

Office of Personnel Management, US Government
Contract expands number of e-learning vendors

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Federal agencies will have more than 59 vendors in six specialized areas to choose from for their online learning services under a new contract awarded by the Office of Personnel Management last week.

OPM finally awarded the new GoLearn contract to replace the Transportation Department's Specialized Technical and Technology User Services contract that included only seven vendors.

OPM delayed the release of the request for proposals for GoLearn, one of the Office of Management and Budget's 25-e-government projects, twice, which pushed back the new contract by more than two years.

The contract included seven technical areas and 63 awards; the seventh area and four awards were to support the GoLearn.gov site. OPM received 96 proposals from 67 vendors.

"We spent considerable time and energy with representatives from across government on the contracting vehicle," said Jeff Pon, OPM's acting e-training project manager. "I am confident that our deliberate process has yielded a substantial service offering for the federal learning community."

The winning vendors included large and small companies, including eight that won in multiple functional areas.

GeoLearning Inc. of West Des Moines, Iowa, and Learn.com of Sunrise, Fla., won in three technical areas, including learning management system and learning content management system, training and content courseware and collaboration tools and human-capital performance applications.

"We are glad it is over with because it had been hanging out for long time, and it had not been an easy process," said Frank Russell, president of GeoLearning. "As technology evolves and things change, this will bring more players into the mix, which is good for government. There are new modules and functionalities that we are introducing and now these things can be added to the mix."

Additionally, the contract covers implementation, customization and integration support services, consulting, change management, academic licensing, credentials and online degrees.

Some vendors, though, wondered where the opportunities are after such a long delay. OMB reported that 71 agencies were using GoLearn in fiscal 2004 and, with the addition of the National Security Agency's FasTrac and the Commerce Department's National Technology Information Service online learning sites in September 2004, one vendor said new task orders may be hard to come by.

But Russell said he sees opportunities in the Homeland Security Department as well as in smaller agencies.