A BUYER'S GUIDE

The BC Public Sector Guide to Buying Video

How to scope the work, write the RFP, understand what drives cost, and avoid the mistakes that stall or cancel video projects.

Double H Creative

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1 Why video projects go wrong before anyone picks up a camera

Many video projects that go sideways were in trouble long before production, in the brief. The usual pattern: a communications team gets a mandate, someone writes an RFP from an old template, vendors bid against a vague scope, and the cheapest or the most familiar one wins. Then the real requirements show up in revision round three.

This guide is written from the buyer's side of the table. It covers how to scope the work, what to put in the procurement document, what drives cost, and the mistakes that get projects stalled or cancelled.

> I've seen an executive direct or initiate the desire for a splashy video campaign, and the request gets relayed through multiple people before it lands at the procurement desk. By the time it goes out to vendors, the scope, the budget and the need have often changed. I've also seen procurement requests come from teams who believe they have storytelling capability, only to be overruled by non-storytellers, which weakens the RFP as well.

2 Scope the project before you write the RFP

Answer these six questions in writing before you draft anything. If you can't, the RFP will not be able to either.

1. **Who is the audience, and what should they do after watching?** "Raise awareness" is not an answer. "Call the enrolment line" is.
2. **Where will it be seen?** Website, social, a town hall screen, or a conference stage each need different lengths, aspect ratios and captions.
3. **How many finished pieces?** One flagship film, or a flagship plus cut-downs? Cut-downs are far cheaper when planned for at the shoot.
4. **Who has to approve it, and how many rounds?** Name the approvers. Every extra reviewer is a schedule risk.
5. **What is the real deadline?** Work backward from the launch date and leave a buffer for approvals.
6. **What must be true for it to count as a success?** A number, a date, or a decision.

> I've seen campaigns derailed because the planned outcome didn't materialize. One team set out to feature real people sharing their experiences, and the stories weren't what they had imagined. The result was less impactful and needed more pre-production budget and a revised scope.

3 What to put in the RFP

A good video RFP is short, specific and scoreable. Include each of these:

SECTION	WHAT TO INCLUDE	WHY IT MATTERS
Background and objective	The audience, the action you want, and where the video will live	Lets vendors propose the right approach, not a generic one
Deliverables	Number of finished pieces, lengths, formats, captioning, accessibility needs	Prevents price gaps caused by different assumptions
Budget range	A ceiling or range, if your policy allows it	Stops wasted bids and lets vendors price to the real scope
Timeline	Key dates: award, shoot window, review rounds, final delivery	Surfaces schedule risk early
Revision rounds	How many are included and who consolidates feedback	The most common source of change orders
Rights and usage	Who owns the footage, music licensing, how long and where it can be used	Avoids surprises when you want to reuse it
Evaluation criteria	Weighted scoring: relevant experience, approach, team, price	Makes the decision defensible

Check your organization's procurement policy for thresholds, required wording and how bids must be posted. In the BC provincial government, chapter 6 of the Core Policy and Procedures Manual sets the rules. As of its August 2025 update, services contracts are generally posted on BC Bid, with a lower tier of $75,000 where at least three quotes should be attempted instead. Competitive solicitations must disclose their evaluation criteria and weightings, selection must rest only on those criteria, and unsuccessful vendors must be offered feedback once the contract is signed. Policies change, so check the current version.

One practical point: weight experience and approach, not only price. A bid that is 20% cheaper because it assumes one revision round will cost more by the end.

Decide how you will score before you publish. A common structure screens mandatory requirements pass or fail first, then scores the rest in weighted categories. A published example below shows one way to split it. Score each criterion on a defined scale, for example 0 to 10 with a written meaning for 10, 8, 6, 4, 2 and 0, so every evaluator reads "above average" the same way.

Three process habits protect you: use the same evaluators on the same sections for every bid, have them score independently before agreeing a consensus, and record comments so you can debrief every bidder afterwards. Under current BC policy, vendors must be offered feedback after the contract is signed, so a debrief is expected, and it also improves the next competition.

A published example. A 2023 federal Crown-corporation qualification process for video and photo production split its 100 points as 40% work samples, 30% a questionnaire covering company, team and project management, and 30% pricing. Pricing was scored only for shortlisted bidders, and the document stated that the lowest price does not guarantee selection.

