AURORA
marketing

TENDERS | BIDS | PROPOSALS | SUBMISSIONS

10 BID-WINNING IDEAS

HOW TO WIN

TENDERS
BIDS
PROPOSALS
SUBMISSIONS

Whatever word you use, it means 'hard work', 'long hours' and 'tight deadlines'.

This is the world we live in. If this is your world too, we can help.

Aurora Marketing has developed a niche in submission management, having worked on countless tenders and bids in defence, infrastructure, engineering, construction, manufacturing, professional services, corporate services and a range of other industries.

We're a special forces team of strategists, communicators, designers, project managers and marketers, backed by a proprietary system for submission management which guarantees we pitch the best possible bid and get you over the line.

Aurora Marketing's bid-winning ideas are drawn from our real experience winning more than $160B worth of projects and achieving an extraordinary success rate of 98.5%. These practical ideas will help you pitch a more compelling, persuasive and competitive proposal to give you the winning edge.

For more bid-winning ideas and to help on your next 'must win' bid, contact Aurora Marketing today.

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BID-WINNING IDEAS

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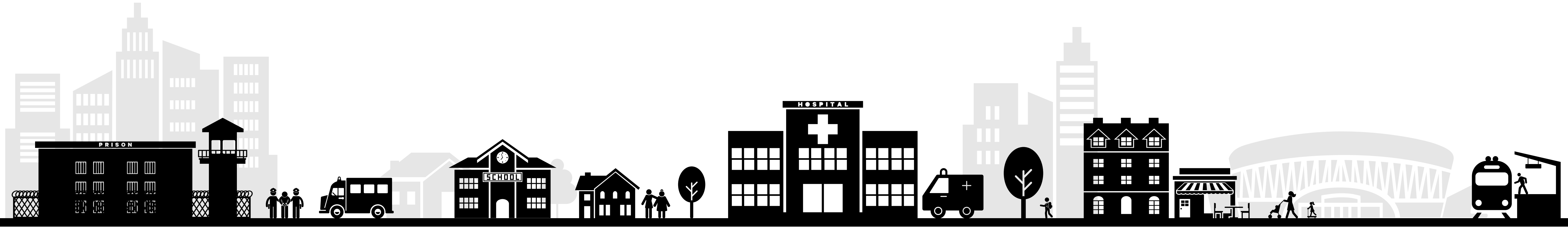


Provide a detailed list of initiatives

01

101 ways to impress a client

One of the easiest yet most impactful bid-winning ideas is to provide a detailed list of the improvements and innovations you propose to implement for the client. These initiatives can range from major changes to minor tweaks, and from crazy concepts to the mundane minutiae. While each initiative has value, compiling them in a list has greater impact.

Each initiative demonstrates your team's knowledge and understanding of the client, their requirements, their challenges, their risks and their opportunities. And together, the initiatives tell a compelling and detailed story of how you will achieve success for them.

Creating a detailed list of initiatives is super easy:

1. Brainstorm the ideas, innovations and improvements that will benefit the client
2. Shortlist the most viable initiatives that you would like to propose to the client
3. Give each initiative a title and description – it helps to summarise each initiative's what, why and how
4. Put the initiatives in a sensible order – alphabetical, by impact, by cost or in sequence for delivery – whatever works for your bid
5. Include the full list of initiatives in the executive summary and anywhere else it makes sense to include
6. Reference individual initiatives throughout the deliverables as frequently as sensible.

How many initiatives do you need? Firstly, you can relax because you don't need 101 initiatives, although you might be surprised how easy it is to compile a list that comprehensive... 10 is always a nice round number (like this booklet); otherwise odd numbers tend to be more catchy. Go for a number like 5, 7, 15, 21 or 35.

If a silver bullet solution eludes you, sweep together your silver shavings into a list of initiatives

Most suitable for

Incumbents – A list of initiatives is a particularly powerful tool for incumbents and existing service providers as the list demonstrates their deep understanding of the current situation and identified priorities.

Bidders with deep and relevant knowledge – A list of initiatives is a brilliant way of demonstrating the team's depth of knowledge relating to the client's objectives, risks and opportunities.

