

**Call for Proposals: Developing U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)
Courses for Online Delivery (FY 2016)**

Do you:

Currently coordinate or teach a USGS scientific or technical course that could be delivered via the Internet to a wider audience including USGS employees, cooperators, contractors and/or partners?

Are you:

A USGS subject matter expert (SME) wanting to develop a new scientific or technical course for delivery via the Internet?

Responsible for a scientific/technical course in which all or parts of the course, or prerequisite materials, might be taught via the Internet?

If you answer “yes” to any of these questions, please consider submitting a proposal to develop your course for Distance Learning.

Background

In 2004, the Water Mission Area’s (WMA) Science and Technical Employee Development Committee (STED) recommended the purchase of software to enable USGS subject matter experts (SMEs), course developers, and course coordinators to redevelop existing classroom courses or create new courses for delivery online. The selected software is straightforward to use and once courses are “published,” they can be accessed through any web browser. This software also supports course narration, assessments, animations and synchronization of audio and slide content.

With the support of the Water Mission Area (WMA), the Office of Organizational and Employee Development (OED) purchased the necessary course development software. The OED assists USGS SMEs in the design, development, delivery and maintenance of scientific and technical online courses. To date, a number of SMEs from multiple USGS mission areas have been certified via the OED blended course, *Designing, Developing and Deploying Effective and Accessible Online Learning*.

The Goal of Distance Delivery of Courses

OED strives to provide effective, accessible and relevant learning on science and technical topics to USGS personnel, cooperators, partners and others. Additional information on courses already under development can be found at http://www.usgs.gov/humancapital/ecd/ecd_tel.html.

Direct Benefits to USGS

Online course delivery minimizes, and in many cases eliminates, travel for instructors and/or students. Online courses also reduce the hours an employee needs to spend away from his or her job. A 40-hour classroom-delivered technical course redesigned for online delivery is typically condensed to approximately 25-30 hours of employee contact time.

What Courses Work Best for Online Delivery?

An ideal course for online development is content “rich” and has clear learning objectives. Such courses may include step-by-step procedures, scientific and business concepts, syntax, computer languages and/or mechanical skills. Such a course may also utilize live, collaborative question-and-answer sessions, introductions and streaming-video demonstrations.

Not all courses will translate to effective online learning. For some courses, a “blended” delivery approach is the best choice. Blended courses allow certain modules to be redeveloped for online delivery while other modules are delivered via live cyber seminar, in the classroom, lab or field. They also offer a combination of self-paced lessons and live activities allowing collaboration between instructors and students via the Internet.

Who Should Submit a Proposal?

Proposals are encouraged from all USGS mission areas and USGS scientists, technicians, and administrative support staff. Your proposal should indicate that each identified SME is available to work on the course as necessary to ensure completion of all course modules by October 1, 2016.

Proposal Deadlines

The OED is currently accepting proposals and the deadline for all submissions is **July 31, 2015**.

Proposal Review Process

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- 1) Suitability of the course to online delivery
- 2) An estimate of course need, applicability to multiple USGS mission areas
- 3) Support of integrated science, connection to the USGS Science Strategy
- 4) The rationale for delivery as an online course

A panel comprised of OED staff and USGS Mission Area representatives will review and rank all proposals. Reviewers will recuse themselves from reviewing any proposal in the event of a conflict of interest.

The panel will make a recommendation to the Chief of OED who, in consultation with the Associate Director for Administration, will make the final decision on which proposal(s) are selected. Proposals for any courses that do not lend themselves to an online format or those requesting additional overhead and/or any funds outside of the scope of the project will be returned without review.

Time Requirements to Develop an Online Course

Online courses offer an efficient way to learn. Developing courses for online delivery can be time consuming, and each hour of online content may require a significant amount of a subject matter expert’s time to develop. Actual hours depend on the current state of the existing course content and materials, whether the class has been taught previously, the amount of student interactivity desired (class exercises, scenarios, assessments, etc.) and development experience of the subject matter experts involved. For a blended course, additional time will be needed by SMEs to provide real-time collaborative events and address student participant questions via

online “discussion” boards. Such courses may require additional hours each time the course is scheduled.

What is Provided if Your Proposal is Selected?

- Certification training for Lead Developer and any co-developers. This is a blended-learning event (i.e., does not require travel) and may take up to 15 hours. An Adobe® Presenter software license will be issued upon completion.
- OED’s Distance Learning Lead will work directly with the Lead SME Developer to ensure your course is instructionally sound, engaging, interactive, easily accessible and effective.
- Up to 50 percent of salary costs for any SME involved in the development process.
- Upon completion of your course, OED will deploy it from an appropriate server and assist with any live, collaborative sessions provided in the course.
- OED’s Distance Learning Lead will make a DOI LEARN course catalog entry for the course to allow students to register for the course, etc.
- QA/QC of each course module as they are developed.

