

What makes a good Statement of Work (SOW)?

What is a SOW?

A Statement of Work describes the work to be performed and includes a timeframe necessary for the completion of the work. A well written SOW allows the vendor or contractor to provide a detailed response, with a realistic cost estimate. The goal is to allow the other party to understand what is expected of them and what should be included in the finished product.

Elements of a SOW

A good Statement of Work should include the following elements:

- A detailed description of the work to be performed
 - Clearly state what you want the contractor to achieve and deliver.
 - Will travel be required to complete the work?
 - Is there a specific number of times something needs to be done" (i.e. interview 10 subjects)
- Period of Performance - When do you want this work to start and end?
- The rate (or rates) should be clearly defined, or reimbursements estimated.
- The contract type is either a firm-fixed price or a reimbursement, or can be a combination (i.e. \$25 per hour for labor + travel reimbursement)
- Deliverables
 - Include a timeline of major deliverable due dates
 - Fixed dates
 - Flexible dates (i.e. Two weeks after some event occurs)
 - Include milestones as necessary so that the work can be monitored to ensure that you are getting what you need and the quality of the work is as expected.
- Special requirements
 - Travel
 - Security Clearance required
 - Special skills or knowledge
 - Resources

Remember to include

- Specific language
 - Don't leave room for interpretation
 - Use language everyone can understand
- A definition of completion
 - If a final product is submitted, what constitutes acceptance?
- Payment terms
 - Tie to milestones - payment can be tied to acceptance of the product?
 - Based on monthly invoices?
 - Lump sum at the end of the project?