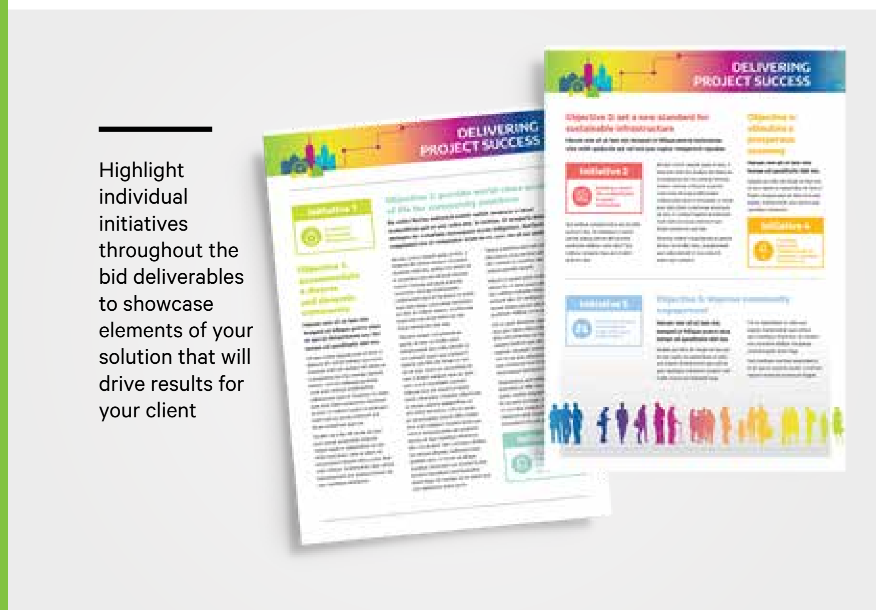
Potential impact

Typical cost to produce

Typical time to produce

'Initiatives' are ideas, innovations and improvements that will deliver value for the client

Include the full list of initiatives with the executive summary



Highlight individual initiatives throughout the bid deliverables to showcase elements of your solution that will drive results for your client

Link each initiative to the overarching project objectives and requirements for maximum impact

Provide a detailed timeline of activities

Step-by-step brilliance

Every project manager loves a timeline and so do we!

A timeline is a powerful visual tool that can paint a very clear picture of action and progress. It can clarify a sequence of events, outline a schedule of activities, highlight the achievement of major milestones, and symbolise changes in outcomes and performance.

There are three main timelines we love to include in bids:

1. **Future-focussed**

   The most common timeline is a future-focussed programme that shows the step-by-step activities that will drive success. These timelines might show the various phases of the project and the transition between those phases, specify key activities, confirm milestones, show sequencing, etc…

   This kind of timeline creates confidence in the reader that you have considered all of the factors for project delivery, have included sufficient contingency, and have accounted for major impacts and constraints. Generally, the more detailed, the better.

2. **Historical**

   Another terrific type of timeline to include is a historical timeline that summarises past events. This is an ideal way to highlight experience, showcase major initiatives that have been implemented and draw attention to past innovations.

   This kind of timeline can demonstrate stability by showing a series of steady accomplishments or prove growth by emphasising key milestones that have been achieved. This kind of timeline is also perfect for highlighting past engagements with the client.

3. **Performance**

   Our favourite type of timeline illustrates performance. For instance, how your performance has improved over time, linked to the various initiatives you've implemented. Or, how your performance will improve over time, again tied to clear actions that you will be implementing.

   This kind of timeline can even reframe glitches in past performance if you can show extenuating circumstances that compromised performance and the implementation of strategies that ultimately turned the tide.

If you've developed a detailed timeline, you might also need a summary version. The summary will be perfect for the executive summary and relevant introductory sections, while the detailed version will be great in the relevant deliverables or in the appendices.

Most suitable for

Anyone! Timelines do more than show what you've done – they are a great way to show what you're committed to doing in future.

