



Request for Proposals

Online Learning Assessment for Vocational Programs

PURPOSE:

JEVS Human Services invites proposals from qualified distance education consultants to conduct an online learning needs assessment, recommendations for converting existing curriculum to a hybrid online learning environment, and course content management recommendations for vocational programs offered through the Orleans Technical Institute (Orleans Tech).

OVERVIEW:

JEVS Human Services is a large, not-for-profit, social service agency that has served the communities of Greater Philadelphia since 1941. Its flagship employment and training program is Orleans Tech, a licensed and nationally accredited career school that offers skills training programs to meet the needs of students and employers throughout the Delaware Valley. It was founded on the belief that intensive skill training is the key to finding and retaining employment in a competitive job market. The Institute offers an associate degree in court reporting and diploma programs in telecommunications, human services, and a number of building trades specialties including plumbing, heating, and electricity.

Online delivery has the potential to give a greater number of students access to our programs and to provide students with greater scheduling flexibility. In addition, online learning will help Orleans Tech reach an expanded geographic market for its vocational training programs.

This request is for a formal needs assessment leading to recommendations for converting and managing existing course content to the most optimal online delivery mode for our unique vocational programs. We are interested in analysis which compares the benefits and costs of commercial multimedia learning management systems and technology platforms. The analysis will need to include projected costs for conversion of course content to online delivery, technology acquisition, and ongoing operational requirements. The technology and operational costs may be structured differently, depending on the nature of the recommendation (i.e., commercial software subscription, open source subscription or open source self-hosting). Technology and curriculum acquisition also involve risk. Comparative risks associated with each option or combination of options will need to be specified. The assessment should consider cost effective options that allow Orleans Tech to determine the best approach for successfully converting its curriculum to online delivery.

SCOPE OF WORK AND DELIVERABLES:

Online Learning Technology Assessment and Recommendations:

There are a range of technologies available for managing online and mixed mode course delivery. Commercial Software as a Service (SaaS) vendors, open source packages hosted by third parties and open source packages hosted by the Orleans Institute are all feasible options. Cost and risk are the most critical considerations. The primary goal of this study is to develop recommendations based on useful and fair comparisons between the different technology options in relation to the school's vocational program needs. The following options are recommended for consideration:

1. Blackboard – The most popular online learning management system hosting provider.
2. ECollege – A discounted online learning management system that is very similar to Blackboard, and has a larger online college customer portfolio.
3. Desire2Learn – Generally viewed as the most innovative commercial learning management system vendor.
4. Moodle – An open source learning management system that is more popular than the commercial options listed above in Europe and Australia. (Sub options: Self-hosted and 3rd party-hosted).
5. Liferay – An open source portal technology that is more flexible than conventional learning management systems. Liferay is gaining a foothold in the learning management space at small institutions. (Sub options: Self-hosted and 3rd party-hosted).

Understanding the total cost of acquiring and maintaining each of these options requires careful analysis and ultimately negotiation. Once a decision is made and students are enrolled, switching to a different vendor typically proves prohibitively expensive and risky. Commercial vendors actively work to ensure switching costs are high, and often include hidden costs if contracts are not carefully reviewed. Open source vendors rely on a technologically skilled labor pool if hosted internally, and less financially robust enterprises if hosted by 3rd parties. These factors should be considered in the analysis.

The following factors should be considered in the technology assessment:

1. Recommendations for converting existing course content to a hybrid or blended online learning environment.

2. Identify all technology components and functional requirements needed to convert course content to online delivery including technology platforms, custom websites, learning management systems, multi-media interfaces etc.
3. Provide overview and recommendations regarding SCORM compliance requirements
4. Work closely with JEVS internal IT department to define functional requirements of prospective solutions.
5. Costs
 - a. Total cost of acquisition
 - b. Annual costs
 - c. Per student costs
 - d. Per credit hour costs
 - e. Length of agreement and minimum costs
6. Service Level Agreements
7. Evidence of user satisfaction with current customers
8. Independent usability studies conducted with each candidate vendor
9. Student technology requirements for online learning for various platforms and learning management systems including but not limited to the following: operating system, processing capability, browser type and speed, high speed internet, video capability, monitor resolution, and software
10. Potential integration with CampusVue, a unified academic and administrative student lifecycle platform
11. Potential Integration and/or compatibility with employee-based learning management system, Cornerstone on Demand.
12. Software support for social media
13. Provide recommendations on steps needed for offering online program in other states

CONFIDENTIALITY:

All information gathered during this feasibility study is to be considered proprietary information and is to be kept confidential and shared only with designated JEVS and Orleans Tech staff members.

