

Request for Proposal: Warehouse Management System (WMS)

Template from RFPhub.com. Replace everything in square brackets, adjust the Must-have/Nice-to-have priorities, and delete this note and the instructions section before you issue the RFP.

Instructions for the buyer (delete before issuing)

A WMS changes how every person on the warehouse floor works, so the evaluation has to be grounded in your real operation, not in vendor feature lists. The example schedule below runs about 15 weeks from kickoff to contract award; stretch it for several sites, warehouse automation or a 3PL operation with many clients.

Implementation follows as a separate project.

1. **Document your operation and volumes (weeks 1-3).** Map your current processes from receiving to shipping, including the exceptions. Build a data pack that vendors can design and price against: sites and storage types, active SKUs and units of measure, order lines per day on average and at peak, order profiles by channel, mobile users per shift, carriers, EDI trading partners, and any automation in place or planned.
2. **Assemble the buying team.** Include warehouse operations (managers, supervisors and an experienced floor lead), inventory control, IT and integration, transportation, customer service and finance, plus procurement and legal. Add engineering if automation is in scope, and account managers if you run a 3PL operation. The people who do the work every day are best placed to judge the mobile screens and exception handling.
3. **Decide whether you need an RFI (weeks 3-5).** Issue a short RFI first if you haven't decided between a dedicated WMS and your ERP's warehouse module, if your long list has more than five vendors, or if you're selecting automation at the same time. Ask about fit with your order profile, deployment model, integrations with your ERP and automation, and pricing model, then cut the list to three or four vendors.
4. **Tailor and issue the RFP (weeks 5-8).** Delete requirements that don't apply, adjust priorities, and attach your data pack and process maps to

Section 1. Give vendors three weeks to respond, with a written question-and-answer window in the first week.

5. **Score the responses and run scripted demonstrations (weeks 8-11).**

Have each evaluator score independently against the rubric before comparing notes, and set aside any vendor that misses a Must-have. Give the two or three leaders a demonstration script built from your own items and orders, including exceptions such as a short pick, a damaged receipt and a late order cancellation. Score what you see on screen, not what is on the slides.

6. **Visit reference sites (weeks 11-13).** Visit at least one live warehouse per finalist with an operation like yours. Talk to supervisors and floor staff as well as IT, and ask how the go-live went, what still runs outside the system, and how the vendor responded when something broke.

7. **Negotiate and award (weeks 13-15).** Use the pricing table to compare like for like over the contract term, including peak-season terms, hardware and EDI costs. Put go-live criteria, hypercare and a release freeze around your peak season into the statement of work, and schedule go-live away from your busiest period.

WMS vs ERP warehouse module: when you need a dedicated WMS

Many ERP systems include a warehouse or inventory module that handles receiving, bin locations, picking and shipping. Its advantages are real: inventory and finance live in one system, there is no WMS-to-ERP integration to build and support, and you deal with one vendor and one contract. For a single site with a straightforward order profile and no automation, it can be the right answer.

A dedicated WMS is built to direct the work on the floor, not just record it, and the case for one grows as the operation becomes more complex. The trade-off is an extra integration to maintain and two systems whose inventory figures must agree, so plan for reconciliation from the start.

If you're unsure, put both options in the same evaluation. Send this RFP to your ERP vendor for its warehouse module alongside dedicated WMS vendors, and score every proposal against the same scripted scenarios.

Signs you need a dedicated WMS:

- High order and line volumes, many SKUs, or tight carrier cut-offs that call for directed, prioritized work instead of printed pick lists
- Picking methods beyond simple order-by-order picking: batch, cluster, zone, wave or waveless release, with replenishment driven by demand
- Warehouse automation in place or planned (WES/WCS, autonomous mobile robots, conveyors, sortation, AS/RS) that needs a system to release and coordinate work
- Several clients in one building, as a 3PL, with client-specific rules, EDI and billing for storage and handling
- Labor management against engineered standards, or incentive pay based on measured performance
- Several warehouses running different ERPs, or an ERP replacement planned, where warehouse operations shouldn't depend on one ERP's timeline
- Lot, serial or expiry control, customer compliance labels or advance ship notice requirements that you can't meet with your ERP module today

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1. Introduction and Background

[Company Name] is seeking proposals for a warehouse management system (WMS) that directs and records receiving, putaway, inventory control, picking, packing, shipping and returns in our warehouses. This RFP describes our requirements, the questions we need answered, and how proposals will be evaluated.