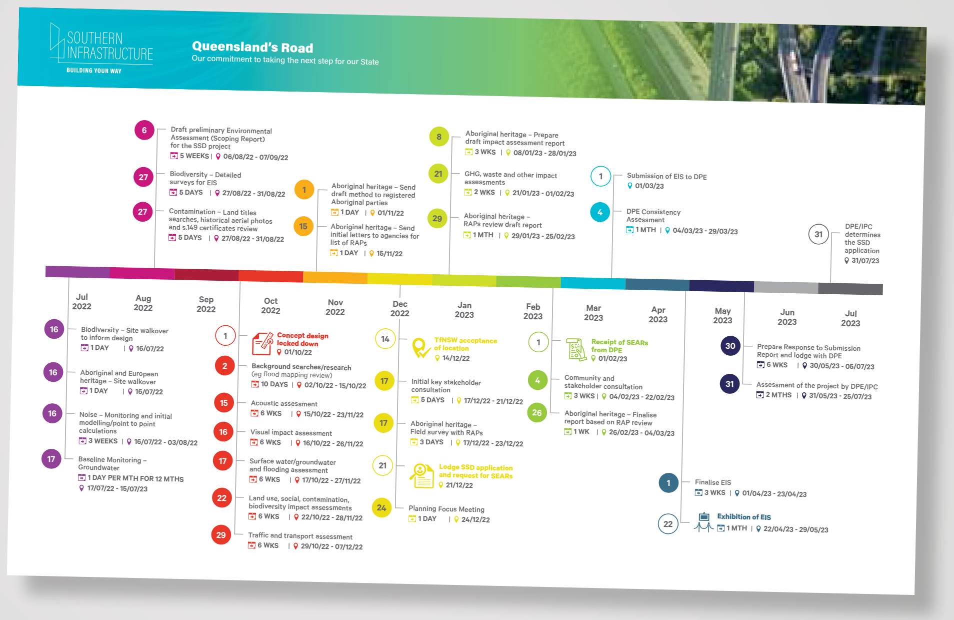
Potential impact

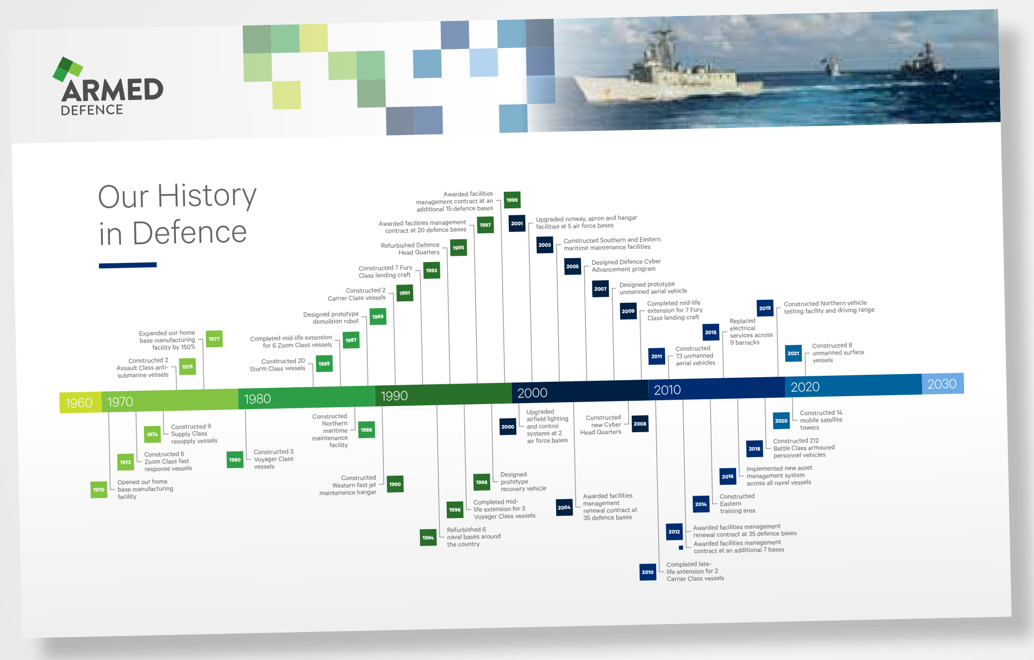
Typical cost to produce

Typical time to produce

A timeline transforms a bid platitude into a robust and believable plan

With a future-focussed timeline, you can show the step-by-step detail of how you will achieve and exceed the project objectives





A historical timeline is perfect for highlighting your experience and past successes

A performance-oriented timeline shows how you will drive improved outcomes

03

Simplify complexity with a system diagram

A picture tells a thousand words

The beauty of a system diagram is that it can summarise large volumes of information and very complex processes into a simple and easy-to-understand story. For this reason, a system diagram is a perfect tool for complex projects with lots of moving parts and interrelated elements.

