

Maine Community College System

Management Solution for MCCS Divisions of Workforce Training

RFP #202004

Transcript of Bidders Conference, Friday, April 17, 2020, 2pm EST

00:00

Marty Gang: Just after two o'clock, so we might as well get started. Greetings everybody who's here. My name is Marty gang, I'm the Chief Information Officer for the main community college system. And we're here today to talk about our RFP for implementation of a management solution for the Division of workforce training, I'll let the MCCS and college personnel introduce themselves first and then from there we'll get the introductions of everybody else who's here.

Dan Belyea: Thank you. Good afternoon. My name is Dan Belyea. I am the executive director of workforce training for the Maine Community College System.

Michelle Hawley: I am Michelle Hawley: Dean of Workforce and Professional Development at Central Maine Community College.

Scott Fortin: I'm the chief information security officer for the community college system.

Helen Pelletier: Good afternoon. I'm Helen Pelletier. I'm Vice President of the community college system.

Chris Eideh: Hello everybody, I'm Christ Eideh. I'm an account executive for Ellucien. And I am based in Massachusetts.

Jeff Whitlow: Thanks, Marty. Jeff Whitlow the Director of Sales here at CourseStorm which is a Maine based company here in Orono.

Kody Ellis: Hi all. Kody Ellis Desire2Learn or D2L. I'm the client sales executive that works in Maine.

Leidy Smith: Nice to meet everybody. I'm Leidy Smith. I am with Attain. We are a Salesforce services partner based out of Pennsylvania.

Kathy Starr: Afternoon everybody. I work with Leidy at Attain in the business development group.

Lou Camerlengo: Lou Camerlengo, president and co-founder of Five Star Development in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

03:37

Marty Gang: We're here today to basically take questions rather than give you a presentation about the process itself. I would rather leave the time for questions. Whoever wants to ask questions, you can

raise your hand and I can call on you would be the easily orderly way to do it. And you can use the virtual hand raise or you can just raise your hand flag.

Danielle Greenberg: Sorry about that. Yes. This is Danielle Greenberg, I'm an account executive with salesforce.org.

Marty Gang: Who wants to start with questions.

04:50

Chris Eideh: Well, Marty. I mean, I'll jump in. I know I did get your requirements document, but just on a personal level since we've got, you know, Sonia, Helen and Dan in here. You know, I'm just wondering, a couple things. So why now? I saw you had a Go Live date for November. So I'm wondering if there's any compelling event wrapped around that, and if you could, help share any information around that. That would be great.

Marty Gang: Good question, Dan, you want to handle it.

Dan Belyea: Yeah, absolutely. Why now? We currently don't have a workable system. We're using different sorts of processes at our seven campuses. No unified approach. The things that you see in the RFP are the desires that we have to make use of a very seamless, workable solution. The sooner the better. You could ask that question of Michelle Hawley. She's actually based on the ground, taking registrations, and that's why she and I were talking a few minutes ago, that it's a very manual process.

Marty Gang: And I will interject, though it was not the deciding factor for the timeline. It wasn't even considered in the timeline, but COVID-19 has certainly increased the need for getting this up, running, and going very quickly and effectively and efficiently. Because both the fact that we need something that's automated and very less interpersonal in the sense of face-to-face and paper and also because workforce development is going to become far more important as the unemployment rates suddenly rocket.

07:00

Lou Camerlengo: Hi this is Lou. I was curious if you would consider a custom solution or are you looking for something that's more of a product or a configuration.

Marty Gang: Dan, it's still your bailiwick. You want to answer that one?

Dan Belyea: I think it's fair to say that we're looking for a system that's going to work for all of our seven college campuses. We're certainly not interested in customization at any of the locations. We all want to look the same, act the same, same feel the same. We have a number of users that will maybe take classes with Michelle in Auburn and maybe they take classes elsewhere. So we want to we want that ease of use for everyone. I'm not an IT expert and don't ever pretend to be one. Michelle could good sort of dive into that and or Marty, but I really think what we're doing right now is not working, there's a lot of Excel spreadsheets. Paper forms. It's not a good way for us to be operating, and we've been talking about this solution for some time and now it's the time.

