

## Core Competency Training Development RFP

### Question and Answer

January 25<sup>th</sup> 2017

**1. Is this project state or federally funded?**

This project is funded with both State and Federal dollars.

**2. Is the recipient of the funds considered to be a sub recipient (grant-sponsored project) or contractor (contract-program revenue)? If a federal contract, what Federal Acquisition Regulation clauses are applicable?**

The recipient is considered a contractor to the State of Minnesota. No federal contracts are involved.

**3. According to information on the web page at [http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/training/technical\\_training/Technical\\_Training.html](http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/training/technical_training/Technical_Training.html), there is an MOU between BWSR, MACDE, MAWCD and NRCS. Would the contract awarded be subject to those terms?**

The MOU signed by BWSR, MACDE, MASWCD, and NRCS documented the commitment of organizations to move forward in developing a statewide technical training approach. There are not terms in the MOU that the RFP recipient would be subject to.

**4. Is the Certificate of Equal Pay Application required?**

The Equal Pay certification is mandatory for contracts that will be or anticipated in being awarded over \$500,000. BWSR's budget for this project and RFP is under \$500,000 therefore vendors do not need to submit the Certificate of Equal Pay or apply for a certificate of Equal Pay.

**5. Do the online course materials need to be 508 compliant? If so, what level of compliance?**

The training modules and course materials must follow the State of Minnesota Technology Accessibility Standards. <http://mn.gov/mnit/programs/policies/accessibility/>. The standard incorporates the [Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.0](#) and [Section 508](#) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. WCAG 2.0 Level AA is required. For example, video and animation is considered accessibility compliant if alternative text is provided.

**6. Will the BWSR consider capping run times on proposed online courses to hours lower than estimated in the RFP to bring down the cost?**

Yes, BWSR has the authority to adjust elements of the project (tasks, hours of eLearning) to reduce total project cost.

**7. Would BWSR consider cost proposals over \$600,000?**

BWSR's approximate budget is \$300,000. All proposals will be reviewed and ranked separately from the cost detail. In the two tier ranking process, cost is weighted at 10% in the first round of ranking. It is possible for a proposal with a cost detail exceeding \$300,000 to move on to the second round of scoring if the other portions of the proposal are ranked highly. In the second round of scoring, the cost detail is weighted at 40% (see RFP pages 7 and 8 for additional ranking details). If the proposal with the highest composite score comes in over the budget allocated for this project, BWSR has the authority to negotiate with the vendor and adjust the project tasks and deliverables based on the cost detail provided and BWSR's budget.

**8. The core competency topics overlap with existing NRCS training. Is there a need to distinguish a difference between national scope and Minnesota specific training and topics?**

There is some overlap between the core competency topics for this project, and existing Natural Resources Conservation Service Training (NRCS). However, much of the NRCS training is not easily accessible to other conservation partners like Soil and Water Conservation Districts or BWSR staff. The goal of the Core Competency trainings is to make introductory conservation training courses available to all of our partners in Minnesota. The Core Competency course materials developed for this project may include information derived National NRCS courses, but should also should incorporate Minnesota-specific information and topics as much as possible.

**9. How prescribed are the training modules as far as content? Is there room for modifications as the work progresses?**

The content of the training modules is open to modification as work progresses. The ideal vendor would have knowledge and experience in natural resources and conservation to assist in the finalization of the curriculum plan. However, we will have subject matter experts available to assist the vendor, as well as source material to draw from.

**10. How do the core competency trainings fit into the framework for professional development for the intended audience?**

The Core Competency Trainings are the foundation of professional development for the intended audience. These foundational competencies will be achieved by all positions and will be a standard training offered to all Soil and Water Conservation District, Natural Resources Conservation Service and Board of Water and Soil Resources employees, regardless of position or title. The Core Competency trainings are intended to build the foundation for future technical trainings an employee will receive.

**11. What does the maintenance plan include?**

The maintenance plan should provide information so BWSR has a full understanding of how fixes, updates and changes can be made to the training modules in the future. This should include any information regarding a “warranty” period, estimated hourly costs for vendor services related to maintenance, and allocating time within the proposal for development of instructional materials and/or training to allow BWSR staff to implement basic fixes on our own. Preference is given to plans that result in a product that can be maintained and updated by BWSR.

**12. How are learners going to demonstrate competency?**

Vendors are encouraged to identify and describe how learners will demonstrate competency as part of their proposal, however, some suggestions include using quizzes and questions built into the trainings, the use of post-training discussions with colleagues and supervisors and supplemental training materials/discussion questions for use by supervisors.

**13. Does the website need to have form capabilities or embedded videos? Are videos hosted on another site?**

We anticipate and expect that the selected vendor will recommend a site or service capable of hosting the interactive training modules, which may include videos. BWSR will contract for the hosting through its IT services organization (MNIT) separately from this project.

At this point we do not anticipate the need for the website to have form capabilities. Unless recommended as part of the vendor’s vision for the training and included in the proposal, form capabilities are not needed.

**14. What is the approximate budget?**

BWSR’s budget for this project is approximately \$300,000.

