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montreal.ad

Launched by the AAPQ, Montréal.ad is a platform created to showcase the excellence, originality, and innovation of local creative and strategic talent. Its aim is to guide advertisers in order to facilitate the process of selecting an agency.

Author

Patrice Attanasio

Patrice Attanasio has worked in the marketing communications industry for more than 20 years. As a consultant, he has managed or collaborated on agency evaluation and selection processes for numerous clients. He is also an instructor at the Université du Québec à Montréal's School of Media, where he teaches creative advertising.

In collaboration with

Mario Daigle

Mario Daigle has more than 25 years of experience working in advertising agencies. He was head of Allard Johnson (Montreal) and kbs+ canada, and has taken part in numerous requests for proposals.

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Graphic design
Cossette

Produced and distributed by



2015 Peel, Suite 925
Montreal, Quebec H3A 1T8

Tel.: 514-848-1732 or
1-877-878-1732
Fax: 514-848-1950
Email: aapq@aapq.ca

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Table of contents	<u>06</u>	Summary	<u>46</u>	About speculative presentations
	<u>07</u>	About the AAPQ		
	<u>09</u>	Introduction	<u>46</u>	Contract and conditions
	<u>10</u>	The guide		
	<u>11</u>	Guiding principles	<u>47</u>	Agreement about a relationship management process
		Guidelines for advertisers		Annexes
	<u>14</u>	Foundations of an efficient agency selection process	<u>50</u>	Annex I: List of potential needs
	<u>18</u>	Preparation of an agency selection process	<u>51</u>	Annex II: Example of an evaluation grid
	<u>24</u>	Issuing a request for proposals and agency selection	<u>52</u>	Annex III: A request for proposals by invitation or open to everyone?
	<u>34</u>	Conclusion of the selection process and transition to a new agency	<u>54</u>	Annex IV: Example of a solicitation letter for a request for proposals
		Guidelines for agencies	<u>58</u>	Annex V: Speculative presentations
	<u>42</u>	You have received a call for interest or a request for proposals: what do you do?	<u>62</u>	Annex VI: Cultural compatibility
	<u>44</u>	Your agency is among the finalists: how do you optimize your presentation in line with the potential client's needs?	<u>64</u>	Annex VII: Manage the process internally or seek outside assistance?

Outstanding
work by
outstanding
agencies is only
possible through
an outstanding
relationship with
an outstanding
client.

Summary

The present *Agency Selection Guide for Advertisers and Agencies* was prepared in response to comments and requests from agencies and advertisers looking for a practical document that would help them organize a selection process that is simple, efficient, competitive, and fair.

This guide is divided into two parts and includes annexes that answer frequently asked questions, particularly about the advantages and disadvantages of issuing a request for proposals by invitation or open to everyone, speculative presentations, and the importance of cultural compatibility between advertisers and agencies. You'll find useful tools to efficiently manage any selection process. These tools include a non-exhaustive list of an advertiser's potential needs, an example of an evaluation grid, and an example of a solicitation letter for a request for proposals.

The first part is intended for advertisers. It describes the foundations of an efficient agency selection process after assessing if such an exercise is warranted. It explains a simple selection process divided into two main parts. This process will help many advertisers choose an agency without having to rely on speculative presentations, which would normally incur fees. It also touches on questions about issuing a request for proposals and efficiently selecting an agency. Finally, this part concludes with the steps necessary for an efficient conclusion to the process, and if applicable, the transition to a new agency.

The second part is intended primarily for agencies. It lists the factors that should be considered when an agency is invited to participate in a selection process with or without a request for proposals. It also touches on the best ways to optimize a presentation in line with the needs of the potential client. Finally, it deals with issues such as speculative presentations, the importance of contracts, and the agreements essential to the creation of a harmonious and long-term relationship between advertisers and agencies.

Ultimately, this guide aims to help advertisers and agencies implement selection processes that will contribute to building a partnership that is profitable to both advertisers' success and to the financial health of member agencies of the AAPQ.

About the AAPQ

The Association of Quebec Advertising Agencies (AAPQ) includes more than 70 member agencies. Its mission is to promote, advocate, and represent its agencies by providing today's decision-makers and tomorrow's professionals with tools that will help them face the challenges related to the evolution of the communications industry.

To be a member of the AAPQ, the agency must:

- Be a company that only works as an agency within the communications industry
- Have an office in the province of Quebec
- Be a solvent business
- Have been in business for at least two (2) years in the province of Quebec
- Offer the three (3) following basic services: concept and creative, strategic planning, and account services
- Offer one or more complementary services
- Have a minimum of three (3) client-advertisers (generating most of the agency's revenue)
- Have a minimum gross income of \$250,000
- Employ a minimum of five (5) full-time employees
- Comply with the AAPQ's Code of Ethics and Quality Standards and with any collective agreement negotiated by the AAPQ under the *Status of the Artist Act*

Benefits of working with a member agency of the AAPQ

By working with agencies that are members of the AAPQ, you'll not only be working with an agency that is solvent, credible, and competent (see criteria above), you'll also be collaborating with an agency that complies with the AAPQ's standards for excellence. In fact, members are required to adhere to a strict code of ethics and to the best standards of practice and quality in the marketing communications industry, such as:

- Within the company, promoting and applying high standards of quality in both their professional and commercial practices
- Complying with current laws and regulations in the best interest of clients and consumers
- Respecting agreements with employees and collaborators, partners and suppliers who take part in the design, execution, and management of campaigns

- Observing the rules of absolute confidentiality that govern the transactions, privileged information, and other situations related to the implementation of mandates
- Refraining from criticizing the work of competing agencies in public or in front of clients and other individuals involved in the process
- Avoiding any conflict of interest in their relationship with clients, partners, and suppliers
- Proposing to clients a fair rate for the work that needs to be done and honouring commitments and agreements to this end
- Advising clients in an unbiased manner, free from any commitment or outside influence from suppliers or the media
- In response to a request for proposals, following the rules established by the advertiser in an honest way and not attempting to bypass the process in place in order to influence the decision of the selection committee
- Not attempting to influence an elected official or any other person under their authority in order to obtain contracts outside the official request for proposals process

It is beneficial to work with agencies that are members of the AAPQ because you'll indirectly benefit from numerous services and resources. In fact, member agencies have access to free interpretation services and legal advice when it comes to working with Quebec artists (collective agreement with the UDA) and model contracts (services, privacy policy, freelancers, internet, and new media).

Moreover, you are guaranteed to be teaming up with an agency that is constantly evolving and innovating. One that also keeps up with the latest trends and trade issues thanks to its first-rate access to continuous training and high level provincial, national, and international conferences and industry events.

Introduction

As part of its activities, the Association of Quebec Advertising Agencies (AAPQ) is often called upon to play the role of advisor for companies that want to choose a marketing communications agency.

Publishing a reference document became essential following numerous questions from advertisers and comments from agencies about the process of selecting an agency. In fact, a study by polling firm CROP in October 2013 confirmed that there is a significant gap between the costs incurred by agencies during a request for proposals process and the perception of these costs by advertisers. Furthermore, the study highlighted the fact that agencies and advertisers generally agree about the best and worst practices observed during the request for proposals process.

In light of this, the AAPQ offers advertisers and member agencies a guide to facilitate the process of selecting an agency.

This process requires great effort and significant investments, by both the advertisers and agencies. And because the relationship between an advertiser and agency represents a substantial strategic investment, it is important to adhere to the appropriate stringent practices.