What is Not Provided?

- Computer hardware.
- Any SME salary costs required to update your course in subsequent years.
- Salary support for the SME(s) involvement with any live course support activities for blended courses.
- Funding for any other type of support (note, fees are not charged for any OED staff support).
- Travel support.

Expectations of the Lead SME

- Actual course development will be conducted at the home office of the Lead SME unless otherwise arranged.
- Regular progress reports (see below).
- Alternative Text Tags for all graphics, photographs and all other non-text elements used in the course.

Course Accessibility

The OED Distance Learning Team will ensure that all funded courses are developed according to all Section 508 Accessibility guidelines.

Progress Reporting

A quarterly progress report from the Lead SME developer for the selected proposal with the total number of hours on the project by each SME involved.

Expectations of all Involved SME(s)

Again, redevelopment of existing classroom courses and development of new online courses requires considerable investment of the SME’s time. SMEs must also receive written supervisory approval for the time necessary to develop the course. Once developed, the course

may require periodic updates. In addition, blended courses may require instructor involvement each time the course is deployed on activities such as answering discussion board questions, conducting live lectures, Q&A sessions and evaluation of class exercises.

Proposal Instructions

Your proposal should be relatively short (up to 1,000 words) and needs to include enough information to allow for accurate evaluation. Please provide a course module breakdown with an associated completion date for each.

Proposals are accepted only as Microsoft® Word files. All proposals should be submitted as a single, complete document and be formatted to standard letter size (8.5" W by 11" L). Graphics, if included, should be embedded directly in the document. Do not send compressed files such as .ZIP files.

In your proposal, include a brief Return on Investment (ROI) calculation for your online course. Include the number of students you estimate will complete your course each fiscal year. How much travel and per diem costs will be avoided compared to offering your class in the classroom? Also list the benefits to the USGS to have your course available online.

All proposal submissions should be sent as an e-mail attachment to: tjlane@usgs.gov by July 31, 2015. Submitting authors will receive confirmation of receipt within two business days. If you do not receive a confirmation please call Tj Lane at 303-445-4677 and provide the Lead SME name and proposal title.

Proposal Tips from the OED:

To develop a successful proposal, please consider the following:

- Provide as much information as possible regarding course content and learning outcomes along with applicability to online delivery.
- Provide a clear rationale for why this course is needed, the target learner audience and the advantage of delivery via the Internet.
- Be clear and concise. Give brief examples of your major points and approaches.
- For proposals with more than one SME, include the names and roles of each.
- Indicate the current state of course materials (e.g., course handbook last updated in 2012 and course last taught in classroom setting in 2014).
- Indicate where the materials are located and the format used in creating them (e.g., PowerPoint®, Microsoft Word®, Excel, gif, jpg, etc.).
- Indicate any desired live events anticipated in your course (e.g., course intro, short lecture, Q&A session, etc.)
- Indicate any student assessments (tests, learning reviews), video clips, student exercises you might be considering.

To view last year's selected proposals go to:

<http://www.usgs.gov/humancapital/ecd/2014onlinecoursewinners.html>

Distance Learning Proposal Checklist
Short Course Title - Two or three key words for use as project name (25 characters maximum).
Descriptive Course Title - Actual title that will be used to identify the course in the DOI LEARN course catalog.
Lead SME Name Plus Any Additional SMEs - Include complete contact information, supervisor(s) name(s) and the role of each SME in course development.
Brief Explanation of Return on Investment to the USGS for Delivery Via the Internet - (\$ savings for per diem and travel, number of students the course will serve each year, etc.).
Brief Curriculum Vitae for Each SME - One (1) page maximum for each.
Problem Statement - Clear and concise statement of course purpose and its importance/relevance to the USGS mission.
Course Summary/Description - Appropriate for DOI LEARN course catalog (attached).
Indicate if the Course Has Been Taught Before in the Classroom - If so, when and by whom?
List Existing Course Materials Including Formats, etc.
Intended Audience - Include estimated number of potential course participants for three years after deployment. Include USGS and other Federal, State, and cooperator personnel (if any) who would benefit from the proposed course. Your course may be made publicly available upon approval by your management.
Anticipated Results and Benefits - Why is online delivery the best choice for your course?
Applicability of Course to Multiple USGS Mission Areas - Which mission areas would benefit?
Describe How the Course Will Support the USGS Science Strategy
Timetable - Course development activities by module with planned start and end dates (month/year).
Estimated Project Budget - Based on funding of 50% of all hours required for all SME(s) for each instructional module.
Estimated Number of Course Modules/Lessons - Modules typically involve one hour or less of participant contact time.
Course Updates - How often do you estimate updates be needed and who will do them?
Written Supervisory Approval - Include as attachment. Required for any all SMEs involved.

If you have any questions, please contact Tj Lane: 303-445-4677, tjlane@usgs.gov.