How to Run a
Supply Chain Visibility Solution RFPt

FRDM.ai

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A Step-by-Step Guide to Selecting the Right Technology Partner

> ***Note: FRDM AI is a supply chain visibility solution that participates in many RFPs. We've seen RFPs run well and not so well. Bad RFPs are bad for everyone. This article is designed to help your company run the best RFP for you, whether you choose us or not!***

In an era of accelerating supply chain regulation and reputational risk, visibility is a competitive and compliance imperative. Whether you're facing scrutiny under the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA), preparing for the EU Forced Labour Regulation, or trying to meet internal ESG goals, implementing the right supply chain visibility solution is essential.

This guide walks you through every step of the RFP (Request for Proposal) process—from building the internal team to final vendor selection—so you can approach this critical project with structure, clarity, and confidence.

Step 1: **Assemble Stakeholders**

Why it matters: An RFP process is cross-functional by nature. Visibility into your supply chain touches legal, compliance, sourcing, ESG, operations, and IT. Getting these voices involved early prevents misalignment and ensures broad buy-in.

How this can go wrong: Group think can be a death blow to innovation. Be careful who you invite in.

Be sure they can really add value to the process.

Possible participants to include:
- Procurement/Sourcing – understands vendor onboarding, sourcing regions, and category-specific risks
- Legal/Compliance – ensures solutions meet import regulations and due diligence laws
- Sustainability/ESG – brings in ethical and environmental impact goals
- Supply Chain Operations – assesses data availability and operational integration
- IT/Data Security – evaluates data handling, system integrations, and cybersecurity (but if you add IT too early they can become an obstacle)

Checklist:
- Appoint a project owner (e.g., Head of Procurement or Compliance Lead)
- Establish governance: Who approves, who scores, who signs?
- Schedule a kickoff meeting to align on purpose, goals, and timeline

Step 2: **Define Your Goals and Requirements**

Why it matters: You're not just buying software—you're building a system to uncover and mitigate risk, comply with laws, and improve ethical outcomes. Clarity here helps avoid vendor mismatches.

How this can go wrong: you are buying software because you don't know very much about risk in supply chains, so how can you possibly know your goals? Leave some room for learning and curiosity after purchase. Plan to plan again.

Common goals driving RFPs:
- Meet legal requirements (UFLPA, EU Forced Labour, German Supply Chain Act, CSRD, EUDR)
- Reduce exposure to supplier-related risks (forced labor, geopolitical, environmental)
- Automate due diligence and third-party risk assessments
- Gain traceability beyond Tier 1 suppliers
- Align sourcing with corporate sustainability targets
- Meet customer and investor expectations

Pro tip: Define what "visibility" means to your organization. Is it knowing Tier 1 names? Mapping to Tier 4? Risk scoring? Supplier remediation? It's impossible to see everything all at once, but its foolish to expect questionnaires and audits alone will tell you much.

Checklist:
- Write a clear problem statement
- Identify regulatory must-haves vs ESG value-adds
- List internal systems the solution must integrate with (ERP, SRM, etc.)
- Identify KPIs (e.g., % supplier coverage, number of mapped tiers, audit rate, average remediation time)

Step 3: **Should You Run an RFI Before the RFP?**

Short answer: Not always—and often, it's a waste of time.
While RFIs can be useful for unfamiliar or emerging markets, many companies

find that issuing an RFI before an RFP in mature technology categories like supply chain visibility solutions can actually slow down decision-making, create unnecessary vendor churn, and delay implementation.

> **For many established technology markets, an RFI is a redundant step that frustrates vendors and reduces internal momentum. The best teams move straight to a focused RFP with clearly defined needs."**
>
> — Gartner, "How to Run an Effective RFP" (2022)

Downsides of Running an RFI First:

Delays Time-to-Impact

Every extra step adds calendar weeks—sometimes months—before a solution is live. For companies facing looming compliance deadlines (like UFLPA or the EU Forced Labour Regulation), that delay can create significant risk exposure.

Vendors May Drop Out

Top vendors may opt out of an RFI-only process due to the resource investment required without a clear opportunity. This limits the quality of responses you'll receive later in the RFP stage.

Creates Internal Fatigue

Running two separate sourcing processes (RFI, then RFP) can lead to stakeholder fatigue and loss of focus. Key internal champions may disengage during long delays between phases.

Often Duplicates RFP Questions

RFIs tend to ask the same high-level questions that an RFP would, but without the benefit of structured scoring, implementation timelines, or pricing clarity. For most companies seeking supply chain risk and visibility tools, going directly to an RFP with a well-crafted set of requirements saves time and delivers better outcomes.

Recommendation:
Skip the RFI. Start with a focused RFP—backed by internal stakeholder alignment, clear requirements, and strategic evaluation criteria. You'll reach impact faster and attract more committed vendor partners.

