

Proof of Concept (POC) Plan

1. Purpose and why a POC

Buyer instructions: replace every [bracketed placeholder], delete anything that doesn't apply, and delete all italic guidance before you send this plan. Sections 1 to 9 are the POC plan: make one copy per finalist, with identical success criteria and scenarios, and have both sides sign Section 9 before any work starts. Sections 10 to 13 are for your evaluation team only, so delete them from every vendor's copy.

Item	Details
RFP reference	[RFP number and title]
Buyer	[Organization legal name]
Vendor	[Vendor legal name]
Product and edition tested	[Product, edition and version, as proposed]
POC period	[Start date to end date]
Buyer POC lead	[Name, title, email]
Vendor POC lead	[Name, title, email]
Plan version	[Version number and date]

1.1 Purpose

[Organization name] ("we", "us") is selecting [type of software] through [RFP number]. [Vendor name] ("the vendor") is one of [two / three] finalists. This proof of concept (POC) tests whether [product] meets the requirements in Section 1.2 when our own staff use it with our data, in the environment in Section 5, over the period in Section 7.

The results will update our evaluation of the vendor's proposal. This POC does not commit us to buy [product], or either party to enter into a contract. [The confidentiality terms in the RFP / The non-disclosure agreement dated [date]] apply to everything shared during the POC.

1.2 Requirements a demo couldn't prove

List only requirements that matter to the decision and that a scripted demo, a reference call or a document can't settle, such as integrations, performance at your volumes, loading your real data, or configuration by your own staff.

RFP requirement ID	Requirement	Why the demo didn't prove it	Tested in scenario
[INT-03]	[Two-way sync of accounts and orders with [ERP]]	[Shown with a simulated ERP]	[TS-1]
[NFR-07]	[Search and reporting speed with [number] records]	[Demo held far fewer records]	[TS-2]
[DM-02]	[Import of our customer data without manual rework]	[Not shown with data in our format]	[TS-3]
[SEC-04]	[Single sign-on with [identity provider]]	[Shown with the vendor's own setup]	[TS-4]
[FR-21]	[Our administrators configure [approval workflow] without code]	[Configured by the vendor's engineer]	[TS-5]

2. Scope

2.1 Use cases in scope

- [UC-1, e.g. A sales rep creates an account and order that flow to [ERP]]
- [UC-2, e.g. A sales manager runs the pipeline report for all regions]
- [UC-3, e.g. An administrator sets up the discount approval workflow]

2.2 In scope

- Product: [modules and features]
- Integrations: test connections to [test instances of systems] only
- Data: the data sets in Section 5.2
- Users: up to [number] named test users in these roles: [roles]
- Configuration: the vendor configures [list]; our administrators configure [list]

2.3 Out of scope

- Production systems and live data, unless Section 5.2 says otherwise
- Full data migration beyond the samples in Section 5.2

- Custom development, unless agreed in writing under Section 2.4
- [Training beyond what testers need]
- [Other exclusions]

2.4 Ground rules

- The vendor uses the product and edition priced in its proposal.
- If a scenario needs custom code, a third-party product or an unreleased feature, the vendor tells our POC lead before building it. We record it in the results log (Section 4.3), and it can affect the evaluation and the price.
- Our testers carry out the scenario steps wherever possible. The vendor can guide them but doesn't operate the product during recorded tests.
- Changes to the scope, criteria or schedule need written agreement from both POC leads, and we make any change to a criterion or scenario for every finalist.

3. Success criteria

Use the same criteria for every finalist, and set every pass threshold before the POC starts. Must: a vendor that fails it fails the POC. Nice: it adds to the score.

ID	Criterion	How measured	Pass threshold	Priority	Scenario
SC-1	Accounts and orders sync both ways with [ERP]	Create and update [number] test records on each side; compare field by field	All records match within [time]; failed records logged with a reason	Must	TS-1
SC-2	Performance at our volumes	Our IT team times [search or report] over [number] runs, all test data loaded	[Seconds] or less in at least [number] of [number] runs	Must	TS-2
SC-3	Our data loads without manual rework	Import our masked [data set] extract; reconcile record counts	[X]% load without manual correction; every reject has an error reason	Must	TS-3
SC-4	Single sign-on with [identity]	Test users sign in	Every test user signs in;	Must	TS-4

ID	Criterion	How measured	Pass threshold	Priority	Scenario
	provider]	through [identity provider] using [SAML 2.0 / OpenID Connect]	a disabled user loses access within [time]		
SC-5	Our administrators can configure [workflow]	Our administrator builds the workflow after [hours] of vendor training	Workflow runs end to end with no code and no vendor help	Nice	TS-5
SC-6	Ease of use for [role]	Testers rate ease of use from 1 to 5 after their scenarios	Average rating of [score] or higher	Nice	All
SC-7	Vendor support during the POC	Response times to questions and issues in the results log	First response within [number] business hours	Nice	All

A must-have criterion not met by the end of the retest window (Section 7) is a fail, and a partial result counts as not met.