Organization background

- [Describe your organization: industry, size, locations]
- [Regulatory or contractual requirements that apply]
- [Warehouses in scope: number, size, location and storage types (pallet racking, shelving, bulk, temperature-controlled)]
- [Current systems: ERP, any existing WMS or warehouse module, order management, transportation management, shipping and EDI tools]
- [Volumes: active SKUs, receipts per day, order lines per day on average and at peak, units of measure handled]
- [Order profile and channels: e-commerce, wholesale, retail replenishment, and any 3PL clients]
- [Automation and equipment in place or planned: conveyors, sortation, autonomous mobile robots, AS/RS, mobile computers and label printers]

2. Project Objectives

- Improve inventory accuracy and real-time visibility of stock by location, lot, serial number and status
- Direct receiving, putaway, replenishment and picking by system rules instead of paper lists and individual know-how
- Meet carrier cut-offs and customer shipping requirements, including compliance labels and advance ship notices
- Measure labor productivity consistently across shifts and sites
- Provide a platform that supports [planned automation / additional sites / 3PL clients]

3. Scope of Work

The selected vendor will be responsible for:

- Provision of the WMS for [number] warehouses, starting with [first site]
- Configuration of locations, putaway, allocation, picking, replenishment and shipping rules to fit our processes
- Integration with our ERP, order management, transportation and shipping systems, EDI trading partners and [automation equipment]
- Migration of item, location and on-hand inventory data, including lots and serial numbers

- Integration, end-to-end and peak-volume testing, and on-site go-live support
- Training for administrators, super users, supervisors and floor staff
- Ongoing support, upgrades and service management for the contract term

4. Requirements

For each requirement, enter a response code and a short explanation. Y = available today in the proposed edition; P = partially met or needs configuration/services (explain); R = on the roadmap (give a date); N = not supported. Must-have requirements are pass/fail; Nice-to-have requirements add points.

4.1 Functional

ID	Requirement	Priority	Response	Vendor comments
F1	Receiving against advance ship notices (ASNs), purchase orders and blind receipts, with scanning of license plate numbers (LPNs) or SSCC pallet labels, capture of lot, serial and expiry data, and recording of over, short and damaged quantities with reason codes.	Must		
F2	Cross-docking of received goods straight to outbound staging for open orders, both planned (from ASN and order data) and opportunistic (identified at receipt). Make this Must-have if cross-docking is part of your operation.	Nice		
F3	Directed putaway using configurable rules: item attributes, velocity, location capacity by weight and cube, mixing rules, and storage restrictions such as temperature zones or hazardous-material segregation. Operators confirm each putaway by scanning the location.	Must		
F4	Slotting analysis that recommends item locations based on pick velocity, dimensions, weight and items often ordered together, and creates the move tasks to re-slot.	Nice		
F5	Replenishment of pick locations from reserve storage using min/max and demand-based triggers, with urgent replenishments prioritized ahead of the picks that need the stock.	Must		
F6	Real-time inventory by location, license plate, lot, serial number, expiry date and status (for example, available, quarantine,	Must		

ID	Requirement	Priority	Response	Vendor comments
	damaged or on hold), with status controlling what can be allocated, and conversions between units of measure (each, inner pack, case and pallet).			
F7	Cycle counting by schedule (for example, by ABC class or zone) and by trigger (such as an empty location or a short pick), with blind counts, recount thresholds and supervisor approval of adjustments.	Must		
F8	Allocation rules for stock rotation (FEFO, FIFO or a specific lot) and customer-specific constraints such as minimum remaining shelf life or single-lot shipments, with handling of partial allocation and backorders.	Must		
F9	Order release in waves built by rules (carrier, cut-off time, zone or order type), with a supervisor view of open work and backlog against carrier cut-offs and the ability to reprioritize or reassign tasks. State whether continuous (waveless) release is supported.	Must		
F10	Discrete, batch, cluster, zone and pick-and-pass picking, with optimized pick paths and each, case and pallet picking in the same building. Short picks are recorded, redirected to an alternate location where stock exists, and trigger a count.	Must		
F11	Pack stations with scan verification of every item, weight capture, packing lists and customer-specific documents. State whether the system recommends carton sizes (cartonization).	Must		
F12	Shipping for parcel, less-than-truckload (LTL) and truckload orders: carrier labels and customer compliance labels, manifesting and end-of-day close, bills of lading, and load verification by scanning each pallet or carton onto the trailer.	Must		
F13	Returns processing: receipt against a return authorization or as an unexpected return, inspection and grading, and disposition (restock, refurbish, quarantine, return to vendor or scrap), with results sent to our ERP for credit.	Must		
F14	Dock appointment scheduling, including carrier self-scheduling, and yard management: gate check-in and check-out, trailer location and status, and yard moves assigned to drivers.	Nice		