4 What video costs and what drives it

Price is set less by video length than by the number of people, days and decisions involved. These are the drivers, roughly in order of impact:

COST DRIVER	WHAT MOVES THE PRICE	OUR TYPICAL RATE (CAD)
Shoot days	Crew size, locations, travel, interview count	$3,500 to $5,000+ per day
Post-production	Editing, basic motion graphics, audio sweetening and basic colour grading. Larger budgets add a separate colourist and audio engineer. Animation is budgeted separately	$1,200 to $3,000 per day
Talent and locations	Actors, voice-over, permits, location fees	Varies by project; quoted separately
Revisions	Rounds beyond those in the contract	Roughly +20%
Versions and cut-downs	Extra lengths, formats, languages, captions	Additional post-production days
Rush timelines	Compressed schedule, overtime	Roughly +25% or more

These are Double H Creative's own rates, not an industry standard, because no single standard exists. Published ranges vary widely by city, crew size and what a day includes, so ask every bidder for rates by role and for what each rate covers (equipment, overtime, travel).

For context, a full single-day production with up to three interviews across two nearby locations, including planning, basic graphics and music, typically runs $15,000 to $18,000 CAD all-in. The day rates above are the building blocks, not the total.

Three ways to spend less without cutting quality:

- Plan cut-downs and social versions at the shoot, not afterwards.
- Consolidate feedback into one set of notes per round.
- Shoot several short pieces in one day instead of commissioning them one at a time.

> I generally include one short cut-down, under a minute, in the deliverables, because it's fairly easy to produce with the editor once the main video is cut. If a client wants specific additional deliverables, I add post-production days to the budget so they understand the time involved. I also give a range of additional deliverables worth considering, because clients often don't think of them until they realize they need them. This is another place where a non-storyteller driving procurement can miss what the project needs.

5 Seven mistakes that stall or cancel video projects

1. **Choosing on price alone.** The lowest bid often assumes the least work. Compare what each bid actually includes, and check that its summary total matches its own detailed breakdown.

2. **No single point of contact for feedback.** Conflicting notes from five reviewers are the fastest way to blow a schedule.
3. **Approvals added late.** Legal, executive or Indigenous-relations review discovered in week six means reshoots.
4. **Forgetting accessibility.** Captions, transcripts and plain-language checks are cheaper built in than added later.
5. **Unclear rights.** If you can't reuse the footage next year, you paid for one use.
6. **Treating video as a one-off.** A single film with no plan for cut-downs, updates or a follow-up rarely moves the needle.
7. **No success measure.** Without a target, nobody can say whether it worked, and the next budget request gets harder.

> Many public sector bodies weight price the highest because they are protecting taxpayer dollars. I've seen low bids win, which often proves the old adage that you get what you pay for. I've also seen executives weigh in far too late and ask for changes after the video was delivered, and there is rarely a success measure. For many teams, simply getting it completed is the goal.

6 How to recognize a strong proposal

Publish your criteria, then look for evidence of each one. These are what public buyers commonly score for video work:

1. **Samples that match your project.** Ask for examples similar in audience, format and complexity, and for the bidder's actual role on each. Public qualification processes often give work samples the largest share of the score.
2. **A named team with relevant bios.** Who will do the work, how much of their time you get, and who steps in if someone is unavailable.
3. **A project management approach you can verify.** Milestones tied to your approval dates, a feedback process, and what happens if the schedule slips.
4. **Business continuity.** What happens to your project if the lead is sick or unavailable? Public buyers increasingly ask this.
5. **References you can call.** Recent clients with a similar brief. Actually call them.
6. **Clear pricing and assumptions.** Rates, what is excluded (travel, talent, licensing), revision rounds included, and payment terms.
7. **Accessibility and rights covered.** Captioning, transcripts, music and footage licensing, and who owns the final files and raw footage.

Warning signs: totals that don't match between pages, a generic approach that could apply to any client, a large team with no explanation, and a response that ignores your page limit.

> I've seen proposals with very detailed workback schedules and milestones, backed up by strong video examples, that stood out above the rest. With some proposals you can tell immediately that the team has done this before, is professional, and will go above and beyond what you expect.

7 Pre-RFP checklist and next step

Before you issue the procurement, confirm each of these:

- [ ] Audience and desired action are written down
- [ ] Distribution channels and formats are listed
- [ ] Number of finished pieces and cut-downs is defined
- [ ] Approvers are named, and one person consolidates feedback
- [ ] Revision rounds are specified
- [ ] Rights, usage and music licensing terms are stated
- [ ] Accessibility requirements (captions, transcripts) are included
- [ ] Evaluation criteria and weighting are published
- [ ] A budget range or ceiling is set, if policy allows
- [ ] A success measure is agreed

Want a second set of eyes on your brief? Double H Creative offers a free discovery call. Bring your draft scope and we'll tell you where the gaps are, whether or not you hire us. Book at **doublehcreative.com/contact**.

About the author. Heron Hanuman is the principal of Double H Creative in Victoria, BC. He spent 22 years in broadcast journalism and six years in BC Government communications, where he managed the video team and oversaw video contractors.

Sources: CPPM Chapter 6: Procurement, updated August 28, 2025; Destination Canada RFSQ DC-2023-CD-08; City of Vernon RFP24-45; City of Surrey RFP 2018-043.