3PL RFP template for brands

A working RFP document for buying fulfillment: 8 sections, 12 bidder questions, and a weighted scoring rubric. Fill in your data, send it to 4 to 6 providers, and score the responses on landed cost per order, not on the storage rate.

How to use this template

- **Fill sections 1 through 8** with your numbers. A blank order profile gets priced on the bidder's assumptions, and those assumptions favor the bidder.
- **Send the 12 questions to every bidder** and compare the answers side by side. The fee schedule tells you the rate card; the questions tell you what the invoice will look like.
- **Score with the rubric on the last page.** All in cost per order 40 to 50%, delivery promise and geography 20 to 30%, operations and visibility 15 to 25%, contract risk 10 to 15%. The lowest storage rate wins less than a quarter of the points.

The 30 to 45 day RFP cycle

Publish these dates in the RFP itself. The two longest phases are bidder Q&A (5 to 7 days) and bid preparation (14 to 21 days). A fulfillment bid also needs a site visit or a video walk of the building; leave room for it.

PHASE	TYPICAL DURATION	YOUR DATE
1. RFP release	Day 0	
2. Bidder Q&A window	5 to 7 days	
3. Q&A answers published to all bidders	1 to 2 days	
4. Bid preparation	14 to 21 days	
5. Bid submission deadline	1 day	
6. Scorecard review and site visits	5 to 10 days	
7. Finalist interviews (optional)	3 to 5 days	
8. Award notification	1 day	

Before you send it: put your full fee schedule from today's provider into the 3PL cost calculator at wearewarp.com/tools/3pl-cost-calculator. Your current all in cost per order is the number every bid has to beat, and bidders should be told what it is.

Section 1. Company background and order profile

Purpose: tell bidders what they are pricing. Orders per month, units per order and the DTC versus wholesale split drive every fee on the schedule.

FIELD	YOUR ANSWER
Company, products, channels (DTC, marketplace, wholesale, retail)	
Orders per month, last 12 months, by month (peak and trough)	
Average units per order, and share of single unit orders	
DTC parcel orders vs wholesale pallet orders, per month	
Growth plan for the next 12 to 24 months	

Section 2. Inventory and SKU profile

Purpose: storage and pick pricing depend on what sits on the shelf. Give bidders the shape of the catalog, not just the count.

FIELD	YOUR ANSWER
Active SKUs, and share of SKUs that carry 80% of orders	
Average pallets in storage, and pallet or bin mix	
Unit dimensions and weight ranges; oversized or big and bulky share	
Special handling: lot or expiry tracking, hazmat, temperature, serialization, kitting	
Inventory turns per year	

Section 3. Receiving and inbound freight

Purpose: the freight into the building is a line most RFPs leave to the bidder, and it is where brokered markups hide. State who owns it and how it is priced.

FIELD	YOUR ANSWER
Inbound pallets per month, by origin (supplier, plant, port)	
Who arranges inbound freight today, and what it costs per pallet	
Receiving requirements: ASN, labeling, pallet spec, count and inspection depth	
Import share: containers landing at which ports	

Section 4. Storage and billing model required

Purpose: force every bid onto one billing shape so you can compare it. Ask for pallet day or pallet month pricing with any minimums stated in dollars.

FIELD	YOUR ANSWER
Billing unit required: per pallet per day, per pallet per month, per bin, per cubic foot	
Minimum monthly storage or minimum stay you will accept	
Peak season storage: surcharge policy required	
Long term storage: aging surcharges you will or will not accept	

Section 5. Pick, pack and outbound

Purpose: the per order fees. Require a first pick, additional unit pick, packaging, and insert or kitting fees stated separately so the schedule can be modeled.

FIELD	YOUR ANSWER
Packing spec: branded packaging, inserts, gift options, fragile handling	
Order cutoff and same day ship expectation	
Parcel carriers and service levels required; who owns the carrier accounts	
Wholesale: pallet build, retailer routing guides, EDI and ASN requirements	
Returns: volume, inspection rules, restock vs dispose	

Section 6. Delivery promise and geography

Purpose: where your customers are decides which building wins. Give bidders the order map and ask what promise each location can keep.

FIELD	YOUR ANSWER
Top 10 metros by order share, last 12 months	
Delivery promise required: same day radius, next day share, 2 day share	
Number of locations you want inventory split across	
Zone skipping or regional injection acceptable for parcel	

Section 7. Technology, reporting and visibility

Purpose: what you need to see, and how. Separate what you require from what would be nice.