4. Test scenarios and results log

4.1 How the tests run

Base each scenario on one of your hardest real processes, as you did for the demo script.

- Each scenario is run [once as a dry run, then once for the record].
 - Testers record each result in Section 4.3 on the day, with evidence such as screenshots, timings, logs or reconciliation reports.
 - The vendor can fix logged issues during the retest window in Section 7.
- Each retest is a new row in the results log.

4.2 Scenarios

ID	Scenario and steps	Data used	Run by	Expected result	Criteria
TS-1	[Create an	[Masked	[Sales rep,	[Changes in	SC-1, SC-6

ID	Scenario and steps	Data used	Run by	Expected result	Criteria
	account and order in [product]; update the account in [ERP]; check both]	accounts, [number] records]	finance tester]	both systems within [time]]	
TS-2	[Run [report] and [search] [number] times each with all test data loaded]	[Generated data, [number] records]	[Our IT team]	[Within the SC-2 threshold]	SC-2
TS-3	[Import our [data set] extract with the standard import tools]	[Masked extract, [number] records]	[Our data lead]	[Records load; rejects listed with reasons]	SC-3
TS-4	[Sign in through [identity provider]; disable a test user and try again]	[Test user accounts]	[Our identity team]	[Access granted, then removed]	SC-4
TS-5	[Build [approval workflow] from our written specification]	[Workflow specification]	[Our administrator]	[Workflow runs as specified]	SC-5, SC-6

4.3 Results log

Complete this during the POC. Share a vendor's log only with that vendor, to confirm the facts. "How achieved" uses the RFP's response codes; an unreleased feature counts as not met.

Scenario	Date	Result	How achieved	Evidence	Issues and follow-up
[TS-1]	[Date]	[Pass / Fail / Partial]	[Standard / Configuration / Custom / Third party / Not met]	[Screenshots, logs or reports]	[Issue, owner, retest date]
[TS-2]					

Scenario	Date	Result	How achieved	Evidence	Issues and follow-up
[TS-3]					
[TS-4]					
[TS-5]					

5. Environment and data handling

5.1 Test environment

Item	Details
Environment	[Vendor-hosted test tenant / our sandbox / test server on our premises]
Hosting location	[Country or region where our data is stored and processed]
Access	[Named test users only, with single sign-on or multi-factor authentication]
Connections to our systems	[Test instances of [systems] only. No connection to production systems.]
Access ends	[Date], when the vendor disables all test accounts and connections

5.2 Test data

Use the least data that will prove the criteria. Prefer generated data, or real data with personal and confidential details masked.

Data set	Source	Volume	Personal or confidential data?	Masked or generated	Provided by
[Customer accounts]	[Extract from [system]]	[Number] records	[Yes: names, contact details]	[Masked: names and contact details replaced]	[Us]
[Performance test data]	[Generated]	[Number] records	[No]	[Generated]	[Vendor]
[Data set]	[Source]	[Volume]	[Yes / No]	[Method]	[Us / Vendor]

- Real, unmasked personal data is used only if [our data protection lead / security team] approves it in writing before the POC starts.
- [Payment card data, health records or other regulated data] must not be used in the POC.

- We transfer data by [secure file transfer method], not by email.
- Only the vendor staff named in Section 6 can access our data.
- Within [number] days after the POC ends, the vendor deletes our data from the POC environment and all copies, [including backups / with backups expiring within [number] days], and confirms in writing.

If real personal data is involved, ask your privacy or legal team whether you need a data processing agreement or other terms before the POC starts. Requirements vary by country and sector.

5.3 Security

- Before access is granted, the vendor provides [security documentation, such as a SOC 2 report or ISO/IEC 27001 certificate, and our completed security questionnaire], and our security team approves the environment.
- The vendor tells our POC lead about any security incident affecting the POC environment or our data within [number] hours of learning of it.
- Every tester has their own account. Accounts and passwords aren't shared.

5.4 Who provides what

Item	Provided by	Due by
Test environment and licenses for [number] test users	[Vendor]	[Date]
Security documentation (Section 5.3)	[Vendor]	[Date]
Masked data extracts (Section 5.2)	[Us]	[Date]
Access to test instances of [systems]	[Us]	[Date]
Configuration for scenarios TS-1 to TS-4	[Vendor]	[Date]
Testers, for [number] hours each	[Us]	[Date]
Training for testers and administrators	[Vendor]	[Date]

6. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Side	Name	Responsibilities
Executive sponsor	Us	[Name]	Approves the plan; makes the go/no-go