

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Justification and Approval
For
Other Than Full and Open Competition

1. **Contracting Activity:** Department of Veterans Affairs, VISN 8, located @ Lake City VA Medical Center, Purchase Order/Form 2237 # 485-14-1-414-0001
2. **Nature and/or Description of the Action Being Processed:** This is a request for other than full and open competition for the procurement of School at Work Program from Catalyst Learning Co. Contact: Tyrone Anderson, (502) 584-7337.
3. **Description of Supplies/Services Required to Meet the Agency's Needs:**

VISN 8 Medical Centers currently have limited opportunities for employees in grades GS-01 thru GS-05 and equivalent Wage Grades. Although the Stepping with PRIDE program targets GS 8 and below level staff, historical data shows that only higher level staff (GS 6-8) have successfully applied for that program. There is, therefore, a need to provide a career development program for lower GS level staff to improve upward mobility for those employees who often "feel stuck" in entry-level positions. To improve diversity within the organization, and to improve EEO performance, there is a need to have employees learning new tasks, and learning how to develop their skills in order to be successful in their career advancement. The School at Work (SAW), offered only by Catalyst Learning, provides learning opportunities to employees in GS-01 thru GS-05 and employees in Wage Grade equivalent. In the School at Work program, employees develop computer skills, math, reading, grammar, writing, medical terminology, principals of patient safety and satisfaction, and organizational skills.

School at Work (SAW) is a six month career development system that will be delivered within the seven VISN 8 Medical Centers using a blended learning system: on-line coursework, DVD classroom sessions, and participant workbooks. Instructional tools are provided by Catalyst Learning, a workplace education and e-learning company. During the SAW "Building A Career Ladder in Healthcare" program participants develop a Career and Learning Plan (CLP) that helps them identify and achieve personal career goals through self-assessments and other exercises. Students attend class two hours per week for twenty-two (22) weeks for a total of six months.

Each facility conducting a SAW session has a Coach and Career Advisor provided by each Medical Center. The Coach facilitates the blended learning system committing 4 hours per week (two hours in the classroom, and approximately two hours in the management of the program). The coach serves as a project manager for the SAW class, works closely with internal staff (e.g. student supervisors), keeps attendance records, and monitors the completion of the online components. The coach must have good computer skills, strong communication and facilitation skills, suggested previous experience in education, recruiting, or human resources, and must be familiar with the healthcare organization.

Catalyst Learning will provide the following services and products:

1. Renewal Site Fee for all seven facilities
2. SAW Student Packages/1 Quantity: 69

3. Additional Coach Packages/2 Quantity: 4
4. **1/** Includes total number of SAW student packages requested by each VISN 8 Site Coach
5. **2/**Additional Coach Packages – **Please Note:** 7 Coach Packages were Requested; Catalyst Learning will provide 3 of the 7 at no cost - at a savings of \$5,700.
6. See attached Proposal from Catalyst Learning for more information



VISN 8 School at
Work Renewal Propo:

4. Statutory Authority Permitting Other than Full and Open Competition:

- (1) Only One Responsible Source and No Other Supplies or Services Will Satisfy Agency Requirements per FAR 6.302-1;
- (2) Unusual and Compelling Urgency per FAR 6.302-2;
- (3) Industrial Mobilization, Engineering, Developmental or Research Capability or Expert Services per FAR 6.302-3;
- (4) International Agreement per FAR 6.302-4
- (5) Authorized or Required by Statute FAR 6.302-5;
- (6) National Security per FAR 6.302-6;
- (7) Public Interest per FAR 6.302-7;

5. Demonstration that the Contractor's Unique Qualifications or Nature of the Acquisition Requires the Use of the Authority Cited Above (applicability of authority):

Catalyst Learning is a Sole-Source Competitor and at this time the only known vendor who provides an "all-in-one" program that uses the blended learning system of on-line coursework, DVD Classroom Sessions, and participants workbooks.