There are two main system diagrams that we love to use in bids:

1. **Lifecycle**

   A lifecycle diagram shows a circular or repeating process that drives a sustainable result.

2. **Ecosystem**

   An ecosystem diagram illustrates the many and varied initiatives that work together to create an outcome.

Either way, a system diagram visualises your smart thinking and your depth of understanding. It shows the interaction and interdependence of key activities and initiatives, and your cohesive approach to solving a problem or achieving an objective.

> A good system diagram visualises your smart thinking

Most suitable for

Complex bids – A system diagram simplifies complex processes and tells an easy-to-understand story of how you will achieve success.

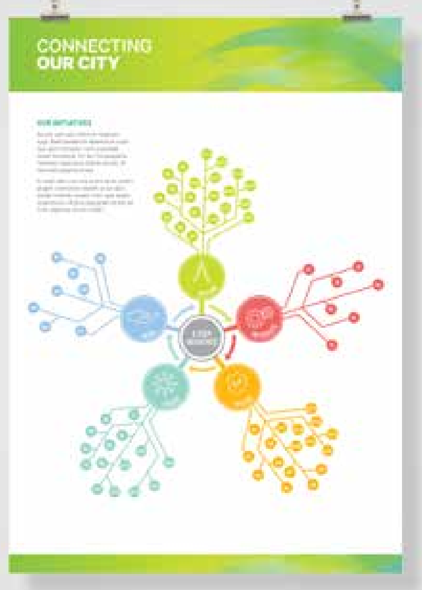
Potential impact

Typical cost to produce

Typical time to produce

A lifecycle diagram illustrates how a sustainable outcome can be achieved

An ecosystem diagram shows the interaction and interdependency of project initiatives



04

Present formal research findings

Reveal a greater understanding of key constituents

Presumably, your client has a deep understanding of their constituents (whether they be customers, communities, passengers, users or stakeholders). But sometimes there is an opportunity to provide a different insight or to flesh out some gaps in the detail.

Undertaking formal research can help you understand the situation much more deeply. What are the impacts, opportunities and risks that the various constituents face? What are the real needs and concerns for them? How will the product or service work in real life? What innovations or improvements would provide real value?

A formal research project can enhance your bid in three ways:

1. Demonstrate the depth of your understanding which builds confidence in your proposed solution
2. Provide value to the client by sharing an additional perspective that broadens or deepens their own understanding, and consequently enhances their appreciation of your proposed solution, and
3. Provide you with the insights needed to shape a different solution which ultimately differentiates you from your competitors and provides greater value and certainty to your client.

Forget the competition – understand the customer

Most suitable for

Projects with complex constituent relationships – If there are a lot of dimensions to constituent relationships, a formal research project may help you deepen or broaden your understanding and identify new solutions.

Potential impact

Typical cost to produce

Typical time to produce

Formal research can reveal valuable insights which can be used to shape your solution and differentiate your offer

Including the voice of the customer throughout the submission demonstrates your understanding of their needs and expectations

05

Develop a suite of personas

Get to know the people who matter

If you believe there is truth in the mantra 'it's not what you know, it's who you know', then we recommend developing a suite of personas.

A persona is a fictional character that represents a type of constituent who is relevant to the project or service. A persona could represent a type of customer, community member, passenger, user, stakeholder… any type of constituent that matters to the client.

It is normal to have a suite of 3–5 personas to cover different behavioural profiles. For example, a construction project might develop personas to understand the types of people who will be impacted by traffic deviations. In this instance personas could include a peak hour commuter, a parent doing drop off and pick up at the local school, a bus driver with local routes, a patron of the local shopping centre, and a cyclist who uses the cycleway.

Each persona describes that type of constituent, their typical motivators and drivers, their typical behaviours, and their likely concerns and pain points. Importantly, each persona demonstrates how the product or service will impact that type of constituent and how your approach will solve their challenges or problems.

> Personas become the fictional spokespeople for your solution, illustrating how your solution has solved the problems for various types of constituents

Most suitable for

Everyone! Personas are a simple tool you can use to show how your solution solves problems or improves the outcomes for various constituents.