This relationship is also built on mutual trust and understanding. Creating this type of relationship should be possible from the very start of the selection process.

This guide underlines the best recognized practices in Quebec, other provinces, and elsewhere in the world. The AAPQ hopes that it will help advertisers find the best possible business partner when it comes to marketing communications.

The guide

This guide is easy to use and understand. A four-step process for advertisers will be explained, including:

- ↗ Foundations of an efficient agency selection process
- ↗ Preparation of an agency selection process
- ↗ Issue of a request for proposals and agency selection
- ↗ Conclusion of the selection process and transition to a new agency

For agencies, the following questions will be addressed:

- ↗ What do you do when you receive a call for interest or a request for proposals?
- ↗ How do you optimize the request for proposals process and the presentation for finalist agencies?
- ↗ What about speculative presentations?
- ↗ How do you establish a good relationship with a new client, specifically in terms of the contract and conditions and the implementation of an agreement that aims to favour the development of a productive and long-term relationship?

In order to make this document easier to read, some of the various stages have been placed in the annex. This is the case for answers to frequently asked questions from advertisers and agencies during the request for proposals process.

Guiding principles

When creating this guide, the AAPQ kept in mind that advertisers have very specific needs when the time comes to select and work with an agency. Furthermore, they are increasingly subjected to organizational constraints that require the selection process of a new agency to be stringent and fair.

The AAPQ and its member agencies advocate a selection process that is efficient, competitive, and fair so as to build a partnership that favours both the success of clients and the financial health of agencies.

Four principles guide the AAPQ's position:

- ↗ Choosing the agency that best meets the needs of advertisers must be done through a **simple selection process that does not include speculative work**
- ↗ Maintaining a **healthy and competitive process** between agencies is essential in our industry, much like in any other sector
- ↗ Recognition of the **fair value** of the services offered by the agencies along with their financial health are vital components to attracting and retaining the **best human resources** on the market and the **skills necessary** to best serve the clients
- ↗ A **mutually beneficial approach** for the agency and the client is essential, so each party can invest in their company and foster their own growth

a d v
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Guidelines
for
advertisers

Foundations of an efficient agency selection process

Is it really necessary to change your agency?

Before proceeding with a request for proposals (also known as an “RFP” or “call for tenders”), you have to bear in mind that any agency selection process requires a lot of time and money, both for the advertisers and agencies involved.

The following points should be considered:

- ↗ The time and resources required by the advertiser to prepare the request for proposals and evaluate the agencies
- ↗ The loss of corporate memory and historical tracking acquired by the incumbent agency
- ↗ The significant amount of time and money required by participating agencies and the resulting increase in operational and production costs
- ↗ The learning and familiarization process for the new agency with the new client (“learning curve”)
- ↗ The transition period and file transfer (along with the costs associated with this transfer) between the incumbent agency and the new agency

You should therefore ask yourself if you really want to begin the process of selecting a new agency. In fact, it is generally preferable for you to stay with your current agency and if needed require changes or corrective measures that will allow you to pursue a mutually beneficial long-term business relationship.

Establishing the selection process

If for any reason you must begin the process of selecting an agency, doing so can be a simple task, with or without a request for proposals. The following table lists most of the solutions available to you.

<u>Various ways to select an agency</u>	<u>Without a request for proposals</u>	<u>With a request for proposals</u>
Consultation of the aapq.ca and montreal.ad websites	☒	☒
Agency visits and presentations	☒	☒
Individual meetings with the potential leaders and teams	☒	☒
References from other advertisers or business partners	☒	☒
Invitation to all the member agencies of the AAPQ		☒
Invitation to a list of pre-selected agencies (long or short)		☒
Publication on websites specialized in requests for proposals		☒

Note: There are many ways to choose an agency. Certain situations require a longer process, but a quick selection without the need for a complex request for proposals is always possible.

The AAPQ recommends advertisers consider the following steps:

- Consult the aapq.ca and montreal.ad websites, which allow you to browse agency profiles and evaluate the services they offer and their portfolio; this step can help you pre-select agencies with whom you would like to work
- Communicate with the key leaders of the agencies that interest you in order to establish a first contact, assess their interest and availability, and make sure no conflict exists between both parties
- Meet and get to know the teams from agencies that interest you

This succinct method of selecting an agency allows you to:

- Save time, particularly for urgent projects
- Compare the agencies' different approaches and accomplishments in a competitive context
- Discuss the issues surrounding your brand in person
- Ascertain if there is chemistry between your company and the agency

Assess your marketing communications needs

The marketing communications industry is multi-disciplinary. Some agencies provide a variety of services, while others specialize in specific sectors.

Before undertaking the process of selecting an agency, the advertiser must first specify their marketing communications needs in order to choose the best agency for them. [Annex I](#) of this guide includes a list of potential needs that will help you determine your own within the context of your company.

Determine what kind of mandates you will give the agency

The advertiser must determine as soon as possible what kind of mandate they plan to give the agency. They must clearly communicate this with the agency at the very start of the process. This deliberation should include:

- ↗ The type of mandate: strategy, joint annual planning, tactical short-term mandates, or specific projects
- ↗ The degree of involvement of the agency within the advertiser's activities: sales meetings, in-store visits, advice for product design, etc.
- ↗ The length of the mandate(s), short-term or long-term, and the possibility of renewal
- ↗ Available budget

Note: In order to optimize the agency's performance and facilitate a real long-term partnership between the agency and the client, the AAPQ favours an in-depth involvement of the agency in their client's strategic planning and business process.

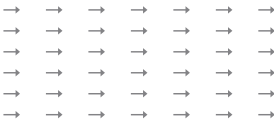
To maximize the efficiency and creativity of agencies, the AAPQ also favours an approach based on strategy, vision, and continuity, rather than adaptation or the simple execution of short- or long-term mandates.

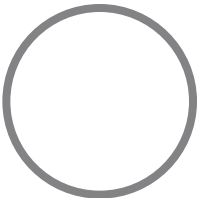
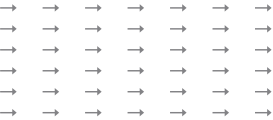
Determine the budget allocated to the agency

The advertiser must determine and communicate a budget allocated for the mandate, or at least estimate its size. This information is essential for the agency to make the appropriate recommendations and determine which resources are needed for the mandate. Keep in mind that any creative project's efficiency and success are directly linked to the time, budget, and resources allocated.

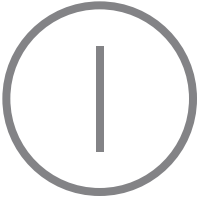
—
**Preparation of
an agency
selection process**

Whether or not you have decided to proceed with a request for proposals, the AAPQ recommends that you use the following preliminary steps, even before communicating with the agencies.





↗
Determine your needs, budget, and type of mandates you'll give the agency



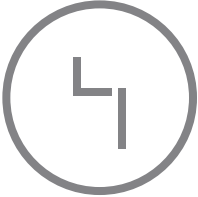
↗
Determine the information about your company that needs to be transmitted to the agencies



↗
Determine the list of services required



↗
Establish the main criteria for selecting an agency

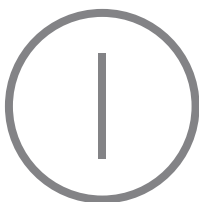


↗
Choose the members of your selection committee



↗
Establish an evaluation grid for agencies





Determine the information about your company that needs to be transmitted to the agencies

In order to successfully meet your needs and communicate their vision, the agencies must get to know your company well. The transmitted information will include the following elements:

- The nature and culture of your business
- The context of the market in which you evolve
- Your business objectives
- Challenges faced and main issues
- The nature and scope of the mandate given to the agency (e.g. short- or long-term mandate)
- Any other relevant information, such as target markets and budget allowance

If the information communicated must remain strictly confidential, do not hesitate to ask the agencies to sign a confidentiality agreement.

