



Why Most Lighting RFPs Fail (And How to Get Them Right the First Time)

*Specification Expertise for Successful
Lighting Projects*

Eric M. Hansel, MIES

Founder | Municipal Lighting Consultants

Experience Behind Municipal Lighting Consultants

Eric M. Hansel MIES

Member Illuminating Engineering Society (IES)

- **30+ Years Across the Lighting Industry**

Manufacturing • Rep Agency • Distribution • Installation • Consulting

- **Selected Experience**

Ford Motor Company's First Lighting Subject Matter Expert

Completed turnkey lighting projects throughout the United States

Additional project experience in Canada • Mexico • India

My Why

Why I started Municipal Lighting Consultants—and why this matters

- **Why I started MLC:**

- To bring independent lighting expertise to public owners

- To improve outcomes before projects go out to bid

- To support procurement and facilities teams

- **My goal today is simple:**

- Share practical, real-world lighting insights

- Help you avoid common pitfalls in lighting bids

- Improve clarity and comparability before bid day

- Support better outcomes for public projects

- **This is not a product presentation.**

- No manufacturers. No equipment sales.

- Just independent perspective from real-world experience.

How Lighting Projects Typically Begin

Path A

Department defines need → Creates scope → Procurement issues bid

Path B

Procurement assembles bid package → Seeks internal / external input

Different starting points, but same responsibility for the outcome.

Lighting Is Not a Commodity

Not all LED fixtures are created equal

- Differences in:
 - *Light quality & glare control*
 - *Performance & output*
 - *Controls compatibility*
 - *Driver reliability*
 - *Warranty & support*
 - *Lifecycle cost*

Similar appearance does not equal similar performance

The Most Common Value Leak

One-for-One Replacement Thinking

Replacing: Old fluorescent layout → New LED fixtures

That layout was designed 20+ years ago for a completely different light source

Yesterday's design may not be the best solution today

When a Lighting Specification Is Single-Sourced

Single-sourcing is not wrong. But it should be clearly justified.

What to Look For

- One manufacturer specified throughout
- Little or no “approved equals” language
- Specs tied to a specific product
- Limited flexibility for alternatives

Questions to Ask

- What is the technical reason?
- Are comparable alternatives available?
- Would allowing equals improve competition?
- Does this limit pricing leverage?

Limited competition can limit value

Where Lighting Projects Go Sideways

- Confusing vendor questions
- Apples-to-oranges bids
- Vague substitutions
- Lowest-bid regret
- Change orders after award
- Delays and rework
- Underwhelming results

These are usually front-end problems

What Strong Lighting RFPs Include

- Clear project goals
- Performance-based specifications
- Defined “approved equals”
- Warranty requirements
- Controls scope (if applicable)
- Comparable bid structure
- Defined expectations for installation & closeout

Clarity upfront reduces confusion later.

The Four Pillars of Better Lighting Outcomes

- Maximize Savings
- Add Specialized Expertise
- Achieve Project Goals
- Reduce Total Cost & Risk

Better outcomes start before bid day

Practical Takeaways

Before Your Next Lighting Bid:

- ✓ Define the real problem
- ✓ Don't default to one-for-one replacement
- ✓ Ensure apples-to-apples comparisons
- ✓ Think lifecycle cost—not just first cost
- ✓ Ask one independent question before release

Small changes upfront can lead to significantly better outcomes

In Summary

Lighting is more specialized than it appears

Early decisions drive long-term outcomes

Not all solutions are equal

Competition and clarity matter

Small improvements upfront can deliver significant value

Better outcomes begin before bid day

In Closing

If this topic is relevant to your organization:

- ✓ I'm always available for a more in-depth conversation
- ✓ Happy to review upcoming lighting projects or draft RFPs
- ✓ Open to sharing additional perspective where helpful

Would you like a copy of this presentation?

- ✓ Email: **eric@lightingrfp.com**

Thank You

Better Documents. Better Process. Better Results.

Better Lighting Outcomes Start With a Solid RFP

Eric M. Hansel, MIES

Municipal Lighting Consultants

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248.202.7302

eric@lightingrfp.com