Potential impact

Typical cost to produce

Typical time to produce

Each persona describes the typical motivators, concerns and expectations for that type of constituent, which provides insights that can help shape the solution to meet their needs

Persona case studies showcase your solution from the constituent's perspective

06

Map the customer journey

Go on a sightseeing adventure through the eyes of the customer

The best way to understand the customer is to walk a mile in their shoes. That's why this bid-winning idea is so effective.

A customer journey map is a visual representation of the steps a customer follows when using a product or service. Each step in the journey represents a service touchpoint. By recreating the customer's journey, you can identify potential pain points, bottlenecks or disconnections that need to be addressed, which in turn allows you to identify opportunities for service improvement.

There are two types of customer journey maps that we like to use in a bid:

1. **Simple**

   This kind of customer journey map takes the reader on the journey through the eyes of the customer as they experience each of the service touchpoints. This approach demonstrates your understanding of the customer's expectations of the product or service and builds confidence that you can create a positive and consistent customer experience.

2. **Comparative**

   This kind of customer journey map identifies the current issues and problems experienced by the customer, and shows how you will create a better experience in future by solving those issues and problems. By showing the comparison between the 'current state' and the preferred 'future state', this approach demonstrates your deep understanding of the customer's current experience and showcases the benefits of your solution.

Advanced players can combine bid-winning ideas 4, 5 and 6 – use research to understand key constituents, develop constituent personas to understand their motivators, drivers and behaviours, and map out a customer journey map for each constituent.

Most suitable for

Anyone! Map out a simple customer journey map if you want to build confidence in your ability to consistently deliver a good customer experience, or use a comparative version to show how you will resolve current issues and problems.

Potential impact

Typical cost to produce

Typical time to produce

It's not about the destination, it's about the journey.

A simple journey map illustrates the customer's touchpoints as they experience the service

A comparative journey map identifies the current pain points and challenges for the customer, and shows how you will create a better experience in the future

Get specific with a transition plan

07

Provide certainty in your ability to manage risk

Transitioning from one supplier to another is a major risk for a client. Is it better to stay with the devil you know, or is the grass greener on the other side? Either way, bidders are smart to focus on the issue of transition.

If you are the incumbent, the smart strategy is to amplify the level of risk in transition. On the other hand, if you are the new kid on the block, you'll want to stress the long-term gain from choosing a better operator and convince the client that you can manage the risks and streamline the transition.

With this context in mind, there are three types of transition plans that we love to use in bids:

1. **Smooth sailing**

   This plan is ideal for the incumbent with a strong track record and a client that wants more of the same. Your transition plan should try to quantify the high cost, time and effort involved in a transition, and highlight all the potential risks from changing provider. In comparison, everything is smooth sailing with you at the helm.

2. **Stepping up**

   This plan is also for the incumbent but is appropriate where the track record has been less-than-ideal or where the client wants something different. As the incumbent, you understand better than anyone how to step up performance. This type of transition plan provides a thorough and detailed roadmap for how to achieve the client's vision and expectations, while understanding the reality of the situation and managing the risks.

3. **Changing the game**

   This plan is for the new player who needs to convince the client that it is worth the effort to change the game. This type of transition plan needs to demonstrate that you understand every element of the operation and that you can manage all the risks through the transition. It should also show the client how soon they will see improvements and how significant those improvements will be.

> **'Nothing is particularly hard if you divide it up into small jobs.'**
>
> – Henry Ford

Most suitable for

Incumbents – A transition plan is a perfect tool to ghost your competition by drawing comparisons between the risk of transition and your oh-so-smooth ability to continue without interruption.

Bidders who want to demonstrate a low risk solution – If the client has reason to worry about the transition to a new operator or service partner, a transition plan gives comfort in your ability to manage the risks.

Potential impact

Typical cost to produce

Typical time to produce

A transition plan can be as simple as a matrix of the key activities to be undertaken in each phase across each of the main work streams or disciplines

08

Showcase your offer with a proposal on a page

The next evolution of the executive summary

Everyone knows that the most important document of a bid is the executive summary. So, imagine a visual executive summary...

A proposal on a page captures all of the major elements and hero initiatives of your proposal, and presents them in a simple, high impact format. Our favourite style is a single A3 landscape page that showcases a combination of catchy headings, the briefest of text, bold images, meaningful diagrams, informative charts, explanatory icons and punchy pullouts.

