



STATE OF MARYLAND
DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Minimum Qualifications Training Guide

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What are Minimum Qualifications?

Minimum Qualifications are a set of qualifications that an Offeror must meet in order to be “deemed susceptible for award.”

- Found in a separate section of the CATS+ or RFP Template
- Must be unambiguous
- Must be easily verifiable

A bid/proposal that does not meet minimum qualifications is not evaluated further. The Procurement Officer determines whether the minimum qualifications are met.



Why Have Minimum Qualifications?

- Minimum Qualifications provide a baseline set of experience and abilities that provide reasonable assurance that the required work will be performed successfully.
- Minimum Qualifications also provide a way to reduce the number of qualifying Offerors, limiting the number of proposals to a manageable number.



Selecting Minimum Qualifications

Selecting good Minimum Qualifications is challenging.

They must be:

- Directly linked to the skills and experience a contractor needs to fulfill the core requirements of the Task Order or RFP
- Must be concrete and unambiguous (can be easily evaluated pass or fail)
- Must be easily verifiable
- Not so difficult that competition is too limited
- Not so easily met that many companies can qualify, resulting in extensive evaluation effort



Common Concerns with Minimum Qualifications

1. Ambiguous requirements statements
2. Naming a specific application or product, or even product version
3. Failure to establish crisp “pass”/“fail” criteria
4. Unmeasurable criteria
5. Inappropriate qualifications for a labor category (for personnel Minimum Qualifications)



Minimum Qualifications Examples

Examples to illustrate common pitfalls when writing minimum qualifications.

Remember:

- Offerors **MUST** be able to meet minimum qualifications to be eligible to compete for the Task Order or RFP.
- Other requirements in the TORFP are **NOT** absolute, they are a “statement of need.” They are evaluated in order to determine the Offeror that **BEST** meets the State’s needs.

Ambiguity in Expectations

Example 1:

“...demonstrated knowledge and experience working with student systems.”

The term “demonstrated knowledge” is a vague terminology; it doesn’t identify the required experience.

Improved Wording:

“...at least three (3) years of experience in the design, delivery and evaluation of student systems.”

This version of the minimum qualification presents a more precise description of the required experience. It avoids the ambiguity of the expectations.



Ambiguity in Expectations (Cont.)

Example 2:

“...Five (5) years of experience in Object Oriented Programming.”

This minimum qualification leaves out the action required for the qualification.

Improved Wording:

“...Five (5) years of experience developing software in Object Oriented Programming.”

Inserting the term “*developing software in*” ensures that the qualification has descriptive action language.



Naming Specific Application or Product

Example 1:

“...experience operating and maintaining the State’s XYZ Fleet System.”

This minimum qualification is too specific regarding experience with a particular state application. Saying this limits competition to the incumbent vendor or a very small group of vendors.

▪Improved Wording:

“...experience performing operations and maintenance on enterprise-wide web based applications having a minimum of 1000 users.”

Instead of being too specific, this version of the minimum qualification describes the candidate’s required general industry experience with projects of similar size, scope and technology.



Failure to meet Pass/Fail Criteria

Example 1:

“...shall have a Bachelor’s degree in Computer Science (Master’s degree Preferred).”

Using the term “preferred” does not specify the credentials required to be considered.

▪Improved Wording:

“...shall have a Bachelor’s degree in Computer Science...”

This rewording is clear. It specifies the credentials required to be considered a candidate. You can put the “Masters degree preferred” in a different section entitled “Contractor and Personnel Other Requirement” if desired.



Unmeasurable Criteria

Example 1:

“... provide references that demonstrate that the Offeror has successfully conducted information security risk or information security program assessments in mid-to-large sized organizations.”

This minimum qualification fails to provide measurable criteria and does not quantify the variables against which a contractor or resource can be measured.

▪Improved Wording:

“... provide references that demonstrate that the Offeror has successfully conducted within the past three (3) years at least two (2) information security risk or information security program assessments in mid-to-large sized organizations (100 to 2000 employees).”

This rewording defines and quantifies the variables such as the duration of experience and size of prior projects.



Unmeasurable Criteria (Cont.)

Example 2:

“The Offeror shall propose at least one (1) team member with excellent written and oral communication skills.”

This skill cannot be measured objectively in a way that is unambiguous. DoIT recommends that written and oral communication skills not be used as a minimum qualification. You can evaluate for this in a different way:

- Put the qualification in a different section related to “Other Requirements”
- Ensure that the proposal requirements in Section 3.4 require Offerors to provide examples of projects where writing and speaking capabilities were important.
- Require that the person filling this position on the contract be present at and participate in the Oral Presentation/Interview process.
- Ensure that the evaluation criteria in Section 4 mention this as an evaluation criteria.



Inappropriate qualifications for labor category

Example 1 (CATS + example)

The Project Manager shall have a minimum of 4 years of experience as a Project Manager for an IT Project.

The minimum requirements for the Project Manager Labor Category on CATS Plus (See Section 2.10 in the CATS Plus RFP) require 5 years of successful leadership on IT Projects. Any personnel qualifications should be requirements IN ADDITION TO the minimum requirements for the Labor Category in the RFP.

Improved Wording

The Project Manager shall have a minimum of 4 years experience as a Project Manager for web development projects.

Now the requirement is for a specific type of project which is in addition to the specific experience required in the Labor Category in the CATS Plus RFP.