Note: The AAPQ recommends only using a request for proposals process for long-term projects that have a large budget. For other mandates, it is preferable to use a simplified selection process focused on individual meetings.



Determine the list of services required

- Draw up a list of your needs that is as complete as possible; if you already use the services of one or more agencies, make a full inventory of them and add the services that may be used over the coming years
- Note that these services can be considered as essential, optional, or added value
- As clearly as possible, indicate the services that are targeted or not by your selection process

Note: The AAPQ recommends that you undertake any agency selection process only for the main required services, while taking into account the amount of work anticipated and specifying the budget allocated.

Moreover, if the business sectors targeted by the selection process include activities that are not considered promotional, the advertiser must decide if they want to collaborate with specialized business groups (consortiums) or if they prefer to grant all the services needed to a single agency. If consortiums are acceptable (they generally are), the advertiser must check if the partner agencies have already successfully collaborated with each other or with other agencies.



Establish the main criteria for selecting an agency

The basic criteria for selecting an agency can include the following elements:

- ↗ The main services offered internally by the agency
- ↗ The minimum number of employees
- ↗ The agency's minimum revenue
- ↗ The minimum amount of account services or creative teams
- ↗ Conflicts of interest in your company's business sector
- ↗ The relevant experience of the agency or individuals in your business sector or with similar companies
- ↗ Reputation and references
- ↗ Geographic proximity (if applicable)

These criteria are the first filter in the selection process, and not criteria for evaluation. Therefore, agencies that meet the basic criteria defined by the advertiser will all begin the selection process on equal footing.



Choose the members of your selection committee

The selection committee should at minimum be composed of the following people:

- ↗ The main decision-maker(s) in the selection process
- ↗ The person(s) who will act as the client(s) of the agency, including the individual responsible for marketing and the individual who will act as the contact point on a daily basis
- ↗ A representative from each of the services involved in the selection process
- ↗ A representative of the company's senior management (if needed)
- ↗ A representative of the procurement department (if this role exists in your company) or an external independent advisor whose role will be to manage the process and guide the selection committee's deliberations

In order to avoid needlessly prolonging the discussions, the selection committee should comprise a maximum of six or seven people.

Furthermore, note that the selection committee should ideally remain the same during the entire process, or at least be mainly composed of the same people in order to ensure consistency in the selection process.



Establish an evaluation grid for agencies

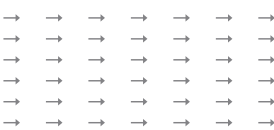
The evaluation grid for agencies can focus on the following criteria:

- ↗ The agency's general expertise
- ↗ The agency's main achievements and a reasonable amount of case studies
- ↗ The agency's (or individuals') expertise in the advertiser's business sector
- ↗ The agency's creativity
- ↗ Chemistry with the advertiser (cultural compatibility)
- ↗ Administrative accountability
- ↗ Competence in digital (web) and interactive services
- ↗ Planning and media buying
- ↗ Added value of other services such as public relations and promotion
- ↗ Quality of the presentation
- ↗ Cohesion of the presentation team

The evaluation grid should be given to the agencies participating in the process so that they may consult it (see [Annex II](#): Example of an evaluation grid). This information will also allow the agency to determine if they have the necessary skills and resources to make an informed decision about their participation in the selection process.

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**Issuing a request
for proposals and
agency selection**

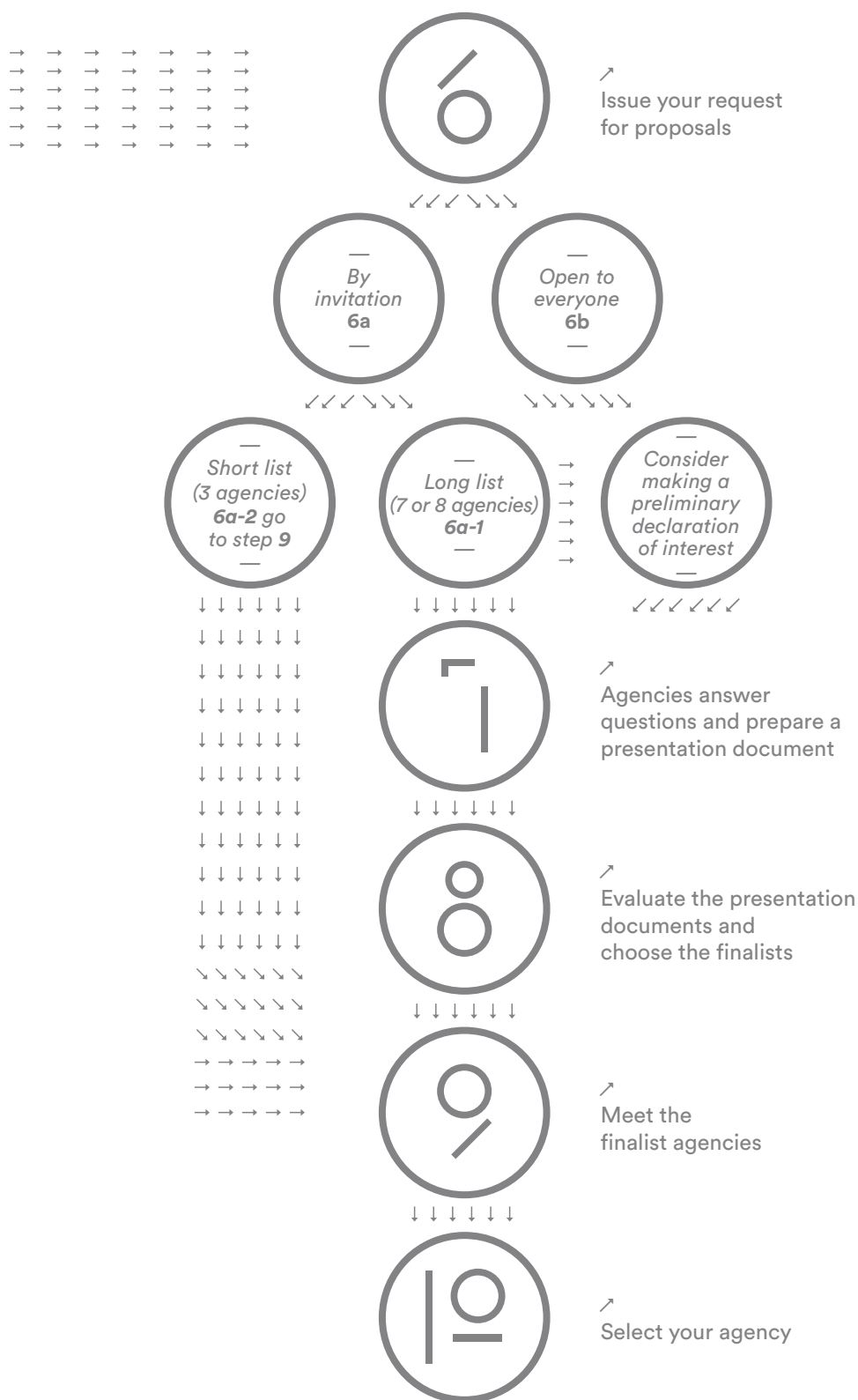
The process of selecting an agency through a request for proposals can be issued three ways:



- 1) by invitation to a short or long list of pre-selected agencies;
- 2) to all the member agencies of the AAPQ; and
- 3) on a website designed for calls for tenders or requests for proposals, such as Merx and SEAO.