> Time-poor executives and evaluators will thank you for making their lives easier

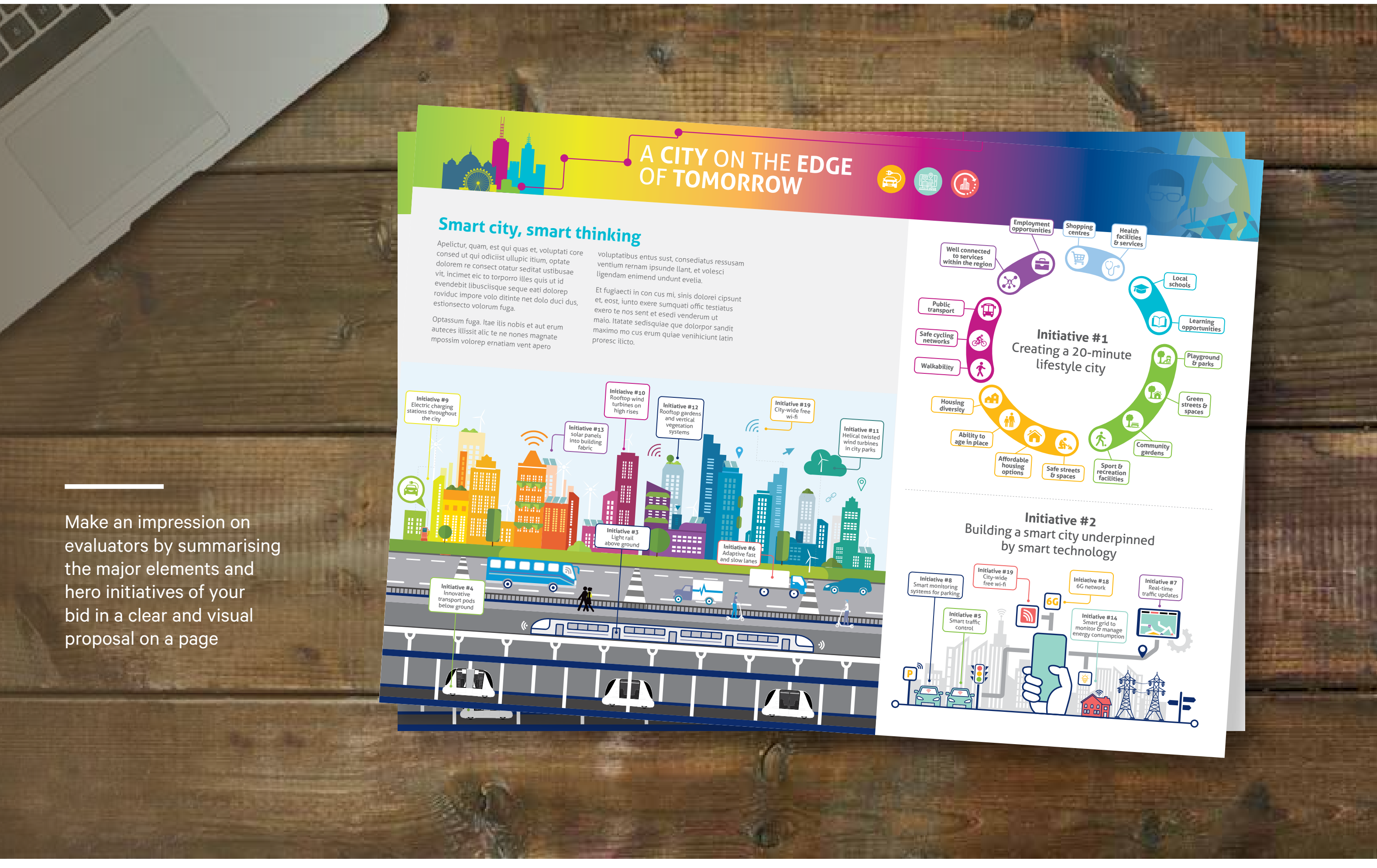
Most suitable for

Everyone! A proposal on a page works for any bid as it makes life easier for evaluators and decision makers. And the bigger and more complex the bid, the more value a proposal on a page will be.