The uniqueness of the package is due to several factors:

- SAW is a VHA- approved and recommended career development program as mentioned in the VHA's Workforce Development and Succession Plan. SAW is also featured in the VHA HPDM brochure as the suggested contract program for Level 1-4 and Wage Grade employees. Multiple VISN in the VHA have implemented the SAW program with positive results.
- The "Building a Career Ladder in Healthcare" curriculum is taught in a healthcare specific context (rather than generic, remedial education subject matter).
- SAW is a technology-enabled approach to training for adults with remedial education needs (rather than the traditional approach of a teacher in the classroom).
- Catalyst Learning prepares a Medical Center employee ("Coach") to facilitate the SAW program. The Coach's familiarity with and ability to work within the organization go beyond what is typically possible with an external teacher, and are important contributors to success.
- SAW is a career development system and combines career planning with education (rather than a standalone training program) and is integrated with the VHA's HPDM Model and PDP format.
- Catalyst Learning's Client Relations team works with the Coach throughout the 6-month period. The Company is "outcomes oriented" (as opposed to shipping workbooks and walking away) and work with Coaches throughout the period to achieve results.

6. Description of Efforts Made to ensure that offers are solicited from as many potential sources as deemed practicable:

Market Research was conducted and only found one company, Catalyst Learning, as the sole owner of the copyrighted and registered School-At-Work (SAW) program and materials.

7. Determination by the Contracting Officer that the Anticipated Cost to the Government will be Fair and Reasonable:

The pricing provided by the Contractor is considered to be fair and reasonable. The Contractor provided documentation showing that the Government receives a 3% discount over retail pricing. Past performance was researched and shows that VISN has been doing business with Catalyst Learning since August 2011 and pricing and performance has been acceptable.

8. Description of the Market Research Conducted and the Results, or a Statement of the Reasons Market Research Was Not Conducted:

The VISN DLO conducted a survey within the VHA of vendor-provided programs that will meet the career development needs of GS 1-5 level staff. It was determined that the SAW program by Catalyst Learning is the only program available that provides a complete package to address both the technical and personal/professional mastery components of the career development program for lower GS level staff. The VISN DLO and other DLOs from other VISNs are not aware of any direct competitors to this package of products/services.

9. Any Other Facts Supporting the Use of Other than Full and Open Competition:

FAR 6.302-1(b)(2) Unique supplies available from one source with unique capabilities. The existence of limited rights in copyrights makes this requirement available from only one source.

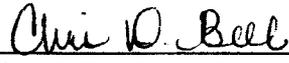
10. Listing of Sources that Expressed, in Writing, an Interest in the Acquisition:

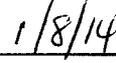
See Section 6 above.

11. A Statement of the Actions, if any, the Agency May Take to Remove or Overcome any Barriers to Competition before Making subsequent acquisitions for the supplies or services required:

Currently, these products are proprietary and there is no competition available.

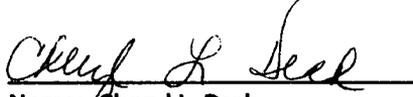
12. Requirements Certification: I certify that the requirement outlined in this justification is a Bona Fide Need of the Department of Veterans Affairs and that the supporting data under my cognizance, which are included in the justification, are accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief.


Chris D. Bell, VHA-COR
Administrative Support Assistant
VISN 8 – Education Service


Date

13. Approvals in accordance with FAR 6.304

- a. **Contracting Officer's Certification (required)**: I certify that the foregoing justification is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief.



Name: Cheryl L. Drak
Title: Contract Specialist
Facility: Bay Pines / NCO - 8

1/8/2014
Date

- b. **DNCM/PCM (Required \$3K and above)**: I certify the justification meets requirements for other than full and open competition.



Digitally signed by KAREN L. SPURLIN 422265
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Name: Karene L. Spurlin
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Facility: Tampa / NCO - 8

1/9/2014
Date