Note: The AAPQ offers several services, including issuing a request for proposals to all its members. That way you can be assured that every agency will receive the relevant information.

Reminder: A request for proposals is predominantly an opportunity for agencies to present themselves and showcase their experience, expertise, and achievements. It is not designed for them to provide speculative work.





FIRST STEP OF THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Choose the type of request for proposals process: by invitation or open to everyone?

a. Request for proposals by invitation

If you choose to proceed with a request for proposals by invitation, it is important to decide the number of agencies you want to invite (see [Annex III: A request for proposals by invitation or open to everyone?](#)).

The process generally happens in the following way:

a1. A two-step process: invitation issued to seven or eight agencies at most

↗ Step of the process during which you narrow down the list to three agencies that you will meet during a final presentation. If you wish to follow this approach, skip ahead to [step 7](#).

a2. A single-step process: invitation issued to three agencies at most

↗ The three pre-selected agencies will move directly to the step of presenting to the selection committee. If you wish to follow this approach, skip ahead to [step 9](#).

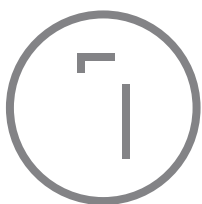
Important: In order to ensure an efficient process that is fair for everyone, the AAPQ does not recommend inviting agencies that have no chance of being selected as finalists.

b. Open request for proposals

This formula allows all the agencies that meet the basic criteria defined by the advertiser to participate in the request for proposals. If the request is intended for all the member agencies of the AAPQ, it can include agencies that the advertiser didn't consider at first. The open request for proposals is also a way to group agencies into consortiums in order for them to better meet certain needs of the advertiser.

Note: The AAPQ recommends starting the request for proposals by inviting agencies to send you a statement of interest. This will allow you to:

- Assess the initial interest from agencies
- Find out how many agencies will submit a proposal
- Avoid a situation where not enough agencies answer the request for proposals
- Issue a confidentiality agreement to interested agencies along with a more detailed briefing without having to make it public



Give the invited agencies enough time to prepare a presentation document

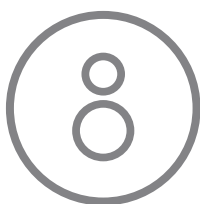
Once the request for proposals has been issued, give the agencies enough time to prepare their presentation document, because a quality response must be tailor-made.

In fact, in order to let the agencies conduct their research and perform the necessary analyses to provide the best answer possible, you must allow at least **15 to 20 business days** between the date you issue the request for proposals and the date when you receive the presentation documents.

Apart from questions specific to each advertiser, the presentation document will include:

- The agency's DNA, personality, and positioning
- The agency's history
- The agency's expertise and the services they offer
- Relevant complementary services (added value)
- Clients of the agency
- Key personnel (with biographical notes)
- Relevant previous experience (agency or key personnel)
- The agency's client case studies, if applicable
- Fee schedule, or if needed, the agency's proposed remuneration

Note: Please see the example of a solicitation letter for a request for proposals in [Annex IV](#) that will assist you in this step.



Evaluate the presentation documents and choose the finalists

Agencies generally spend many hours preparing a presentation tailored to your needs. In order to make a fair decision, it is important for you to take the time to examine each presentation.

According to the information requested, you will most likely have to spend at least one hour on each document. For typical two-step requests for proposals, the members of the selection committee will have to spend at least one or two full days reading the presentation documents before even starting to deliberate which agencies should make the final cut.

The selection committee will choose finalists once they've finished evaluating the agencies' documents. The following approach is the most efficient way to do so:

- Each member individually reviews and evaluates each submission in order to discuss it with the other members of the selection committee
- Individual scores will be compiled and conveyed to the selection committee
- Deliberations are based first and foremost on the score and continue until the committee agrees on the finalists

Once this step is completed, a maximum of **three agencies** go on to the final phase of the process. Note that only agencies with a real chance of winning the mandate should be considered finalists. Don't hesitate to disclose the identity of the finalists to all the agencies that have participated. Many advertisers communicate this information to agencies instead of letting them seek out this information for themselves.

Note: Following this step, all the agencies, whether they made it to the second step or not, should be contacted by the client or their representative. It's a question of respect for the time and work they put into the process.



SECOND STEP OF THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Meet the finalist agencies

Important: Instead of focusing on speculative presentations in an artificial environment, the final step should consist of meeting the team assigned to your mandate, highlighting the achievements of members of this team, evaluating their understanding of your key issues, and choosing the best team to assist you in meeting your business objectives.

Advice for preparing to meet with finalists:

- Specify in writing what you expect from the meeting with finalists.
- Generally, finalist agencies have at least 15 to 20 business days to prepare for this meeting. In order to obtain presentation documents that are consistent with each other and to reduce the time needed to read them, think about limiting the length of written answers and the number of creative elements that the agencies can include with their presentation in order to showcase their previous experience.
- If you acquire relevant information during the process, make sure you transmit it to all the participating agencies.
- Make sure that someone can answer the agency's questions at any time. Remember that the agency's representatives' questions can help you form an opinion about a team.
- The evaluations don't have to turn into a strategic or creative "competition." There is a lot to learn about the ways an agency solves a problem by using completely different selection criteria, like case studies or examples of relevant mandates completed by the agency.

Note: Beyond evaluating presentation documents and individual meetings, you can include an additional element that will allow the agencies to distinguish themselves. For instance, you could evaluate their cultural compatibility with your organization (see [Annex VI: Cultural compatibility](#)).

Note: You should give finalist agencies an example of the contract you plan to use with the winning agency. If needed, a model contract is available from the AAPQ. This approach will help facilitate and accelerate the contract negotiations during the last step of the process.

Other possibilities to consider during the final selection step

There are numerous successful ways of choosing an agency. Methods that still fit in a competitive environment include:

- Agency visits and presentations, including interviews with the key leaders and the team assigned to the mandate. This is a quick and efficient process.
- Presentation of the agency's expertise, generally in the form of relevant case studies. This approach is based on real facts and not on theoretical considerations or an artificial "game of seduction."
- Joint work session. This solution closely reflects reality because it simulates the way you will work with the agency and allows you to evaluate their work methods and the potential chemistry with a new business partner.

Please contact the AAPQ for help regarding either of these selection processes.

Optimizing agency presentations

In order to establish favourable conditions for agency presentations, you must keep in mind the following:

- Determine the location of the final presentation early on during the process. If this presentation must occur at the advertiser's place of business, plan to use two rooms in order to give the agencies more time to set up and take down their material, or inform them how much time they'll have to set up their material (e.g. 30 minutes).
- Beforehand, send the agencies a plan of the room that is reserved for their presentation and set a time when they can visit it.

- Give the agencies a list of the audiovisual equipment provided and stipulate that they can choose to use their own equipment or any additional equipment, at their own cost. They will then be able to decide if additional resources are needed.
- If necessary, assign a coordinator from the logistics department to meet the agencies' needs and inform them about the delivery of the material and equipment required for their presentation, its installation, and return.
- Note that the evaluation grid used in the final step can differ from the one used during the pre-selection in order to take into account new elements required for this last step.