08:45

Lou Camerlengo: So thanks, Dan, so in relation to something that you would be licensing on an annual basis or something that would be created for you that you could own outright. Any preference?

Marty Gang: If you're asking for the difference between a highly customized solution, one for each college and an out-of-the-box solution versus a built solution. We're asking for a solution that will work uniformly across all the colleges. It doesn't matter so much that it's an out of box solution as it does that it is a supportable sustainable solution that can work for all the same in a way which meets everybody's needs without being so highly customized that each college becomes too unique.

09:41

Lou Camerlengo: That's helpful thank you. So in relationship to that and if it was something that was built for you. Do you have anything around preferred development platforms? I'm just curious if you would be considering something that would be a solution that would be specifically built for you. Do you have kind of a preferred platform? Would it be something that you would be interested in kind of maintaining yourself or have someone maintained for you?

Marty Gang: I can tell you this very quickly and simply, we don't have the application development team. So we're looking for something that the vendor will host and sustain for us.

Lou Camerlengo: Great, thank you.

Marty Gang: Scott, do you want to add anything in the way of security or information into that.

Scott Fortin: I think that sums it up pretty well. We do have some developers on staff but they primarily deal with integration work between, you know, making a system work better for a business process or something. And we're trying to stay out of the custom application development that we then have to maintain. So that's where a hosted would work well here. And something that obviously stays up to date with, you know, patches in addressing security concerns on an ongoing basis.

Lou Camerlengo: Okay, great. Thank you. That's helpful. I mean, there's definitely some questions I have, and I think based on that, I would rather have my team assemble things more kind of specifically that we can send out to. So I don't want to take up a lot of time with that. Okay.

11:30

Marty Gang: Okay, thank you. Other questions. I'm sure there's plenty.

Chris Eideh: So I've got another one. So from an integration perspective. Are you looking at wanting to integrate this with your current Jenzabar environment or something else, your D2L? I mean, whatever else you're using there. What's your integration strategy? How important is that for this particular project.

Marty Gang: This project the integration strategy, and I'll let the others also answer, but from the IT perspective, is critical. We need to be able to take data automatically from this system and put it into Jenzabar, which is our system of record. And we will also need to be able to take information out of the system and populate into D2L for classes and other things. We really do not want to have to do any form of double entry: use this system and then enter into Jenzabar by hand or enter into D2L by hand. We

need the processing of the data to be able to be transferred from one system to the other, preferably using the API's and automatically. But definitely, in a way, if it's a custom written export, it needs to be done seamlessly and well.

Chris Eideh: Alright, thanks.

12:59

Kody Ellis: A. Just a quick question there as well. I noticed there was no content piece that MCCS is looking for. So you will be providing all your own content for your workforce partners, is that correct?

Marty Gang: Dan you want to answer that one?

Dan Belyea: So you're talking about course information?

Kody Ellis: Yeah, you can look at course information. Yeah, that's probably the simplest way to look at it. Any content that the learners would be studying.

Dan Belyea: Well, if you're talking about course information or you're talking about course registration information.

Kody Ellis: Course information, not registration.

Dan Belyea: Yeah so. So that gets built on our end in set-up so that the colleges can build those aspects of the portfolio that they are going to be offering. Would that be correct, Michelle?

Michelle Hawley: Yeah, so our course descriptions are pulled from our current up into the system we select. The other important piece about that is that we also have to be able to pull scheduling and doing our scheduling because we want to be able to do it in one place.

Marty Gang: If you're asking specifically about course content in the sense of, do we have courses already written that's sitting in Jenzabar E-learning or Blackboard or sit in others. Then, the answer is yes, but most of that can either be exported or put into our system of record for E-learning, which is D2L, or we can rebuild it into the new system.

Dan Belyea: And there is custom courses or training offerings that the campus will be doing differently at different sites. So those will be built as needed from that campus that's working with the business on a training opportunity.

15:21

Kody Ellis: Thank you. And then just continue with that when you say on page 31 number 7.1 in the RFP, you said you talked about end-user training. Are you referring to the six to eight power users or like the end users of this system that will be using it. Like the learners itself.