ID	Requirement	Priority	Response	Vendor comments
F15	Labor management: engineered labor standards for each task, actual versus standard performance by worker, team and shift, and labor planning from forecast workload. Make this Must-have if you run incentive pay or plan to manage to engineered standards.	Nice		
F16	Third-party logistics (3PL) capabilities: multiple clients in one warehouse with client-specific items, rules, labels and documents; billing for storage, handling, value-added services and accessorial charges; and a client portal for inventory and order visibility. Make this Must-have if you are a 3PL.	Nice		
F17	Standard dashboards and reports for warehouse KPIs, including dock-to-stock time, order cycle time, on-time shipment against cut-off, pick and ship accuracy, inventory accuracy from counts, units and lines per labor hour, and location utilization, with drill-down and export.	Must		

4.2 Technical and architecture

ID	Requirement	Priority	Response	Vendor comments
T1	All our warehouses in one instance, with shared item, customer and supplier data and site-specific locations, rules and settings. State the deployment model proposed: multi-tenant SaaS, single-tenant hosted or on-premises.	Must		
T2	Configuration of rules, workflows, mobile screens, labels and reports by our trained administrators, without custom code. Identify every requirement in this RFP that would need custom development.	Must		
T3	Execution and confirmation of all floor tasks (receiving, putaway, moves, replenishment, picking, counting and loading) on handheld or vehicle-mounted mobile computers with barcode scanning, updating inventory in real time, in the languages our staff use. State the supported device operating systems and whether the mobile client is native or browser-based.	Must		
T4	Additional mobile and hands-free options: voice-directed picking, wearable or ring scanners, and camera-based scanning on smartphones.	Nice		

ID	Requirement	Priority	Response	Vendor comments
T5	Performance at our peak volume of [order lines per hour] with [number] concurrent mobile users. State scanner transaction response times and provide load-test results at a comparable volume.	Must		
T6	Defined, tested behavior when the connection between the warehouse and the hosted system is lost: which floor tasks can continue, how transactions are synchronized afterward, and the network redundancy you recommend.	Must		
T7	At least one non-production (sandbox) environment with a copy of our production configuration, for testing configuration changes, integrations and new releases.	Must		
T8	GS1 barcode and label support: GTINs, GS1-128 logistics labels with SSCCs, and parsing of GS1 Application Identifiers (such as lot, expiry date and serial number) from a single scan, with label templates our team can edit. State support for 2D barcodes such as GS1 DataMatrix and QR codes using GS1 Digital Link.	Must		

4.3 Integration

ID	Requirement	Priority	Response	Vendor comments
I1	Two-way, near real-time integration with our ERP ([name your ERP]) for items, purchase orders, sales and transfer orders, receipts, shipments, inventory adjustments and status changes, plus a report that reconciles on-hand inventory between the two systems. State whether the connector is prebuilt and maintained by you.	Must		
I2	Integration with our order management system and sales channels for order intake, changes and cancellations up to the point of picking, and shipment confirmation with tracking numbers.	Must		
I3	Integration with our transportation management system (TMS) for load planning, carrier assignment and shipment status, and with parcel carriers, directly or through a multi-carrier shipping system, for rates, labels, tracking and manifests.	Must		
I4	EDI with customers, suppliers and clients in ANSI X12, and EDIFACT where needed (for example, DESADV despatch advice), including [keep those you use]: 940 warehouse shipping order, 945 warehouse	Must		