Note: In the spirit of partnership, refrain as much as possible from planning final presentations after a holiday or during vacation periods. It would also be in your best interest to contact the AAPQ to find out if other selection processes are occurring. Furthermore, in order to not deprive yourself of the contribution or participation of certain agencies, contact the AAPQ to check when agencies and industry leaders are unavailable due to training or industry related activities (e.g. Advertising Week, Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity, etc.).

Advice about meeting the finalists

During the finalist agencies' presentations, many factors must be taken into account, including:

- Provide the agency with a list of all the participants who will attend the presentation. This information should include each client's title and functional duties.
- Plan a meeting with the selection committee before the agencies begin their presentation in order to go over the requirements and the evaluation grid.
- Give the agency enough time to answer the brief and adequately present their work.
- Clearly specify the time each agency has for their presentation, and the time allotted for a question period, if applicable.

- Respect the schedule. Don't let an agency go over their time. However, don't penalize them if the presentation is running late due to reasons beyond their control.

Presentations of a predetermined length (generally between 90 and 120 minutes) can include the following elements:

- An in-person reminder about the document of appraisal presented during the first step of the process
- Presentation of members of the team assigned to work on the client's mandate
- Presentation of external partners, if applicable
- Complementary elements of the presentation, such as audiovisual components
- Their understanding of the mandate
- Response to elements required for the final step of the process (agency case study or other)
- References from clients that the advertiser can contact before making a final decision
- Visit of the agency and presentation of services, if applicable
- A period allocated to questions or discussion lasting at least 15 to 30 minutes (according to the time allotted for the entire final presentation)



Select your agency

To meet the requirements of this step, you may have asked the agencies to submit a new document during the final presentations. In addition to evaluating the presentations they saw, the selection committee must take the time necessary to evaluate these documents before the final deliberations.

Note: Before going ahead with the final selection, the advertiser can contact the clients listed as the finalist agencies' references. Even if this step is optional, it can be quite useful because nobody knows an agency better than its current or past clients.

Ideally, members of the selection committee should deliberate quickly, even immediately after the presentations, in order to make a decision based on an impression that is still fresh.

Important: If the evaluation goes on for too long, the entire process could be compromised because members of the agency who were available during the evaluation might be reassigned or decide to participate in another request for proposals.

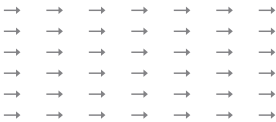
Remember that the search for the right agency is not a beauty contest. It is based on the needs of your company. That's why you should never lose sight of the criteria established at the beginning of the process.

For this, the AAPQ proposes a process similar to the initial step. It includes the following stages:

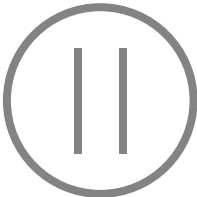
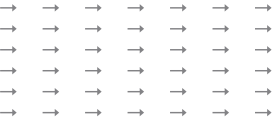
- Each member of the selection committee individually evaluates every agency's file before discussing it with other members
- Individual notes are compiled and transmitted to the selection committee
- Deliberations are based on the final score and continue until the whole committee agrees on an agency

—
**Conclusion of the selection
process and transition
to a new agency**

You have chosen your new
business partner. The AAPQ
recommends you quickly
inform the winning agency, but
tell them that the final decision
depends on an agreement on
contractual provisions.



Once the agency has been
selected, here is the approach
the AAPQ recommends you
follow during the last few steps:



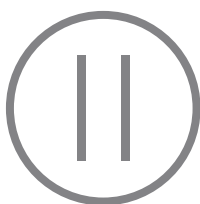
↗
Inform the agencies
that have not
been selected

↗
Confirm the
scope of the
mandate

↗
Negotiate a written
contract with your
new agency

↗
Implement the basic
criteria for a mutual
agency-client evaluation

↗
Establish a harmonious
relationship based
on solid ground



Inform the agencies that have not been selected

You should quickly inform the agencies that have not been selected, so that they avoid learning about your choice through third parties.

Note: It is recommended you inform the agencies that have not been selected about the positive aspects of their presentation along with the elements that did not win over the selection committee (or the ones for which other agencies were more impressive). You can also suggest a debriefing call with these agencies or a meeting in order to provide them with honest and useful comments about their approach, team, and final presentation, and to give them a chance to ask you questions.



Confirm the scope of the mandate

You have chosen an agency in accordance with the primary mandate stipulated in the request for proposals. Once the agency has been selected, and in line with their abilities or those of their partners in other business sectors, you will be able to determine if you will confer additional tasks to them. At this stage, you have several options in the preparation of your final list of needs:

- a. Complete your needs from proposals of the agency's partners

Unless the partners proposed by the agency constitute an integral part of their final offer of services, the advertiser is not obligated to select the agency's proposed partners. For instance, if the agency suggests a public relations firm, the advertiser has no obligation to this firm within the mandate. The advertiser can thus entrust the public relations mandate to the supplier of their choice. However, in most cases, the agency's partner firms will satisfactorily meet its offer for specialized services.

- b. Collaborate with your other agencies (if applicable) to meet your needs

Certain specialized services can be offered by other agencies with which you already have a business relationship. The reorganization surrounding the granting of your mandate(s) is a perfect opportunity for you to reassess the services offered by your agencies and perhaps find new ones that you did not know about.

- c. Undertake a complementary search for agencies for specific needs

If you are not completely satisfied with the offer of complementary services presented by the selected agency or their partners, you can always go back to a request for proposals process for these services.



Negotiate a written contract with your new agency

Too often, this part is neglected by both advertisers and agencies. However, it helps avoid many problems by discussing important subjects such as:

- ↗ The scope of the mandate
- ↗ The length of the agreement
- ↗ The agency's and the client's respective obligations
- ↗ Criteria for evaluating the agency's performance and the agency-client relationship
- ↗ The modes of payment to the agency, including performance bonuses, if applicable
- ↗ Termination and end of the contract
- ↗ Alternative modes for conflict resolution (mediation or arbitration)

Note: Member agencies of the AAPQ can provide you with a standard contract model that can constitute the basis of your agreement.



Implement the basic criteria for a mutual agency-client evaluation

Take advantage of the start of this new relationship to implement an official agency-advertiser mutual evaluation process. This procedure should occur every year and will not only allow the advertiser to measure all the performance aspects of its agency (including the profitability of its services), but it will also allow the agency to evaluate the client in a constructive manner. This will help your business relationship become as productive as possible.

This exercise generally allows both the agency and the advertiser to precisely target the positive elements along with their daily concerns and challenges. It will help all parties to take the necessary corrective actions to maintain a relationship that is both fruitful and harmonious.

Note: In order to maintain a long-term relationship that is beneficial to both the agency and the advertiser, the AAPQ recommends that along with the official annual evaluation, you also schedule informal meetings throughout the year.

Note: The AAPQ, in collaboration with the Association of Canadian Advertisers (ACA) and the Institute of Communication Agencies (ICA), has published the [Come Together](#) guide to enhance the advertiser-agency relationship. In addition to providing you with advice on the best ways to optimize relations between the client and its agencies, this guide includes a “Client-Agency Code of Conduct” to help you implement the industry’s best practices.