FIELD	YOUR ANSWER
Order sources to connect: storefronts, marketplaces, ERP, EDI	
Inventory visibility: by SKU, by location, by day; exception alerts with photos	
Billing visibility: storage bill before it posts, by dock, by SKU, by day	
Reporting cadence and KPIs required (fill rate, dock to stock, order accuracy, on time ship)	

Section 8. Contract terms and exit

Purpose: the terms that decide whether a bad month or a bad provider is survivable.

FIELD	YOUR ANSWER
Contract length, minimums, and platform or onboarding fees you will accept	
Rate change notice period and cap	
Exit terms: notice period, inventory release fee, data export	
Liability: inventory shrink, damage, and claims process	

The 12 bidder questions that predict the invoice

Ask every bidder the same twelve, in writing, and compare the answers side by side. The fee schedule tells you the rate card; these tell you what arrives on the bill.

1. Who runs the freight into and out of your building, and is it priced on the same quote as storage?

Brokered inbound and outbound freight is the biggest line most 3PL bids leave out. A provider that owns the trucks can put it on one per pallet number.

2. State every fee that is not on the rate card: accessorials, surcharges, rebills, reclassifications.

The difference between the quote and the invoice lives here.

3. What is your storage billing unit, and what is the minimum monthly charge in dollars?

Monthly minimums are a lease by another name. Pallet day billing with no minimum stay is the honest comparison point.

4. Which of your buildings would hold our inventory, and what delivery promise can each keep for our top 10 metros?

A same day or next day promise is a distance from a building, not a slogan. Ask for the radius.

5. What is your dock to stock time for a standard inbound pallet, and how is receipt confirmed?

Scanned, timestamped and photographed at receipt is checkable. "Same day receiving" is not.

6. Show a sample invoice for a month like ours, line by line.

The only document that cannot hide a fee.

7. How are exceptions reported: damage, shorts, mispicks, and with what evidence?

Photos attached and tracked to resolution, or an email a week later.

8. Can we see the storage bill before it posts, by SKU and by day?

Visibility that arrives after the invoice is not visibility.

9. What happens to our rate in a slow month, and in a peak month?

Minimums and peak surcharges both decide the true annual cost.

10. Can DTC parcels and wholesale pallets ship from the same inventory, and on whose trucks?

Two programs at two providers is two invoices and two margins.

11. What are the exit terms: notice period, inventory release fee, and data export?

The cost of leaving is part of the cost of joining.

12. Give three references shipping a profile like ours for at least a year, with the invoice date range we can ask about.

A reference that can talk about invoices beats a reference that can talk about onboarding.

Weighted bid scoring rubric

Score each bid 1 to 5 on every criterion, multiply by the weight, and sum. Put every bidder's all in cost per order (from a modeled month, not the storage rate) on the same line before you score anything else.

CRITERION	WEIGHT	WHAT A 5 LOOKS LIKE	BIDDER A · B · C · D
All in cost per order, modeled month	40 to 50%	Lowest landed cost with freight and fees included, quote equals invoice	
Delivery promise and geography	20 to 30%	Buildings inside your top metros; a stated same day or next day radius	
Operations and visibility	15 to 25%	Scanned and photographed receipt, exceptions with evidence, bill visible before it posts	
Contract risk	10 to 15%	No minimum stay, no platform fee, clean exit terms	
Total	100%		

Bidder mix worksheet

Invite at least one of each model so the bids expose each other's structure. A standalone 3PL prices the warehouse and brokers the freight; a marketplace 3PL prices the software and subcontracts the building; a carrier run fulfillment network prices the building and the trucks together.

	MODEL	WHAT IT USUALLY DOES WELL	WHAT TO CHECK
☐	Standalone 3PL	Deep building operations, verticals	Who brokers the freight, and the markup on it
☐	Marketplace or software led 3PL	Integrations, many locations on paper	Which building actually holds you; subcontractor SLAs
☐	Carrier run fulfillment network	Freight in and out on one number, same day radius	Building count and fit for your metros
☐	Marketplace fulfillment (FBA, WFS)	Channel specific speed badges	Fees by size tier, inventory limits, non channel orders

The one line to compare: all in cost per order for a modeled month, with inbound freight, storage, picks, packaging, postage, returns and fixed fees included. Model it with the 3PL cost calculator at wearewarp.com/tools/3pl-cost-calculator before the bids arrive, once with your fee schedule and once with each bid's.