**15. Regarding the pilots, does BWSR expect all content to be developed at one time, or can the pilots be staggered?**

BWSR does not expect training modules to be developed contemporaneously. The pilot testing can be staggered to coincide with independent development/completion of each training module.

**16. Does the website need to have credentials and passwords for learners to access?**

No.

**17. Does it need to be accessible to the public, or could there be a login required such as a moodle course?**

BWSR prefers the core competency trainings to be accessible to the public. However, if a vendor recommends using a LMS to deliver the training and a login is required, BWSR will work with the vendor to identify a solution to meet the needs of both the vendor and learner.

**18. Is there a secondary audience for the training?**

A secondary audience for the core competency trainings may include Soil and Water Conservation District board members, and other conservation professionals.

**19. What other features do you envision the learner website to do?**

The learner website should provide the titles and links for each of the core competency modules.

**20. Will the learners need a certificate of completion after taking each module?**

This project does not require a certificate of completion for learners, however vendors are encouraged to add this and other functionalities to their proposals to create a unique product.

**21. Does BWSR have a Learning Management System?**

BWSR does not have a Learning Management System.

**22. Does this need to be hosted in the BWSR website or would BWSR consider an off-site course management system?**

The training modules will not be hosted on the BWSR website. BWSR will consider a recommendation for an off-site course management system that allows for BWSR to make module updates and adjustments as necessary. The process for making updates must be clearly documented in the maintenance plan.

**23. Relating to videos, does BWSR have videos in mind or will the vendor produce the videos?**

BWSR does not have specific videos in mind. Vendor can produce videos or secure rights to use existing videos from external sources. For example, many of BWSR's partners have existing videos that could be used in full or in part as part of these trainings. It is up to the vendor to decide what is appropriate based on the curriculum plan and other considerations like costs. The resource materials located on the BWSR website provide examples of existing training materials that could potentially be used for this project.

**24. What type of branding considerations does BWSR have such as color, scheme, logos?**

BWSR will work with the vendor to select a color scheme that fits within the new State of Minnesota brand style guide. <https://mn.gov/mmb-stat/branding/style-guide/minnesota-state-brand-style-guide-2016.pdf>

**25. How many users will the training be made available to?**

We anticipate approximately 500 state, federal, and local staff will use the training.

**26. Are the courses free or do users pay for the course? Will some type of payment functionality to need be added to the website?**

The courses will be free, no payment functionality is needed.

**27. What kind of relationship do you want with your vendor? Such as after the project who will be responsible for updates, backups, revisions to the course and website? Will the vendor need to include a training overview of how to edit or update?**

BWSR prefers a product that can be maintained and updated by BWSR. BWSR will back up the website (on the [www.bwsr.state.mn/](http://www.bwsr.state.mn/) domain) which directs learners to training modules. A maintenance plan, including a description of how updates to the modules will occur, and a training overview for BWSR project staff was requested as part of the RFP. Please also see the response to question number 11 in this document.

Specific agreements and processes for ensuring back up of training content depend on the technology and service the vendor uses. It is up to the vendor to describe how this will occur.

**28. Will the Drupal site have other purposes besides delivery of these courses? Is the Drupal template available to share?**

The sole purpose of the Drupal site is to direct users to where the training modules are hosted. The template is not yet available to share.

**29. Do you have a domain name (URL) picked out and reserved? Or will the vendor be responsible for that?**

The vendor is responsible for a domain and URL.

**30. It was mentioned in the preproposal meeting that BWSR would like to self-host. What are the capabilities (hardware, software) of BWSR's server that vendors should be aware of?**

During the pre-proposal meeting, BWSR was asked if we would like to self-host. BWSR's response was that we cannot host the training modules or videos on the BWSR server. The vendor must include a recommendation for a commercial service for hosting training modules.

**31. What is the operating system of the server?**

The operating system of the server is not relevant to this proposal (see answer to #30 above).

**32. What kind of IT chain of command has to be followed for things like DNS, database and hosting administration?**

BWSR is not asking vendors to put a server into the State of Minnesota domain or to host a server. Any database proposed as part of this project should be cloud based, and described as part of the proposal. BWSR will work with MNIT services to develop contracts regarding hosting services and procurement processes.

**33. Has BWSR made provisions for backups?**

The BWSR webpages, including the new pages directing participants to the training modules are backed up on a regular basis. The training modules will be hosted on a commercial site as identified and described by the vendor and should include a backup and recovery service component. Any proposal including a LMS should include provisions for backing up the data in that system. See question #27.

**34. Is the database server on the same server as the web server?**

A database does not currently exist that is related to this project, nor has it been requested as part of this project – if one is proposed, the vendor should describe how it will function and any architecture requirements needed.

**35. What is the Database architecture?**

See answer to question 34.

**36. What grading tool or criteria will there be for evaluating the RFP? If so, what is it like? What is on it?**

The method to be used for evaluating the proposals, including the evaluation criteria, is described in the Proposal Evaluation section of the RFP.

**37. Are there any special circumstances or “hot buttons” that vendors should be aware of?**

BWSR does not want a product with significant long-term maintenance costs for improvements or updates.