Establish a harmonious relationship based on solid ground

Beginning a new business relationship is a step in itself. All that remains are the following actions:

- Transfer the files and transition from the incumbent agency, if applicable. The incumbent agency should help you transfer these files. It's a question of reputation and it is a part of the AAPQ's Code of Conduct.
- Implement a familiarization process so the agency can get to know the advertiser's brands. It is the advertiser's responsibility to help the new agency get to know the organization and its brands. That way, the agency can become familiar with the personality, philosophy, and culture of your business. This step can include visits to the company (stores, outlets, dealerships, etc.), meetings with upper management, product trials, internships at the company or on the road, etc.
- Regularly schedule meetings to update the agency. In order for the agency to be efficient and proactive, they must be kept up-to-date about the evolution of the advertiser's operations and thus be ready to intervene at any moment.
- Make a public announcement about the allocation of the mandate. This can be done by a press release in collaboration with the agency or by a press release prepared by the agency and pre-approved by the advertiser.

Once all these steps have been taken, you are ready to begin a harmonious relationship with the agency, one based on clear business guidelines.

agency n c i e s

Guidelines
for
agencies

You have received a call for interest or a request for proposals: what do you do?

Requests for proposals often come when you least expect them and often when you are particularly busy. Participating in a request for proposals requires an important investment of human resources and a lot of money. That's why it's essential you make an informed decision about your participation in the call for interest or request for proposals.

- If the request for proposals is unclear, ask for clarifications about the mandate, selection criteria, the role other agencies will play (if applicable), and the advertiser's internal team.
- Carefully assess the mandate along with your compatibility with the advertiser and quickly determine if this would be a good opportunity for your agency. Whether you decide to take part or not, quickly answer the potential client or the external consultant and let them know of your intentions.
- If you decline the invitation, explain why to the advertiser. They can learn a lot from your answer. Is the mandate beyond your capabilities or is it the way the advertiser has defined their objectives or the tasks that need to be done?

Important: Make sure your answer respects the guidelines and instructions provided. Answer the questions. Be specific about your basic abilities, your experience, and in what ways you excel. Provide relevant and concise answers. Do not go off topic. Be careful about the details and quality of your presentation (layout, spelling, choice of cases and examples, etc.). Keep in mind that the advertiser could have to evaluate many submissions and might negatively evaluate you or quickly eliminate your candidacy if you don't follow the rules they have set.

- Be honest about your abilities in terms of what the advertiser is seeking. Attempting to get a new account that isn't in line with your resources is a waste of time and could eventually harm your relationship with the advertiser. Don't be afraid to ask questions and admit that you don't possess the right abilities or that a certain aspect is not your strong point. Being transparent says a lot about you. Even if you are not the right agency for the current mandate, the advertiser might keep you in mind for other projects.
- Stand out! Clearly define from the get-go what sets your agency apart from the rest. Express how this distinction translates into practice and how it could benefit the potential client. It could be about your culture, the way you work, or your "secret recipe." Remind them of this distinction often throughout the process so that the advertiser takes note to help them determine if it can be profitable to them in practical, realistic terms. Let them know if an element from their request limits your ability to put this distinction into practice.
- Let the advertiser know if you are working with any of their competitors, and give them a list of all your clients. The advertiser could have a specific opinion on conflicts of interest and you could come to an acceptable solution. For example, you could completely separate the team that works on the competitor's account from the team that would be in charge of your new client's account. This team could work on a different floor, in another office, or even in another city, if need be.
- Discuss fees right from the start, even if the advertiser doesn't bring up the subject. Clarifying each party's expectations can prevent tensions caused by potential financial issues.

Your agency is among the finalists: how do you optimize your presentation in line with the potential client's needs?

Take the time to get to know the advertiser's business reality and specific needs along with the challenges they face and the scope of the mandate. Find out if the advertiser wants a long-term relationship, or one that is limited to the mandate. Stipulate the balance needed between the requirements of the selection process and the deliverables. More specifically:

- Make sure you understand the brief and the project's parameters, like measures of success (sales and brand awareness), geographic parameters (regional, national, and international), the role of new media, etc.
- Get to know your potential client's products or services and those of their main competitors.
- Show genuine interest in the advertiser's products or services.
- Determine which questions or elements of the request for proposals need to be clarified and set up a conference call or meeting with the potential client to get answers. Because it can impress the client, remember that this step is important and could contribute to a positive evaluation of your candidacy.
- Be ready to show that you can work amicably with other agencies, and not only agencies from your network. With the current media landscape's fragmentation, advertisers often rely on more than one agency. Cooperating and collaborating with other agencies is thus essential.

- Discuss the manpower you'll need to assign to the advertiser's account. This could have an important repercussion on costs. First, discuss your staffing needs in general terms. Once the scope of the mandate has been determined, your personnel needs will become clearer.
- Be honest. Don't send a team in charge of business development to get the account with the intention of assigning another team for the actual work. Make sure the advertiser meets the members of the team who are assigned to their account and that there is at least one key person present from the team. Advertisers have to know that it is unreasonable to expect to meet the entire team. In many cases, the team has not yet been formed or the personnel needed have not been hired.
- Make sure you know the advertiser's key personnel with whom you will work on a daily basis along with key decision-makers.
- Determine if your agency has internal services that might be used by the advertiser. These can be services related to media, promotion, production, publishing, music, etc.
- Note that prizes and awards are important, especially if the prize-winning work has contributed to a client's growth in revenue (e.g. CASSIES).
- Do not bring in more people than necessary for the presentation. Every participant must play a role.

About speculative presentations

“Speculative” work means any work for which the agency would normally be remunerated. Please note that the AAPQ cannot support such requests during the process of a request for proposals. Given the prohibitive costs associated with such work and the large amount of resources needed, no speculative work should be done when answering a request for proposals (see [Annex V: Speculative presentations](#)).

Contract and conditions

- An official agreement about the services to be provided, compensation, and the key contractual conditions are essential elements of an exemplary agency-advertiser relationship. Once the agency is chosen, an agreement (which should be written by a legal advisor on behalf of both parties) will be drawn up regarding the scope of services and work needed, assessing the workforce required, choosing the team or key persons the agency will assign to the account, compensation, key contractual parameters, and measures for evaluating the agency. Failing to establish business conditions that satisfy both parties will negatively affect the viability of a long-term relationship. If needed, a model contract is available from the AAPQ.
- In order to obtain a new account, agencies should not accept non-negotiable or unilateral agreements from advertisers. Nor should they accept mandates they deem unfair or that seem difficult to accomplish in the hopes of renegotiating these conditions later on.
- If you accept a mandate, but lose money at the beginning or are solely responsible for your expenses, be transparent about the situation with your new client.
- Decline to work on the mandate if it seems inappropriate to you.

Agreement about a relationship management process

The advertiser and agency have both invested considerable effort in the request for proposals. To promote a productive, efficient long-term relationship, a periodic verification process along with a structured, two-way feedback and evaluation process should be included, occurring after control points and deliverables. They should include a review of the entire mandate (if needed) and attempt to solve any problem that could arise during the mandate.

You could also include a provision that reviews the terms of the mandate at regular intervals (services, contract, procedures, etc.). Despite all the efforts made to define the extent of the expected benefits, scope of the work, and main business hypotheses, it is hard to know how the relationship with your new client will evolve until you work together.

The *Come Together* guide on the optimal management of an agency-advertiser relationship is available from the AAPQ. Don't hesitate to consult it.

