Commercial camera system: RFP and specification template

A structure for soliciting comparable bids. Written so that the answers you get back can actually be set side by side, which is the thing most security RFPs fail at.

How to use it

Replace the bracketed prompts with your own detail and delete anything that does not apply. You may use this document for your own procurement freely, including in a process we are not bidding in, and you do not need to tell us you are using it.

The single most useful thing you can do is specify what each camera position must ACHIEVE rather than what equipment you want. A specification written as a shopping list produces bids that differ only on price and hides whether any of them works. A specification written as requirements produces bids you can judge.

1. The premises

Building and use	[Type, approximate area, number of storeys, single or multi-tenant]
Occupancy pattern	[Hours occupied; hours empty; shift pattern; seasonal variation]
Areas in scope	[Interior areas; exterior; yard; car park; gates; loading]
Areas explicitly out of scope	[List them. Bidders should be told where cameras must not go, not left to guess.]
Tenure	[Owner / tenant / managing agent. Note any landlord consent needed for routes and penetrations, and any make-good obligation at lease end.]

2. Requirements, stated per position

For each position, state the requirement rather than the device. Bidders then propose equipment that meets it and you can compare their reasoning.

Position reference	[e.g. P-01, main entrance]
What it must establish	**THAT something happened** / **WHAT happened in sequence** / **WHO**. These are three different requirements and the third is much harder. Say which you need.
Lighting conditions	[Available light; is the subject backlit; does it change after dark]
Constraints	[Mounting height; access for later maintenance; listed or restricted fabric; environmental]

Ask bidders to state, per position, what their proposed device will and will not achieve. A bidder unwilling to say where a position falls short is telling you something.

3. Recording and retention

Required retention period	[State it if a regulation, insurer or parent company fixes one for you. If nothing does, say so and ask bidders to propose and justify a period.]
Ask bidders to show the arithmetic	Retention, camera count, resolution, frame rate and expected scene activity together determine storage. Require the calculation, not just a number of days.
Recording architecture	[Appliance recorder or software platform, or ask bidders to propose and justify. State how the estate is expected to grow.]
Export	Require a demonstration that footage can be exported in a usable form by your own staff, without the installer present.
Failure notification	Require the system to notify a named person when recording is interrupted or a disk fails. Ask how.

4. Interoperability and lock-in

Name the ONVIF profile, not the badge	ONVIF states that a client conforming to a given profile will work with a device conforming to the same profile, and that conformance to profiles is the only thing that ensures compatibility between conformant products. **Require the profile by letter** for each proposed device and for the recorder. "ONVIF compatible" is not an answer.
Replacement path	Ask what happens when a proposed camera model is discontinued: what else will the recorder or platform accept?
Ownership at handover	**Require administrator credentials, the configuration as built, and documentation, transferred to you at handover.** A system you cannot get into is not one you own.

5. Cabling and infrastructure

Channel length	TIA/EIA permits a **100 metre channel** for copper, and that figure **includes the patch cords at both ends**, not only the in-wall cable. The practical permanent-link limit is therefore about **90 metres**, and shorter once pathway routing, vertical drops and slack are counted. Require bidders to identify any run near the limit.
Cable selection, per run	**Cat6a** supports 10 Gigabit to the full 100 metre channel and its construction handles heat from higher-power loads in a bundle. Cat6 remains appropriate for general workstation and voice. Fibre is for backbone, inter-building runs, and where the path crosses separately grounded structures. Ask bidders to justify the choice per run against what that run carries.
Labelling and administration	Require labelling to **ANSI/TIA-606** and an as-built record.

Power budget	Require the bid to state the PoE power budget of the proposed switching, what will draw on it including any non-camera devices, and what headroom remains with everything running at once.
Certification	Require test results per link, not a general assurance.

6. Procurement eligibility

Section 889	If you hold or expect a federal contract, require **written attestation identifying the actual producer** of every proposed device. A brand list is not attestation, and the name on the bezel does not identify the producer. Note that no body certifies a camera as "NDAA compliant" — that phrase is marketing, not a statutory term, and a bidder claiming certification is describing something that does not exist.
TAA	A separate test, turning on where a product was made or substantially transformed. Ask for it separately: a camera can satisfy Section 889 and still fail TAA.

7. Licensing and legal

Contractor licence	Require the bidder's California contractor licence number and classification, and check it yourself at cslb.ca.gov. Ours is CSLB #976737 — C-7 Low Voltage Systems, and we would rather you checked.
Monitoring and access control	If the scope includes monitored CCTV, intrusion alarm or access control, require the bidder's BSIS Alarm Company Operator licence number. Ours is BSIS ACO #7501.
Who enters your building	Registration as a BSIS alarm agent requires a criminal history background check through the California DOJ and the FBI, via Live Scan fingerprinting, before registration is granted. Ask bidders to confirm the status of the people who will be on site.
Fire alarm	Fire alarm work requires a licence classification that a low-voltage contractor does not hold. If your project includes it, it is a separate contractor. We do not hold a C-10 or C-16 and we do not bid that work.
Gates	If the scope includes a gate, separate the **access control** from the **gate operator**. They are usually different trades. Our own scope is the access control only.
Audio	California Penal Code § 632 addresses the recording of confidential communications. Whether a given space falls inside that definition depends on the facts of the space. If you want audio anywhere, take it to your counsel first and specify what they tell you. Do not leave it to a bidder to decide.

8. What to require in every response

- [ ] **A site visit before bidding**
  Treat a bid produced without one as what it is. A camera system cannot be designed from a floor plan.
- [ ] **A drawing with every position marked**
  Including what each position is for. Bids without this cannot be compared to each other.
- [ ] **The positions the bidder does NOT recommend, and why**
  This question separates bidders quickly. A bidder who agrees with everything in your brief has not read your building.
- [ ] **Named licence numbers, verifiable with the issuing agency**
  Not "licensed and insured". The numbers.
- [ ] **What is excluded from the price**
  Containment, make-good, power, network changes, licensing, and any work needing another trade.
- [ ] **Handover deliverables, listed**
  As-built documentation, test results, administrator credentials, and training for whoever will operate it.

Scope and boundaries

Commercial only. We work on commercial premises only and not on private residences.

Fire alarm is out of scope. We do not hold a C-10 or C-16, so we do not work on fire alarm systems; that is coordinated with your own licensed fire alarm contractor.

Gate operators. Our gate scope is the access control only. The gate operator itself is supplied and installed by your gate contractor, and we coordinate with them.

What our licences cover. CSLB #976737 — C-7 Low Voltage Systems authorises camera install and repair, structured cabling, intercom and low-voltage work. BSIS ACO #7501 covers monitored CCTV, intrusion alarm and access control. Both are verifiable with the issuing agency, and we would rather you checked than took our word for it.

We are not a regulator or an approved vendor. No body certifies an integrator as compliant with any of the rules summarised in this document. The obligations sit with you.

> This template contains no prices, no rate cards and no timescales, and it is not written to favour us. Several requirements in it are ones we have to meet like anybody else. If a bidder objects to the ownership, attestation or as-built clauses, that is information.