Potential impact

Typical cost to produce

Typical time to produce



Make an impression on evaluators by summarising the major elements and hero initiatives of your bid in a clear and visual proposal on a page

A proposal on a page is a useful tool for evaluators to keep handy as they review the detail of your proposal

09

Capture your proposal in a vision document

Inspire the client with the big picture

Our favourite go-to bid-winning idea is a big, bold vision document. Picture this: high impact visuals, punchy headlines, attention-grabbing pullouts and a dramatic story of ambition realised.

Importantly, a vision document helps you tell your story in the way you want to tell it. In the order and level of detail you want, with the layout and imagery that creates the most impact.

In the old days, our vision documents were big format, hard cover, coffee-table-style books. These days, they are more likely to be electronic. Either way, a vision document is an added extra to your official submission. It won't usually be scored or formally evaluated, but it will almost certainly be reviewed and considered by the decision makers and influencers.

Depending on the circumstances, a vision document may serve a dual purpose of being an executive summary, but many bids have both because they tell a slightly different story to a slightly different audience.

How to tell your vision in the most compelling way:

1. Set the scene with the big picture – what future will you create through your solution?
2. Get into the detail with a page or two dedicated to each of the main aspects of your delivery approach – showcase your smart thinking, innovations and initiatives
3. Show how you will solve problems and overcome challenges along the way
4. Wrap up with a brief summary of your relevant credentials.

A vision document tells the exciting story of the project coming to life and achieving its objectives

Most suitable for

Visionary clients and exciting projects – Vision documents work best on ambitious projects that are striving to create a new and exciting outcome for the client and their stakeholders.

Potential impact

Typical cost to produce

Typical time to produce

A vision document complements your submission to capture the imagination of your client and showcase the key elements of your proposal

Dramatic images, pithy prose and an easily-digestible format ensure that vision documents are often shared far beyond the evaluation panel

Tell your backstory with a legacy document

10

Take the client on your journey

As Hollywood knows, there is great value in a prequel. It can deepen your understanding of key events, develop an empathy for particular characters, and sometimes provide a completely different perspective. A good prequel is a riveting story of a hero's journey: their call to adventure, their trials and tribulations, and their transformation and eventual success.

A legacy document is a cross-over between a vision document (bid-winning idea number 9) and a bid prequel. It's a high impact, visual feast for the reader, but the story is retrospective. It's about your history and what you've already accomplished – your legacy so far.

Consider developing a legacy document if you want to tell any of these stories:

1. **Reframe past performance**

   If you need to take the sting out of a past failure, a legacy document lets you take control of the narrative. You can remind the reader of the broader picture, fill in some of the gaps from the story, explain any extenuating circumstances and leave the reader with a different perspective. When done well, this kind of legacy document can garner empathy and flip the script from negativity to support.

2. **Share a lesson learnt**

   Lessons learnt are powerful stories as they demonstrate your understanding of risks and challenges, your ability to adapt and overcome, and your readiness to face similar challenges again.

3. **Celebrate past successes**

   A legacy document is a wonderful way to blow your own trumpet by cataloguing your past successes. Include testimonials from clients, profiles of team members, news clippings, comparisons of forecast to actual... include anything that makes you proud.

4. **The history of your relationship with the client**

   If you have had a long-term, largely positive relationship with the client, a legacy document can take the reader on a trip down memory lane with reflections on key milestones and achievements. Demonstrate how you've helped them achieve their objectives. Showcase your major accomplishments, initiatives and innovations. Profile the key people from both sides who've been involved. Include loads of photos and memorabilia. Think of this as a photo album on steroids.

> **'A legacy is etched into the minds of others and the stories they share about you.'**
>
> – Shannon L Alder

Most suitable for

Incumbents – Legacy documents are perfect for incumbents, either to highlight strong past performance and positive relationships or to reframe concerning performance or strained relationships.

Bidders who want to uplift or reinforce their track record – If you are drawing a long bow, or want to flesh out your past successes, a legacy document is a powerful tool for highlighting successes.

Potential impact

Typical cost to produce

Typical time to produce

A legacy document is a great way to showcase your successes, milestones and achievements. If used as part of an incumbent strategy, it reminds your client of all the things you have accomplished together. If targeted to a new client, it provides compelling evidence of your capability to deliver.

For greatest impact, include a variety of content types in your legacy document including high impact images, testimonials and diagrams (as above) and maps, stats and case studies (as shown here)

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