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Annex I:
List of
potential needs

- ↗ Managing the client’s account
- ↗ Strategic planning
- ↗ Creative services in English and French
- ↗ Adaptation and translation services
- ↗ Digital services (web, interactive, mobile, etc.)
- ↗ Website creation, management, and hosting
- ↗ Branding and graphic design
- ↗ Non-media creative
- ↗ Point-of-sale communication
- ↗ Design of commercial environments
- ↗ Name and design of new products and new brands
- ↗ Production services (print, electronic, digital)
- ↗ Media planning
- ↗ Media buying
- ↗ Direct marketing
- ↗ Sponsorship management and implementation
- ↗ Event and experiential marketing
- ↗ Promotions
- ↗ Public relations
- ↗ Social media
- ↗ Trade shows, exhibitions, presentations
- ↗ Research
- ↗ Other (if applicable)

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Annex II:
Example of an
evaluation grid

See next page ↗

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Evaluation grid

<u>Skills and experience</u>	<u>Highest % possible</u>	<u>% given</u>
Conflicts of interest Note that even though this aspect is not evaluated (NE), it can still lead to the elimination of candidates	NE	NE
Agency’s accomplishments ↗ Case studies (challenges, strategy, results, awards) ↗ Creativity ↗ Overall quality	____%	____%
Offer of services (in line with your needs) ↗ Planning skills and strategic thinking ↗ Branding and graphic design skills ↗ Digital skills	____%	____%
Experience relevant to your business sector ↗ Experience deploying campaigns or projects (on a local, regional, national, or international scale) ↗ Quality and experience of the team assigned to the client ↗ Experience in French (or other languages), if applicable	____%	____%
Compatibility ↗ Chemistry with your team ↗ Compatibility with your company’s values	____%	____%
Media experience (in line with your needs) ↗ Planning ↗ Identification of needs specific to the business sector ↗ Media buying and creativity ↗ Ability to generate leverage and added value	____%	____%
Administration and controls ↗ Control reports, follow-up offered, internal processes ↗ Quality management	____%	____%
Added value ↗ Unique abilities, experience, or skills ↗ Proven spirit of innovation	____%	____%
Quality of the presentation ↗ Presentation, clarity, and relevance ↗ Answers to questions ↗ Chemistry of the presentation team	____%	____%
Fee schedule*	____%	____%

*In order to make a decision based first and foremost on the quality of services that you are looking for and the resources that are proposed, the fee schedule should never count for more than 20% of the final evaluation.

**Annex III:
A request
for proposals
by invitation
or open to
everyone?**

If after careful consideration you decide to go ahead with a request for proposals, is it better to proceed with one by invitation or open up the process to every agency?

There is no right or wrong answer to this question. There are advantages and disadvantages associated with both approaches.

Process by invitation

The following advantages and disadvantages are associated with a request by invitation

Advantages

- ↗ Shortens the process by eliminating the pre-selection stage
- ↗ Allows the advertiser to pre-select the most interesting agencies
- ↗ Won't waste the time of some agencies by having them work on a presentation, especially if they have no chance of winning the mandate

Disadvantages

- ↗ Prevents the advertiser from getting to know agencies that they would not normally have considered
- ↗ Excludes agencies likely to qualify through consortiums to meet some of the advertiser's expressed needs
- ↗ Pre-selection by invitation often happens in a subjective manner. This can create an unfair impression on agencies that are not invited: why invite certain agencies instead of others that are similar in size and have similar traits?

Open process

The AAPQ generally tends to favour a process open to all of its member agencies. A process that is based on specific criteria in order to eliminate agencies that could not qualify. The following advantages and disadvantages are associated with this approach:

Advantages

- ↗ It is a fair process and offers all qualified agencies an equal chance, including agencies that the advertiser would not think of at first
- ↗ By widening the scope, the open and competitive process allows for a more complete analysis of the possibilities offered to the advertiser
- ↗ This approach is more objective, and the choices made during the pre-selection stage can easily be justified
- ↗ It allows agencies that would not qualify at the outset to form consortiums

Disadvantages

- ↗ Requires an additional pre-selection stage
- ↗ Often generates more service offers and consequently, the advertiser needs more time to evaluate the offers

Keep in mind that you are about to choose a long-term business partner. You will invest a lot of money and energy in this relationship, so don't skimp on the process!

—
Annex IV:
Example of a
solicitation letter
for a request
for proposals



Madam/Sir
Agency
Address
City, Quebec Postal Code

Subject: Request for proposals

About your organization

Briefly describe (in one or two paragraphs) the nature of your company or organization.

The mandate

Briefly describe the mandate for which you are issuing a request for proposals along with the allocated budget. If possible, state how the costs will be divided into professional fees, production fees, media, and so on.

The campaign

Describe, if applicable, the nature and scope of the campaign for which the agency will submit their offer of services and the context in which it falls.

Services required

Describe the nature of the basic services required from the agency. For each of the services listed, you can indicate, if applicable, if they are “Essential,” “An Asset,” or “Optional.”

Basic requirements

Describe the essential traits the candidates will have to meet. These criteria can include the following:

- Be a member in good standing of the AAPQ
- The basic services offered internally by the agency
- The minimum number of employees
- The agency's minimum revenues
- Relevant experience (of the agency or individuals) in the client's business sector or with clients that are similar in size
- The minimum number of creative or client service teams
- Geographic proximity to the advertiser (if needed)

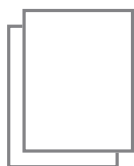
Other desirable characteristics

Describe the other desirable characteristics that could be of added value for the selected agency.

Submission of expertise ("credentials")

Describe what you expect from the agency in its presentation document. For example:

- We would like you to provide us with a presentation document that summarizes your company's relevant information (size, clients, services offered, key personnel, accomplishments, etc.) along with any other information that would make our decision easier. Your answer to each of the following questions should not exceed "x" pages.



○ Please ensure that your expertise relates to the following aspects (the maximum length for each answer should be indicated). You can also include any other information that you think is relevant that could help your candidacy.

- Presentation of your brand and DNA of your agency
- History of your company
- Current clients, products, and revenues
- Key personnel and biographical notes (specifying which members of the team will be assigned to the mandate)
- Expertise of your agency for advertising, promotional, and digital creative
- Expertise of the agency when it comes to research
- Other services offered
- Relevant experience for the company
- Relevant case studies, with supporting results
- Unique skills and relevant added value for the organization

○ In addition to your basic expertise, we would like to know about your agency's approach and position in terms of the following aspects:

- Your accomplishments in similar campaigns and factors that you consider essential to success
- Your vision of the role your agency would play when working with our organization
- Your creative philosophy
- Any other desirable aspect within the request for proposals

Conflicts of interest

Determine which areas could present conflicts of interest. Agencies must provide a list of the clients that could potentially constitute a conflict of interest along with the services they offer these clients. They should also provide the approach they would consider if they work on mandates deemed incompatible with the client's mission.

Confidentiality

In the event you have required agencies to sign a confidentiality agreement, it is important to remind them to limit the number of people who have access to this information to essential members of the team and insist on the importance of maintaining professional secrecy within the ongoing request for proposals process.

Stages and calendar

If you require a letter of intent:

- Interested agencies are asked to send via email a letter of intent. Allow at least 48 to 72 business hours for agencies to show their interest.
- When receiving these letters of intent, send the interested agencies a confidentiality agreement that once signed and sent back, will be followed by a more detailed brief that specifies your expectations along with the evaluation grid used in the selection process.
- Specify what you expect from the agency (written document or presentation) during the initial stage, by making sure to list the details and deadlines. Allow at least 15 to 20 business days for agencies to prepare a presentation document. Clearly indicate the number of documents required along with the exact shipping address and deadline to send these documents. Acknowledge receipt, if needed.
- Explain the stages that will follow, including the deadlines and presentation dates for the finalist agencies. It is also important to provide the date when you will give the agencies your answer.

