

Setting RFP Scoring Criteria

Tips on Setting RFP Scoring Criteria

Congratulations on the decision to commission a work of art! You are embarking on an exciting process to help meet the goals of your business or organization in a creative way, and helping to make the world a more beautiful and thoughtful place.

Once you have determined that your business or organization is interested in commissioning a work of site-specific art, we recommend that the commissioning body or selection committee meet before crafting the RFP document. Beyond budget, timeline, eligibility, installation details, and maintenance requirements, the commissioning agent or selection committee should also agree upon a list of criteria for the project.

Why Criteria?

Establishing criteria for an art commission early in the process is critical, and serves a number of purposes:

- It helps focus project goals on the most important outcomes for the work and the space.
- It helps artists/designers determine if they and their work are a good fit for the commission.
- It helps the selection committee assess applicants using common, agreed-upon measures.

It's important to allow ample time in this initial phase for the commissioning body or selection committee to discuss, reflect, and agree upon criteria for the project.

Examples of Commission Criteria:

- Weather resistance
- Theme or subject matter
- Successful integration into landscape or environment
- Relevance to community or building
- Scale appropriate to building/environment
- Relationship of the work to the site (e.g., current and future architectural/natural features and urban design)
- Enhances or activates viewers/public (e.g., via participation/interaction with work and space)
- Engages viewers in meaningful and responsive ways (i.e., residents, visitors)
- Helps create a place of congregation

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Types of Criteria

Required Criteria are those key elements that must be present in an artist's or designer's proposal for it to be considered. Perhaps your art commission will be installed outdoors and needs to be resistant to weather and climate. Maybe your commission must deal with a particular theme or subject matter. Or maybe it needs to serve a functional purpose, like seating or lighting, for a particular area. (See sidebar for Examples of Commission Criteria.) Simply put: Required Criteria are non-negotiable.

We strongly recommend that you include no more than three Required Criteria in your RFP. Limiting Required Criteria to three helps concentrate your RFP on the features or elements that are critical to the commission. It also helps keep artists/designers focused on the "must haves" as they craft their proposals. Finally, a limit of three criteria helps keep the process streamlined and straightforward, and reduces complexities when it's time to select an applicant.

Beyond a list of three Required Criteria, you may also want to outline a list of Preferred Criteria. **Preferred Criteria** are those elements that would be nice to have, but are not essential to be considered for the project. For example, perhaps you envision a painting for your commission, but you might also be willing to consider a mural or mosaic. Or perhaps you'd like for the commission to be a certain color or size, but you'd be willing to consider other options.

Preferred Criteria are a nice way to communicate what the selection committee may be thinking, without limiting the imagination of the artist or designer. After all, an artist might very well have an idea or solution to your commission that you've never even considered. Stay flexible with Preferred Criteria and let the artists/designers do what they do best: Create!

Examples of Commission Criteria, cont'd:

- Enhance pedestrian traffic and circulation
- Visibility (e.g., from a certain focal point, in the round, within landscape)
- Accessibility by viewers (incl. those with special needs)
- Serves as landmark or safety feature (e.g., gate, lighting)
- Placement does not detract or interfere with surrounding environment
- Temporary/Permanent Installation
- Ecological impact
- Enhances, modifies, or defines a particular area
- Promotes diversity (i.e., in style, scale, media, artistic sources)
- Social context
- Relationship to existing works in the building/environment

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Using Criteria to Select Applicants

When it's time to select an applicant or applicants to move on to the next step, let your criteria be your guide!

We recommend rating applicants on the criteria you established at the beginning of the process on a 1-7 scale, where 1 is *least* successful in meeting each criterion, and 7 is the *most* successful. Then let the numbers do the talking. Add up the scores for each applicant and see who has scored the highest. This system will help set you on your way to selecting the best proposal for your project, and help ensure that the resulting artwork is a success. ■

Examples of Commission Criteria, cont'd:

- Contributes to community identity (e.g., historical, cultural)
- Safety/liability (e.g., free of unsafe conditions, artwork stability)
- Level of maintenance required (including any technical elements)
- Protection against theft/vandalism
- Uniqueness (e.g., one-of-a-kind or limited edition)
- Promotes public art's contribution as an economic catalyst (e.g., to a city)
- Encourages private sector investment in art

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