QUALIFICATIONS:

JEVS is seeking a consultant(s) with the following qualifications:

1. At least three years of verifiable experience in distance learning education which includes extensive knowledge and experience of distance education program design, commercial learning management systems, and technology platforms
2. Demonstrated experience working with entrepreneurial organizations preferred
3. Capacity to complete this project by December 30, 2010

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS:**A. Table of Contents:**

Proposals must include a table of contents with page numbers covering all parts, including exhibits and addenda, with sufficient detail to facilitate easy reference to all requested information.

B. Contact Information:

Name, address, and telephone number of the consulting firm or individual, including a primary contact name, Email address, and direct phone number.

C. Introduction and Management Overview:

Provide a general description of the company's background, nature of business activities, experience in providing the required and related services (specifically address experience in distance education design, delivery, and online educational consulting) and staff qualifications. Provide a statement of understanding of the major objectives of the solicitation and the proposed approach to fulfilling JEVS' requirements.

D. Qualifications:

1. Provide the names of key personnel to be assigned to the project, including their titles, experience, and copy of CV.
2. Provide a full client list from the previous three years.

3. Describe your clients by their industry and field.

E. Response To Scope of Work:

Interested consultants must address the scope of work and requirements set forth in the RFP. The response must identify all proposed services to fulfill the stated requirements and follow the specified format by addressing the requirements in the order and manner presented, in sufficient detail to describe how the proposed process or approach meets the stated requirements.

After responding to each of the RFP requirements, consultants may present alternate and innovative approaches to meeting the requirements that may result in greater efficiency or cost savings to JEVS. Such alternative proposals must be clearly identified as such.

F. Proposal Narrative:

1. Responses to this RFP should demonstrate an understanding of the scope of work and the qualifications and experience of the respondent to complete the elements defined here within.
2. Respondents should describe the approach to learning about and understanding Orleans Tech, its vocational programs and the nature of its operations, and how they will work with staff members to facilitate the needs assessment and planning process.
3. Respondents should describe in detail the online education needs assessment and technology comparisons process to be utilized and include specific timelines and milestones by which primary activities of the process will be concluded.

G. Experience:

Please provide a sample/copy of previous distance education program design and consulting reports.

H. Price Quotation Format and Content:

1. Please provide a fixed cost bid including projected reimbursable expenses, if any, by major category e.g., i.e., travel, meetings, research, etc., which may be relevant to this RFP.
2. Proposals must include the required pricing information in the format specified in this section. All proposed products and services must be clearly identified.
3. Include quotes for all costs on a single, consolidated set of cost sheets that are clearly

identified as "Costs for Proposed Solution."

4. Quote individual prices for all items in the proposed solution, including separate prices for any proposed customization levels.
5. All prices quoted shall be firm and fixed for 120 days following the deadline for RFP submissions, or until a Contract is signed which establishes future pricing, whichever comes first.

I. Proposed Timetable:

Proposals must include a timetable for implementation of all phases of proposed feasibility study. This timeline must specify the critical decision points in the implementation process.

J. Application Instructions:

1. Please **submit one (1) electronic copy** of the proposal to contact listed below. Proposals must be received by **5:00 pm September 30, 2010**.
2. After a preliminary review of proposals, JEVS' selection committee will arrange an interview with each of its top choices to discuss the proposals in greater detail.

Proposals should be sent to:

Cynthia Jobe, Senior Grant Professional
JEVS Human Services
1845 Walnut Street, 7th floor
Philadelphia PA 19103
Email: Cynthia.Jobe@jevs.org
Phone: 215-854-1825

All interested respondents are **encouraged to Email Cynthia Jobe as soon as possible.** Please include: primary contact's name and email address. All future correspondence from JEVS regarding this RFP will be sent electronically to the individual named.

QUESTIONS:

All inquiries, questions, and requests for clarification on the contents of this RFP must be submitted by email to Cynthia.Jobe@jevs.org All **questions must be received by September 9, 2010.**

A listing of inquiries (without identifying the source of the inquiry) and JEVS' responses will be distributed by Email to all Bidders by September 10. All interested respondents are encouraged

to Email Cynthia Jobe as soon as possible in order to be included on the distribution list for questions and answers.

TIMELINE:

RFP issued August 26, 2010
Deadline for questions on RFPSeptember 8, 2010
Responses to questionsSeptember 9, 2010
Letter of Intent to Submit..... September10, 2010
Proposal Submissions Due.....September 30, 2010
Interview period for select respondents Oct 11-Nov 5 2010
Consultant Selected Nov 8, 2010
Complete study and report Due.....Dec 30, 2010