

A woman with long brown hair and bangs, wearing a bright yellow blazer over a white top, stands with her arms crossed in a construction site. The background is a blurred industrial space with overhead lights and structural elements.

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Construction executive guide to RFIs

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Conflicts and clarification

Unclear project documents. Plan inconsistencies and errors. Unforeseen site conditions. These and other major construction concerns typically trigger a request for information (RFI). Sent to the architect, engineer, or owner, an RFI is a necessary and helpful communication tool. However, too many RFIs can be costly and can negatively impact a project's performance. Inefficient RFI management can also cause problems.

This guide covers the latest best practices, trends, and tips related to RFIs. It will help you identify ways to improve your own RFI process to keep projects moving and reduce risk.

887 Average RFIs per construction project

\$1,080 Average cost per each RFI review and response

Source: Impact & control of RFIs on construction projects, Navigant Construction Forum™





Get ahead of RFIs

Reducing the number of RFIs starts before building begins. By working with designers and engineers during the planning phase, you can identify issues before they become construction concerns. Case in point: Collaborative approaches such as design-build and design-assist tend to have fewer RFIs than the traditional design-bid-build method.

Building information modeling (BIM) technology, in particular, helps building teams detect and resolve issues before workers ever set foot on the job site. Think of BIM as an RFI-buster.

How do contractors and construction managers view BIM's impact on their work?

70% reported at least a 5% decrease in RFIs during construction.

Source: Dodge Data & Analytics 2016 BIM study

Put best practices into action

Even with the best-laid building plans, RFIs realistically won't go away completely. How you manage those RFIs, however, will determine how well you stay on schedule, and on budget. Here are a few tips:

- **Standardize your RFI process.** Have a set form that everyone uses and ensure that those who deal with RFIs are properly trained on your procedures and any project owner requirements.
- **Be specific.** Identify only one issue per RFI and clearly communicate the problem. Outline exactly what has to be answered and include references to applicable drawings, documents, and specifications. Make it as easy as possible for people to comprehend what you need so they can quickly respond.
- **Offer a “means and methods” solution to the issue.** One would like and expect the architect, engineer, or owner to come up with the solution. To speed up the process, if possible, provide at least one “means and methods” recommendation on how to address the concern. That way, the reviewer only has to approve your suggestion for you to move forward.
- **Set a priority.** Not every RFI has equal impact on the job. Along with a required date for response, indicate which RFIs are most critical and require more immediate response.
- **Keep tabs on unanswered RFIs.** Use dashboards or other electronic tools that give you constant visibility into outstanding RFIs. Include a review of RFI status in your regular job status meetings. Also track RFI submission and response dates against your contract and submit written notice of delay for late RFI responses that impact the project.
- **Establish an escalation process.** Decide the best course of action to take if an RFI isn't resolved and is about to threaten the project.
- **Automate and mobilize your RFI process.** Use software, including mobile apps, to quickly issue and keep track of RFIs.





Talk with your lawyer

One of the biggest problems with RFIs is slow or no response. This can cause cascading consequences for your projects—including potential legal claims. Your contract is one area to head off the damage RFI delays can cause. Make sure your contract:

- Outlines exactly who is involved in the RFI process
- Specifies a required RFI response time

A project's RFIs, both type and amount, can also be key evidence in legal claims. That's why it's important to follow a strict RFI process that documents approvals and decisions made throughout a project. Plus, tracking RFI submission and response dates against your critical path schedule will allow you to make claims for delays and possibly additional compensation if you can show impacts to the project.

12.2 Average number of days for RFI response
21.9% Percentage of RFIs with no response

Source: Impact & control of RFIs on construction projects, Navigant Construction Forum™

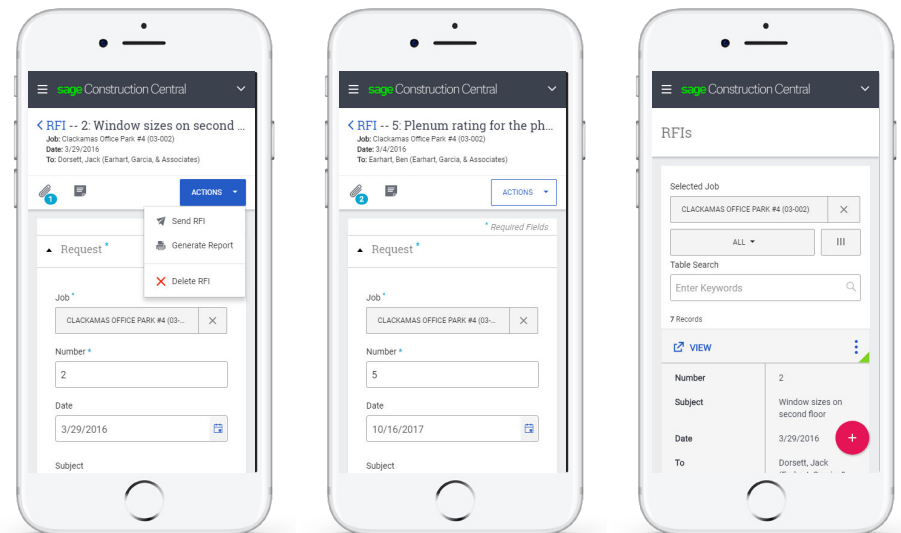


Let technology lend a hand

Mobile devices and software now allow project managers and site supervisors to document and send off RFIs immediately when concerns arise. And new capabilities are helping to streamline the entire process.

Look for mobile RFI software that tightly integrates to your back-office system, and among other things, enables you to:

- Easily create a new RFI with shortcuts, such as pulling in recipient name and email electronically from your back-office contact list
- Set a priority level and required response date for each RFI to assure your most urgent requests are answered quickly
- Attach documents in question, photos, and other relevant items
- Keep tabs on which RFIs have been answered and which need further follow-up or escalation
- Store and track responses to each RFI for solid documentation of instructions given and decisions made on the project
- Track estimated cost and schedule impact by RFI





Learn how Sage can help with your RFIs and other mobile project management needs.

Visit [Sage 300 Construction and Real Estate](#) or call **800-628-6583**.

Special thanks to Alex Barthelet of [The Barthelet Firm](#) and construction law blog [TheLienZone.com](#) for his assistance with legal content in this guide.

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