Marty Gang: The in-depth onsite workforce training staff will be the one, if that's what you're talking about. It's the actual people like Michelle and others who will be using the system is what we're discussing in that point of training.

16:11

Lou Camerlengo: Hi this is Lou again. The requirements are very detailed which we certainly appreciate. I know there was a lot of time and effort that went into that. So I guess my overall question is, can you talk a little bit about the process that you went through to identify these. And do you feel based on that process that it is comprehensive and complete, or will there be a need to do some additional requirements gathering as part of the overall project?

Marty Gang: I can see by Michelle's face and Sonia's face and Dan's face. They want to contribute. I've never worked in a project where we have gotten all the requirements up front. So I'm certain we'll need to do a little bit of requirements gathering, no matter what. However, a lot of work has gone into this and I'll let Michelle, Dan and Sonia discuss

Sonia Dore: Do you want me to join? The process that we did, I tried to document. You know, I'm a project manager. I'm not a business analyst, but I did part of that work to get through, you know, I wanted to know more about all the colleges, the way that they were processing the registration and managing courses and all of the business processes related to the workforce training, then we did a lot of workshops to try to gather the information and I mapped the "as is", the current, processes. Then I built around 25 mapping diagrams to define the current processes. That will give you a good idea of how things are done currently. As Dan said at the beginning, it's really a manual process for almost 80% of the colleges. And then it was almost easy to identify what we would like because once that was defined that made people more aware of the way that they were doing things because nothing was documented. When you know where you're starting from, it is easier to know where we want to go and what the pain points are. Where there is a bottleneck in the process. Where are the integration points with Jenzabar, and you know all these kind of things are popping up during the analysis.

From there I went online and I did a lot of research about all of yours, checked about the solutions and tried to compare the mapping that I have done and find automatic process online that the solution can offer to us, then I think it's not rocket science, but because I was on your site before as a vendor and I know what you will require the first day, when you will be on board. We have a SharePoint website where the documentation is there.

But to be honest with you. Some of the colleges could not provide me all the detailed processes. They will still have some work to do there. And the targeted process are not defined. Then we will need your help to confirm you know where we are going with the process. Then I don't know Michelle, maybe you can add something on that.

Michelle Hawley: I think that Sonia has done an amazing job with trying to take seven different colleges processes and trying to map. What we all do. And when she refers to not having all of the pieces on some campuses, it's, it's literally because it takes multiple hands to get the job done, because it is so very manual. Some of us have an opportunity and understanding of how the systems work and can answer those questions. But some of them. It's all paper driven. So it's very difficult to document. This, product will be extremely helpful in automating a lot of things that we do manually. So I'm excited to see where this goes.

Dan Belyea: And I also will add in fairness to the gaps that may exist, which I don't believe are huge but we actually milled this process with folks like Michelle, who are the end users and who are dealing with

all of the pain points and processes that are so archaic. So it was an extremely good process. You did a great job organizing all of those cats to the end result on where we are. And I think we've come out with some really good information.

Sonia Dore: But at the beginning we worked on the business needs and the pain points, and I worked to make sure all people were on the same page and agreed about what we have in that document, then that will be really helpful for you guys. I tried to involve everybody. It's a big challenge because it's all over Maine. We are not, you know, all in the same place in Portland, ME. That will be part of your challenge, too, when it will be the time to have that kind of meeting or the implementation, but we will have a team in place to support you and help you to facilitate that work.

Marty Gang: One of the things to consider is the fact that each college is of a different size. Each college has a different size and amount of staff and people dedicated. Some colleges have enough people that they try to do a personalized touch. And in the past, they done a personalized approach to each organization they were providing training to and that process of being able to individualize how we interact with vendors and with people that we're trying to do business with is not something we necessarily want to go away, but we need to have a uniform process that allows them to do things efficiently and effectively across so that's part of the reason why the requirements will have gaps is because there were places where people would individualize things. And we're not trying to eliminate some of the interpersonal individualization, we're just trying to do the automation in a way which is uniformed across to make it easier for everybody to do their job and to allow the vendors to also interact directly with us.

Sonia Dore: I imagine the system will have a core functionality, but we will still need some customization to support college needs because their offerings can be different.

