

To reduce the editing required, use writing and style guidelines

To minimize the copy editing required, use writing and style guidelines from the outset to specify common style (e.g. use first-person pronouns, use active voice, avoid acronyms and abbreviations, cite projects in chronological or alphabetical or geographical order) in addition to the standard terminology (the RFP's and yours).

But keep it simple. With too much work to do in too little time, technical experts are understandably reluctant to plow through a ten-page list of “do this, don't do that” instructions. Go for the 70% solution.

The person managing the volume was unhappy with our beautiful writing guidelines. Reviewing similar documents created for other similar proposals, we had carefully thought through many of the issues that we knew would arise, and given astute guidance. In only about twelve pages.

He insisted that we get it down to two pages before sending it out to his team of writers, and he was right. At that, many of them clearly didn't read it, at least not as judged by their implementation of it in their sections. But boiling it down gave the editors a high-level hit list of things to standardize.