Annex I (or subsequent stage, accordingly)

Include the complete agency brief along with the scope of the mandate or any other documents related to your organization that could be relevant for the agency.

Annex II

Include the evaluation grid you will use.

Annex V: Speculative presentations

One of the most debated issues surrounding the process of selecting an agency is whether or not a speculative presentation should be included. The AAPQ defines “speculative” by any strategic or creative work for which the agency would normally be remunerated.

Start from the premise that the agency’s previous achievements are the best examples of how they work with an advertiser on a daily basis. Within a collaborative relationship that aims to develop campaigns that would meet the advertiser’s business objectives, it is the best way for the agency to showcase its talents. Moreover, keep in mind that:

- Some agencies have policies prohibiting speculative presentations. By asking for one, will certain agencies at the top of your list decline?
- In the vast majority of reported cases, the agency that wins the mandate will not use the speculative recommendations made during its presentation.
- In addition to requiring a significant investment from agencies, the strategic thinking or creative submitted within the process is in response to a truncated brief and rarely meets the real strategic considerations of the advertiser. At this stage of the process, the agency has not yet immersed itself in the culture of the company and cannot know about all the considerations or the brand’s particular context.

To deliver good results, as in strategic or creative work that might be implemented, it is important to work closely with the advertiser. This collaboration usually requires a lot of time. Moreover, because it is impossible for the agency to know all the variables (scope of the work, deadlines, or other needs of the client) and that they are asked to work within tight deadlines, you might end up with a presentation team instead of a real team.

Finally, although it seems attractive at first glance, this process is too often a brain picking exercise that easily disregards the industry’s basic codes of ethics, specifically in terms of intellectual property.

That is why the best practices in Canada, the United States, and Europe generally discourage requiring speculative presentations.

In these circumstances, the Association of Quebec Advertising Agencies favours a selection process that does not include any form of speculative work (including creative and strategic thinking).

The AAPQ believes that using speculative work within a request for proposals has the effect of falsifying information and may place undue importance on an exercise of style, to the detriment of other evaluation criteria. In addition, speculative work is not always representative of the agency's creative skills.

In fact, most advertisers now select their agency according to experience, expertise, and business results. The agency's history and its creative road map should serve as a showcase of its capacity to meet the advertiser's needs. Moreover, an agency that was able to design award-winning campaigns or projects and that demonstrates boundless creativity on their clients' projects is most likely going to maintain this level of performance for a new advertiser.

Don't forget: You are first and foremost choosing an agency, not a particular advertising campaign or project.

By choosing an agency, you are opting for:

- ↗ A business partner with relevant experience and strategic abilities, with whom you want to have a long-term relationship
- ↗ A team with whom you could establish a solid business partnership and develop chemistry
- ↗ Specialized services
- ↗ Meticulous management
- ↗ And of course, an efficient creative strategic process attested by the agency's history

Moreover, certain advertisers believe they are doing the right thing by giving a symbolic compensation to agencies in exchange for speculative work. Although this approach is commendable, the remuneration given generally does not correspond to the real investment made by the agency. In general, any form of compensation does not justify asking for speculative work during the request for proposals.

Finally, the advertiser has no right to the creative or strategic work, the ideas, or the intellectual property presented by the agency during the selection process. However, if an agreement is made beforehand, the advertiser could pay fair compensation to acquire this right of ownership.

If for any reason your selection process must include speculative work, please contact the AAPQ for additional information about managing speculative presentations.

Annex VI: Cultural compatibility

Choosing a partner is as much a question of chemistry and shared values as it is about the skills required to carry out the mandate. In addition to evaluating the required skills (creative, strategy, media, research, etc.) and the agency's administration processes, it is essential to evaluate their capacity for adapting to your business culture. Due to the high turnover rate in our industry, make sure to choose an agency as a whole, for its values, personnel, guiding principles, owners, and culture—and not only for the handful of people who made the presentation to get the mandate.

Business culture dictates approaches. It consists of values that unite the company, guiding the managers' ethics and the employees' decisions in the absence of supervisors. In order to determine if your values are compatible with the agency's business culture, visit their offices and see for yourself how they work.

By visiting the agency, you'll be able to find clues as to their values and culture. These will allow you to discern what is important for the agency, what they value, and how they act.

Here are the points that you should keep in mind:

- ↗ The environment: Is it serious or friendly, quiet or noisy, peaceful or chaotic? What connects the public spaces to private areas? How do the personnel communicate with each other about events or news about their agency? How would you describe the ambiance that reigns, the dynamics, the personnel?

- ↗ Policies and practices: Are the titles, structure, and hierarchy important or is there a collegial atmosphere? Do there seem to be unwritten rules regarding the dress code or interactions? What can you observe about where the different services are located or how they communicate with each other? Is the agency proud to show its IT services, operational and production activities, and studio that comprise the creative activities? Finally, if not apparent, ask what is rewarded—which achievements have been commended?
- ↗ The personnel: What is your impression of the staff? What philosophy does the agency adopt in terms of human resources? Is the team formed in large part by permanent employees, full-time independent workers, or freelancers? What is the turnover rate? How do staff members interact with each other? Are they friendly and focused on service?
- ↗ Meetings: You can learn a lot about an agency based on the way they hold meetings. Are presentations structured or informal? Does the agency know how to use technology so that everything runs smoothly (screens, projectors, videos)? Do members have defined roles and demonstrate team spirit when they talk about key points and information?

In brief, the process surrounding a request for proposals should allow you to get to know the agency's history, their positioning and rank, their leadership, financial situation, professional competencies, along with what influences the way they think and their reputation. Visiting the agency must also be evaluated according to flexible criteria, dictated by your experience and impressions. It is an opportunity to observe how the agency's values and culture align with your own.

Annex VII: Manage the process internally or seek outside assistance?

Although managing a request for proposals process is explained in this guide in the simplest ways possible, it remains a complex and demanding process.

In order to limit the amount of time spent on selecting a new agency, it is possible to call upon the AAPQ to get more advice or use an external advisor to get assistance part of the way or for the entire process.

In the same way that you call upon recruitment experts or head hunters to hire a supervisor, there are numerous advantages to seeking help from an external advisor:

- ↗ An external advisor generally knows the industry, the agencies, and what services they offer. They know the best of what they have to offer.
- ↗ Equipped with the required experience, they are able to guide you in selecting criteria that will set the agencies apart.
- ↗ They are impartial, objective, and do not favour one agency over another. Their industry knowledge will allow them to correct falsehoods, rumours, perceptions, and erroneous judgements that can come up during the selection process.
- ↗ They do not choose the agency for the advertiser. Their role is to make sure you make an informed decision, by ensuring:
 - ↗ The rigour and objectivity of the selection process
 - ↗ Process management, including the link between the agencies and advertiser
 - ↗ Stimulating discussions of the selection committee in order for all the members' opinions to be equally represented
- ↗ They can save both the advertiser and agencies time and money, by acting as the main intermediary during the selection process:
 - ↗ For the advertiser, managing the process and the communications with agencies allows them to save time on overseeing that connection
 - ↗ For the agencies, supervision of the process and a satisfactory follow-up for questions and requests allow them to target the essential elements and to better allocate the resources and investments required

