at least 35% of your total cost of course design and installation.

Location and Site Considerations

A number of regional, local, and site-specific factors will contribute to course design and programming success.

- ◆ If you are in a region with high rainfall, cold winters, or extreme summer heat, you might want to install some of your elements indoors to provide you with year-round, all-weather programming options. For indoor installations, you will need to include a physical site evaluation in your bid request.
- ◆ If you have existing utility poles or a hardwood forest on site, you may be able to use them to construct outdoor elements. Again you will want to include a physical site evaluation to determine how to make use of these existing structural components.

Group or Class Size

It is important to indicate the average and maximum group sizes, as well as how many groups you expect to use the course simultaneously. This information will allow your vendor to propose appropriate quantities of safety equipment and props to support your program.