24:24

Lou Camerlengo: It's very comprehensive. I mean, I understand how complex that can be with all the different stakeholders. So, and it makes it, you know, very easy to understand. Have the college's collaborated on anything like this in the past, in other words, is this something that would be totally new? I'm even just thinking about rollout change management. I mean, you know, we have all the super users, but as you know it you know there's this concentric circle of people that are going to be impacted. So I'm curious if you've undertaken anything like this before. And any learning from that. And my other question is the college's themselves. Do you work as seven different kinds of independent organizations in most cases or is there commonality between the courses and transfer agreements and those types of things? I'm just trying to get a sense of what the overall culture is like of the organization to see, you know, how much heavy lifting there may be in getting something like this adopted.

Marty Gang: You ask some great questions. I'll answer the first question you asked, which was, have we done anything like this before. We're in the process of putting out D2L as our one adopted learning management system across all seven colleges in the system office. It was one of the first times that we've done a single platform across everyone. It is a single hosted instance which is the same thing we're asking for this to be. Everybody is putting their data, their authentication and everything into it from seven separate systems into that single instance of D2L. And it's been a great learning experience. The biggest part of the learning experience is to ensure that you build a team of positive individuals who

can go back to their college and influence the college culture to join the corporate culture that's being built.

One an example is we have Sonia here who is a contractor, Dan who's in charge of workforce development, and Michelle who's been of workforce development. Those are all positive people who have added immensely to the project and to get things moving and going. It's those key people who help us bring the culture across all seven colleges.

You had asked several other questions. I'll see if Dan and Michelle want to answer some of the others.

Dan Belyea: Be glad to. I work for the system office. Michelle works directly for her local college campus. So I don't supervise Michelle. But we work as a team across the state as workforce professionals. We meet frequently. As of the last couple weeks, we've been meeting every week or twice a week. We work very closely together. My program funds a lot of job training in the state where we grant the funds to the college. So we have a close connection to the work that college does in the grant program that we run. The college also has fee-for-service activities. So they work with business partners as well. But I would describe our relationship with the campuses as very cooperative. Our college presidents are cooperative and unified with each other. We try to make as many group decisions as we can and try to align those things that are helpful to us all. It's no different than, you know, we went out three years ago to select one bookstore vendor for all seven college colleges, and we were successful in that process. I would I would see us being very successful in this process as well. When Jenzabar was a new product that came along, the colleges teamed up together. They worked collaboratively. So I don't see this being a problem. Our college presidents, right now, as we're going through COVID-19, we meet once a day and it's a lot of good conversation about what we're doing together. So I don't think it will be a culture issue. And I can tell you, and Michelle can speak to it. Our workforce folks are desperate for the solution. They've got to get their time off these paper processes and engaging their business partners and their clients and not entering information three or four times. And it's just crazy. So I think you'll find them very motivated

Lou Camerlengo: Good, thank you. I appreciate that.

Marty Gang: Michelle, did you want to add anything or Helen, did you want to add anything

Michelle Hawley: I will have worked for the system or the college for 25 years in October, and one of the other things that we've also collaborated on was a \$13 million TAACCCT grant where we had to actually look at data and have data collection across the system. And that was really the first time I think that we understood how different each of the colleges were and were hot. I was the TAACCCT grant manager and we were able to navigate and get data collected in a uniform way so the colleges are, you know, more than happy to help and work and cooperate on projects of that scale. So I don't think that there will be an issue. And speaking from my current position, I would tell you that with the COVID-19 grant funding that we have put together really quickly with numerous programs up, there is a dire need for automation. My email is blowing up right now with people who've been displaced and trying to go through prerequisites for programs and ensure that we have all the documentation and then come through and it's just it's overwhelming right now. So this really could not come fast enough.

31:00

Lou Camerlengo: Yeah, I appreciate that. Well, the timeline's pretty aggressive. Are you comfortable that you would be able to kind of evaluate and make a decision and get started as quickly as you have indicated in the RFP?

Dan Belyea: To get started, absolutely. Tomorrow.

