



A SHIPLEY WEBINAR

# Rapid-Response RFPs

Maximizing Score When Turns Are Fast and Capture Was Skipped

Technical   Past Performance   Management   Cost

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# When the Capture Cycle and Color Team Get Cut

Most Shipley guidance assumes a full capture cycle followed by iterative pink, red, and gold team reviews. On rapid-turn RFPs, one or both of those phases often do not happen. This session gives a compressed but disciplined path to a high scoring proposal in every volume.

## SESSION ROADMAP



# Rapid Response May Lead to:

*The scoring rubric does not change/get reduced because the schedule did. Evaluators still score against the same criteria.*

## 1

### No Capture

Proposal writers can be left guessing about customer priorities, discriminators, and price sensitivity.

## 2

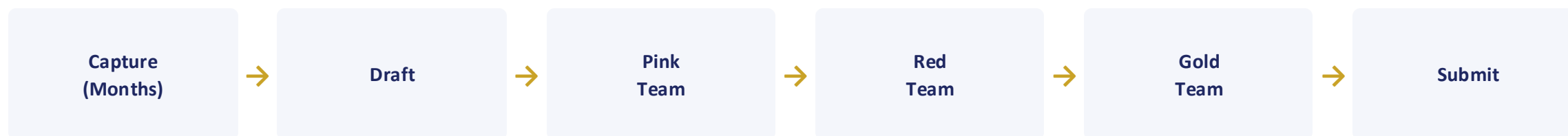
### No Review Cycle

Errors, inconsistencies, and weak compliance ship can remain unaddressed with less time for review.

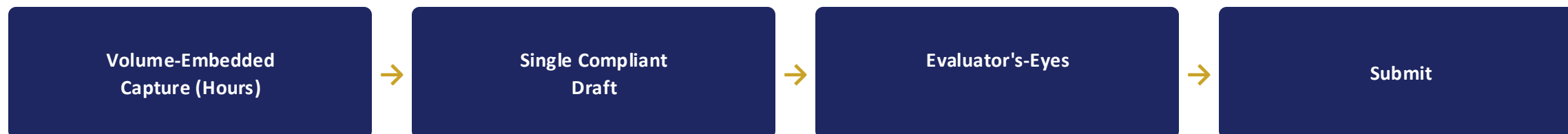
# The Compressed Capture to Proposal Model

Capture remains extremely important on fast turn opportunities. However, here, quick analysis is needed as there is no finished capture plan.

## TRADITIONAL MODEL



## RAPID-RESPONSE MODEL



**One non-negotiable factor, regardless of time:** the compliance matrix, built immediately upon RFP release, against which every volume is written.

# The 1 to 10 Color Band

Most agencies score proposals, and every factor and subfactor within them, on a 1 to 10 scale mapped to four color bands with narrative descriptors.

| 1 to 3                                                                                                               | 4 to 5                                                                                                                     | 6 to 8                                                                                                                     | 9 to 10                                                                                                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <div>RED</div> <div>Unacceptable. Fails the requirement, is non-compliant, or misreads the customer's problem.</div> | <div>YELLOW</div> <div>Marginal. Compliant but unremarkable, no real discriminators, some risk or ambiguity present.</div> | <div>GREEN</div> <div>Meets requirements with strengths. Clear, credible, at least one real, provable discriminator.</div> | <div>BLUE</div> <div>Exceptional. Significant strengths, little to no risk, discriminators hard to replicate.</div> |

*Every volume, Technical, Past Performance, Management, and Cost, is scored this same way, section by section, against Section M.*

# The Scoring Standard Does Not Change

## Same Rubric, Any Timeline

Rapid-response timelines compress the process, not the evaluation rubric. Similar evaluation criteria apply whether the offeror had six months or six days.

## No Partial Credit

There is no compressed scoring lane and no partial credit for a rushed effort. A yellow score reads the same to the customer regardless of how little capture time preceded it.

## Why the Model Exists

The only way to hit green or blue on a fast turn is to spend the limited time on what the band rewards: proven discriminators, compliance, and risk mitigation, not volume of writing.



VOLUME 1

# Technical

Writing to the evaluation criteria.

# Technical: Capture When None Was Done

- 1 **Fast requirement-to-priority triage:** Rank RFP technical requirements by evaluation weight from Section M/L. Spend writing time proportional to points, not page count.
- 2 **Reverse-engineer customer intent:** Read the SOW, PWS, or SOO for the problem the customer is actually trying to solve, not just the tasks listed.
- 3 **Rapid competitive read:** Identify the incumbent or presumed frontrunner and where they are structurally weak. Sixty to ninety minutes, not weeks.
- 4 **Identify two to three real discriminators:** Not ten generic strengths. A discriminator must be true, provable, and valued by the customer.
- 5 **Confirm technical risk areas:** Schedule, technology maturity, and integration concerns the customer is likely worried about become proof points later.