Step 4: **Draft the RFP Document**

Why it matters: Your RFP is both a communication tool and a screening mechanism. It sets expectations and helps you filter serious partners from basic vendors.

How this can go wrong: You want everything in one solution but you are likely not going to get it. Make sure your vendors know this, otherwise you will get hyperbolic proposals that will cost you in the long run.

What to include:
- Introduction to your company and reason for the RFP
- Detailed scope of work and desired outcomes
- Specific compliance requirements (UFLPA, EU, CBP documentation)
- Functional needs (supply chain mapping, risk scoring, reporting)
- Technical needs (API availability, system integrations, cloud architecture)
- Service requirements (supplier engagement, language support, training)
- Evaluation and scoring methodology
- Submission timeline, contact person, and Q&A protocol

Checklist:
- Include a questionnaire that scores critical features
- Require examples of past regulatory compliance success
- Ask for case studies and customer references

Step 5: **Identify and Invite Vendors**

Why it matters: A strong vendor pool increases your chances of finding a true strategic partner—one who not only provides software, but helps drive compliance, efficiency, and impact.

How this can go wrong: 'But we used [insert company name thats been around forever] for our other work and they say they do this'. Just because someone says they do it on their website does not mean they are good at it. Beware of trusting the familiar.

How to find the right vendors:
- Ask peer companies who they use
- Research companies recognized for supply chain transparency leadership
- Read companies content and be sure its not just buzzword bingo

Top questions to consider:
- Does the vendor have experience in your sector or regions?
- Do they offer multi-tier visibility or just Tier 1 mapping?
- Can they help you take action, not just identify risk?

Checklist:
- Finalize a vendor list of 3–5
- Offer an optional pre-RFP info session
- Include an NDA if sensitive details are shared

Step 6: **Evaluate Responses**

Why it matters: Not all RFP responses are created equal. Some vendors excel at presentations but lack real-world regulatory strength or supplier engagement capabilities.

How this can go wrong: price is not the primary indicator. Its easy to believe that because it costs more its better, but its not true for this purchase. This is a relatively new space and new upstarts are coming into the market every quarter.

How to evaluate:

Use a weighted scoring model based on your internal priorities.

Sample categories:

- Functionality: Mapping, risk alerts, dashboards
- Supplier engagement: Communications, onboarding tools
- Implementation: Speed, support, training
- Cost model: Subscription vs. usage-based, supplier fees
- UI/UX: Is it intuitive for internal users and suppliers?

Checklist:

- Create a side-by-side matrix of vendor responses
- Hold internal scoring meetings
- Require demos to validate written claims

Step 7: **Conduct Vendor Demos & Reference Checks**

Why it matters: Demos reveal usability, workflows, and real product capability. References validate vendor claims and service quality.

How this can go wrong: You will likely not fully understand how the software works, even with several demos. So keep your demo calls focused. Come prepared.

What to look for during demos:

- Live tier mapping examples (not canned data)
- Dashboard views for supplier risk
- Supplier communication tools
- Reporting formats for internal and regulatory use
- Evidence of actual compliance support (not theoretical)

For references, ask:

- How long does onboarding take?
- Did they support UFLPA documentation or EU due diligence reporting?

- How responsive are they when issues arise?
- Did the solution lead to measurable results?
- What kind of support does the vendor offer?

Checklist:
- Standardize demo questions across vendors
- Include technical team in demo review
- Speak with at least two customer references per vendor

Step 8: **Final Selection & Negotiation**

Why it matters: The last mile often determines whether implementation will succeed. Don't skip the details—especially on data access, supplier fees, and support.

How this goes wrong: Don't take too long to launch this step. We see a lot of RFPs stall out for several months before this step. Remember you are building a relationship with this process and everyone is busy. If you wait too long all parties will lose familiarity with each other which can lead to a poor final decision.

Key areas to finalize:
- Contract terms and pricing structure
- Data ownership and exportability
- Service level agreements (SLAs) for response and uptime
- Support for supplier onboarding (Do they help or leave it to you?)
- Implementation roadmap and training plans

Pro tip: Be wary of vendors that charge suppliers without your knowledge or restrict you from taking your data elsewhere.

Checklist:

- Confirm implementation schedule and team availability
- Negotiate flexible exit clauses and pricing protections
- Finalize contract and procurement onboarding
- Thank and debrief all other vendors

Why Companies Choose FRDM.ai

FRDM was specifically designed to solve these problems by combining multi-tier visibility, automated risk scoring, supplier engagement, and regulatory compliance tools in one place.

Our solution is built for real-world supply chain challenges—not just visibility, but action. With FRDM you can:

- Map to Tier 4+ suppliers
- Automate regulatory reporting
- Monitor environmental and human rights risk in real-time
- Send supplier surveys and remediation requests
- Integrate with ERP procurement tools like Coupa, SAP, and NetSuite

Our final recommendation is to skip the RFP and give us a call today.

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