00:31:35

Leidy Smith: The RFP states questions are due Monday. So I'm just confirming that there's still the opportunity to ask questions in written form and will those answers be shared with everybody on the call, or just with the people asking the question.

Marty Gang: Almost always after a bidders conference with Q&A there's almost always follow up questions, you go back to your technical staff and they say, what about this. What about this. So yes, absolutely. Send written questions in on Monday, based on discussion. I will post all written questions and answers for those written questions on the RFP. I will reply to anybody who sends a question that your question has been posted on the sheet on the RFP. What that means is anybody who checks the page has the ability to see those questions and answers. So I would strongly for those of you on the call. I would strongly suggest Monday afternoon or Tuesday, you check to see what's up. And what's going on from there. [Answers to written questions will be posted on Thursday, April 22.]

32:47

Leidy Smith: Okay. And I had a follow up question to that. We in partnership with Salesforce replied to a CRM RFP that Michelle put out last summer and I noticed there's really not a whole lot of CRM functionality requested in this response unless I'm missing it somewhere. My question is, are you looking for any of that sort of functionality to be layered on top of this as maybe an alternative response or would you be looking at a CRM as a follow up functionality. Once you get the course catalog and course registration process completed.

Marty Gang: From a technical standpoint, I would suggest anybody and everybody write their best proposal forward and they can submit more than one. You can submit a proposal that says here's what you're asking for. Here's the additional things I can give you. So that in case we can't afford anything additional or we can't afford what we're thinking we can we have the opportunity to start and you can layer on. However, Michelle. And, Dan, what do you guys think on that question?

Dan Belyea: We obviously decided to bite this piece off. I think our intention is to add that functionality later down the road.

Dan Belyea: That was a huge discussion with our workforce, folks, and Michelle can speak on that. That's something folks are very interested in having. We just weren't sure if we're going to be able to squeeze it in the current RFP that we put up.

Sonia Dore: That's why, as you can see in the requirements. You know, there is permission. It's really functionality related to the CRM. But the bite to take everything at the same time, we have to build a solid foundation, because we are so far away, you know, and the basic need for now is really to business

as usual, the registration and all the payment and the course. But for sure the CRM is a big interest, but short-term it's something that we cannot prioritize. We need really need to build that foundation.

35:11

Jeff Whitlow: I was gonna ask a quick question about timing again just to go back to that real quick. You know I've heard a bunch of you talk just about the process today is just such a headache. And I've heard some terms like you guys are fairly desperate to find a solution. Or the users on your staff end are desperate for a solution. Is the timing, you know, with an out of box solution that meets the needs is timing a consideration to some providers that don't have to, you know, custom build the solution. Is that something that's really important if we can move? I feel like we can move a lot faster than the November timeframe. And kind of looked at that and thought that was kind of a ways out. Is that something that's important if a vendor can move faster?

Marty Gang: I'm going to answer really quickly and briefly saying a very canned answer to that question, meaning we will gladly take things sooner than later.

36:22

Jeff Whitlow: I did have one other question I think that'll kind of fulfill my question. The vision for the college system. Just want to make sure that I understand it is that each individual college will obviously have their own registration site. But is there also a goal to—statewide—for students to be able to, you know, kind of have like a roll-up site that you can find different opportunities across the state of Maine, on more of like a statewide type page system as well as individual college that also can roll up to that statewide page?

Marty Gang: Dan, do you want to answer that.

Dan Belyea: Yes. Yes to that answer.

Jeff Whitlow: Okay, thank you.

Dan Belyea: We're currently practicing that right now in our COVID-19 short-term training offerings where we put up a number of programs that sit on our system website that include all of the campuses. So the answer to your question is yes.

37:29

Kody Ellis: For your workforce learners, are you wanting them to be able to also potentially register into like as a student if they're wanting to do more? But let's say upscaling or re skilling with basically take a course as a workforce or number, then they're like, well, I want to now register as a student at MCCS. Is that something you're also looking to combine or you want to keep this as separate as possible.

Marty Gang: Dan, I can answer for it. But you're the one with the functional side where you answer.

Dan Belyea: We would like any functionality that would benefit our trainees to become students if that's something that would happen. I would say, Michelle, shaking her head to that, obviously that's we're trying we're attempting to create very transparent pathways from short term training.