# Technical: Proposal Writing

- 1 **Write to the evaluation criteria:** Structure sections to mirror Section M language so evaluators can score without hunting.
- 2 **Feature, benefit, proof:** Apply this structure to every major claim. Skip narrative scene-setting.
- 3 **Compliance-first drafting:** Answer the literal requirement first, elaborate second. Evaluators scoring fast reward what is easy to find and check off.
- 4 **Graphics over paragraphs:** Process flows, staffing and technology diagrams, and comparison tables score faster than prose.
- 5 **State discriminators explicitly:** “Our approach reduces X by Y percent” beats implying superiority through description.
- 6 **Skip the color team, keep the self-check:** One evaluator's-eyes pass: score your own draft against Section M before submission.



VOLUME 2

# Past Performance

Building the reference case fast, without losing relevance.

# Past Performance: Capture When None Was Done

- 1 Build the reference inventory fast:** Pull every contract that could plausibly qualify on scope, size, complexity, and recency within the first hours of RFP release.
- 2 Rapid relevance scoring:** Map each candidate reference against the RFP's stated relevance criteria, not just general similarity.
- 3 CPARS and customer contact triage:** Identify which references already have strong ratings or documentation on file to save time chasing new confirmations.
- 4 Quantify outcomes early:** Cost savings, schedule performance, and quality metrics captured now so writers are not hunting for them later.
- 5 Flag negative past performance risk:** Terminations, low CPARS, and disputes are flagged immediately so they can be addressed or the reference avoided.

# Past Performance: Proposal Writing

- 1 Lead with a relevance table:** Customer, contract, scope, dollar value, period of performance, and an explicit relevance callout, not a narrative.
- 2 One paragraph per reference maximum:** Unless the RFP demands more. Dense, quantified, no filler.
- 3 Mirror the RFP's relevance factors:** If they ask for similar size and scope, use those exact words when describing the match.
- 4 Numbers over adjectives:** “Reduced delivery time by 22 percent” scores higher and faster than “significantly improved performance.”
- 5 Cross-check against other volumes:** If a reference proves a technical approach, make sure that volume actually references it back.



VOLUME 3

# Management

Orienting the evaluator in the first page, not the tenth.

# Management: Capture When None Was Done

- 1 **Fast org intel:** Identify what management structure the customer has praised or criticized in similar past awards and protest decisions.
- 2 **Key personnel triage:** Confirm availability and clearances for proposed leads immediately. This is the most common rapid-response scramble. Write resumes specifically to the requirements.
- 3 **Risk posture check:** Calibrate the risk register to what this customer cares about most: schedule, cost, transition, or staffing risk.
- 4 **Identify reuse opportunity:** Most organizations have a proven management template. Capture time is about identifying what is genuinely different here.

# Management: Proposal Writing

- 1 **Open with structural clarity:** Org chart, key personnel summary, and staffing plan visible on the first page or two.
- 2 **Explicit crosswalk to Section M:** A simple “your requirement, our approach, where addressed” table is a fast, high-scoring device.
- 3 **Risk register with mitigation:** Evaluators score risk awareness and a credible plan, not a document that pretends no risk exists.
- 4 **Tailor key personnel resumes:** Highlight the twenty percent of experience that matches this contract, not a generic career history.
- 5 **Reuse the standard eighty percent:** Flag and customize the customer-specific twenty percent. Generic language is the most common rapid-response tell.



## VOLUME 4

# Cost / Price

Pricing that traces cleanly back to Technical and Management.

# Cost: Capture When None Was Done

- 1 **Ensure margin requirements are met**
- 2 **Identify cost realism risk points early:** Labor categories, escalation assumptions, and subcontractor pricing take the longest to fix if caught late.
- 3 **Confirm basis-of-estimate sources immediately:** Historical rates, vendor quotes, and wage determinations gathered on day one, in parallel with technical writing.
- 4 **Flag cost-impacting decisions early:** So cost and technical do not diverge at the last minute, the single most common rapid-response cost failure.

# Cost: Proposal Writing

1

**Trace cleanly to Technical and Management:** Every labor hour, material cost, or subcontract dollar should be explainable by a claim made elsewhere.

2

**Build in the cross-volume consistency check:** As a final step, not an afterthought: does price contradict any staffing, schedule, or technical claim?

3

**Present cost credibly, not just competitively:** Unrealistically low pricing without a clear basis reads as risk, not value.

4

**Use scannable summary tables:** Cost by CLIN, by year, and by labor category. Keep narrative cost justification short and pointed.

# Potential Rapid Response Cross-Volume Issues To Mitigate

- 1 **Volumes drafted in silos:** No cross-references, so contradictions surface only at submission.
- 2 **Compliance matrix skipped to save time:** Costs far more time, or the bid itself, later.
- 3 **Discriminators claimed but not backed up:** Stated in Technical but not supported by Past Performance or priced in Cost.
- 4 **Key personnel inconsistencies:** Named in Management but not consistent with resumes or clearances.
- 5 **Generic reused language:** Used where customer-specific tailoring was actually required.

# The Rapid Response Evaluator's Check

- 1 **Reread Section M/L:** One more time, immediately before submission.
- 2 **Score the draft numerically:** Volume by volume, as if you were the government evaluator.
- 3 **Confirm every discriminator is stated:** Not implied.
- 4 **Confirm every number matches:** Cost figures match every claim made in Technical and Management.
- 5 **Confirm the compliance matrix:** Every item is addressed and page-referenced.

# Questions & Discussion

Thank you for joining this Shipley webinar.  
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