**38. What role will pricing play in the decision? What issues are of concern about pricing?**

As stated in the RFP, we will be evaluating proposals using a three step process. Proposals must first pass the “Pass/Fail” step of the evaluation. The work plans that make it to step 2 are then evaluated based on the criteria outlined in the RFP, with cost weighted at 10% of the total score. At this point, the highest ranking proposals will advance to step three, the interview, product demonstration and costs proposal phase, where cost is weighted at 40% of the total score.

- 39. To confirm, you do not currently have a certificate program in place; however, you do have reference materials (consisting of self-study and some classroom materials) available up which to build the program.**

BWSR does not currently have a certificate program in place. BWSR has gathered resource materials for the vendor to draw from to create core competency training modules. The reference materials include self-study materials, webinars, classroom presentations and links to technical information that can be used to create training materials.

- 40. In the RFP, you state that BWSR will manage the project budget. Does this mean that between the four partners, you have overall responsibility for the budget?**

Of the four partnering conservation organizations, BWSR has the overall responsibility of managing the project budget.

- 41. What is the division of labor between vendor and BWSR for managing the budget?**

The BWSR will verify the vendor is billing for work completed and that billing/work completed aligns with the cost detail by deliverable and service (as requested in the RFP, proposal content #5). The vendor has latitude to manage work and effort for each deliverable and core competency area in a way that is most effective and efficient. The vendor is responsible for staying within the project budget.

- 42. Deliverables #2 the inclusion of flipped classroom implies that you may want to consider instructor-led components in the program. Is this true?**

We expect all trainings to be asynchronous and do not want instructor-led components. The concept of a flipped classroom was included only as an example of an alternative training format, and would need to be adapted to function in an asynchronous, online training environment. For example, the learner reads supplemental or introductory material before participating in an interactive training module.

- 43. Please clarify the following regarding your envisioned review and approval process of deliverables. The RFP mentions 3 rounds of editing before finalizing, and reviewing and approving curriculum content at 25%, 50%, and 90% completion.**

- a. Does a deliverable consist of the completed, programmed course or do storyboards also constitute a deliverable?**

BWSR will work closely with the vendor to identify where in the instructional design process it makes the most sense for the 25%, 50% and 90% reviews to occur. A completed storyboard would be a suitable deliverable for the 25% review.

- b. Does this assume content review and changes after online courses are programmed?**

Yes, there may be changes required after an online course is programmed. However the purpose of the curriculum review and approval at 25%, 50% and 90% is to ensure the

vendor creates curriculum that is technically correct and aligns with training objectives. The periodic check in process should minimize changes that need to be made to a programmed course.

- c. Can we assume that there will be fewer changes to content with each subsequent round of review or could there be the same amount of changes each round?**

It is reasonable to assume there will be fewer changes to content with each subsequent round of review, if identified corrections have been made.

- d. Will the same reviewers conduct each review or will some be added/replaced?**

BWSR will work with the vendor to determine the best composition of review groups.

- e. Will you clarify that this means completion of a given *programmed* module? Or of the whole program?**

Yes, the review and approval at 25%, 50%, and 90% means per training module (Conservation Planning, Soils, and Water Quality).

**44. Deliverables #5: would you like the vendor to host the courses?**

We expect the vendor to recommend the hosting service. See questions #13 and #30.

**45. Deliverables#6: Pilot delivery and review process:**

- a. Should the pilot encompass usability testing?**

Yes. The vendor can describe in the proposal their usability testing protocol.

- b. Should the pilot encompass accessibility testing?**

Yes. The vendor can describe in the proposal their accessibility testing protocol.

- c. Are there any additional specific items you want the pilot to test?**

Other items to assess in the pilots include:

- Is the navigation clear?
- Are the instructions clear?
- Does the course meet learning objectives?
- Are there sections that are confusing to the learner?

- d. What is the purpose of the second pilot test?**

The second pilot test would be used to ensure that problems identified during the first test have been corrected, and that no additional problems are detected.

- e. **Should estimates include updates/enhancement work post-pilot and if yes, what % of change from pilot should be assumed?**

Estimates should include updates/enhancement work post pilot. We do not have an assumed % change at this time.

- f. **Can estimate be re-visited at that point if there are more changes than anticipated?**

It is unlikely we would be able to re-visit the estimate post-pilot if more changes than what was originally anticipated are detected. The intent of the 25%, 50%, 90% check-ins and the two pilot tests is to reduce the likelihood that significant changes are detected close to production time. It is the responsibility of the vendor to remain in close communication with BWSR to ensure the project is completed within the anticipated budget.

**46. Proposal content #3: How is the detailed project management plan different from the detailed work plan in 2a?**

The project management plan includes all elements in deliverable #3 Project Staff. The project management plan should provide detail on staff members' role in the project, training, work experience, and a decision making hierarchy.

The detailed work plan identifies the major tasks to be accomplished, anticipated completion dates, and hours of effort and skillsets needed for each task.

**47. Proposal content #7: Please elaborate on the level of detail you want to see in the QA/QC plan.**

At a minimum, the QA/QC plan should provide details regarding how problems in course content, course design, media, functionality, usability, accessibility/508 compliance issues, and platform will be identified and corrected.