38:37

Leidy Smith: I have a question on the integrations with Jenzabar. Sounds like each campus has its own Jenzabar system. Is it safe to say that the integrations then would need to be with each system or is central going to be surfacing any sort of central tables or consuming data centrally that you would then distribute out to the campuses.

Marty Gang: We are open technologically at this point to whatever would work best if it is that system flowing into a central and then the college is pulling from that central but we would need help. Developing that solution if that were the best way forward. Ultimately, the college system of record is Jenzabar. So we need the data to go into each individual college system. How that is accomplished we have less concern, as long as it's done in a manner which was both secure and transparent so that we can figure out what's going on. And we can track down any problems that we can then follow and do whatever is needed to get things right. I don't care if it stops at a central point or if it goes to the college. Ultimately, we do have a data warehouse where we pull data from the colleges. So if we reverse the process for this product and just started into the center and then distributed out or if we went to the colleges, we still have to pull it up to that central. I don't really have a preference from a technological standpoint, which direction it goes in which route it takes. Scott from a security standpoint. What's your preference?

Scott Fortin: Well, just speaking recently to our, our D2L project that is actually still ongoing. It did require integration with each student information system to pull a course data. And we were able to sort of template a method to get that data and then perform minor tweaks at each college based on stuff they've done over the years, local customization. So both, both are okay with me from a security perspective. The central out, you know, kind of the hub and spoke model, is something we haven't done before. So we would definitely need assistance implementing that kind of system.

41:10

Leidy Smith: What's your data warehouse?

Scott Fortin: Data Warehouse is fed by stored procedures on each colleges database and those on a nightly or scripted basis feed a central sequel server with certain data that is important for, you know, IPEDS reporting and regulatory stuff we need to analyze data and get figures or draw trends, analytic stuff. So that's what that system is used for. That's a growing space. The Institutional Research branch of our institution is working on standardizing that data at some colleges and making that work a little better. But that's an ongoing challenge that could take years.

Marty Gang: And we also have cloud based Tableau Server as a reporting tool against that data warehouse.

Marty Gang: Just a time check for everyone. It's almost 2:45pm. We've got about 15 minutes left. I do have a hard stop at three o'clock.

Lou Camerlengo: I'm good from my end. So thank you.

Marty Gang: Anyone else?

42:37

Jeff Whitlow: I want to clarify the API integration. Is that something you're expecting the vendor to put development into to connect to Jenzabar or is that something from your IT perspective that you guys would handle?

Marty Gang: If you have experienced connecting with Jenzabar working with their API. That's awesome. We also have a pool of hours that we can work directly with Jenzabar and get them to do their side of it. At the very least, you would need to be able to present us with a file, file definitions and everything else so that we could then go to Jenzabar and sit in between your people and Jenzabar's people doing whatever is necessary to get things done. We're doing that right now with some things with the D2L integration where we're using both Jenzabar and the vendor. Jenzabar works very well with any of the vendors we bring to the table and they work well with us. So it's not a problem in that regard.

43:42

Kody Ellis: One more question from my end around the training piece. You said you wanted in-classroom training for your power users or end users. And if obviously COVID 19 is still happening at that point, will you accept virtual training or postpone? How would you guys like to proceed with that, if that is still the case?

Marty Gang: If life intercedes we will do things virtually just like the vendors conference today. Not a problem. To be honest, I expect the presentations will be Zoom based when normally we prefer them in person.

Sonia Dore: Marty, from the pricing purposes for the RFP, the vendors should consider it like it is now, and we might have some we might have on site training.

Marty Gang: Yeah, well please bid according to the specs, according to what we asked. If we end up doing things virtually I would assume the travel costs would not be charged. But thank you, Sonia. That's a good point.

Marty Gang: Other questions.

Marty Gang: Well, I guess I can give you 15 minutes of your day back if you're done with questions. I'll stick around here for another 10 minutes in case anybody happens to drop in, but otherwise I will post a link to the recording on the website where you found the documents. But unless anybody has any further questions, you're free to drop off.

[Bidders Conference Ends]