

Questions and Answers for BAA W911QY-BAA-FY17 Topic #4 Update

1. Should the vendor assume continuing with USNORTHCOM as the partner for “scaled up pilot tests”?

A: Most likely.

2. What do you see as the importance of addressing technical risk (e.g. from open questions about microcontent pedagogy)?

A: High, because this is an issue that must be addressed during the development phase across the POM.

3. What is the intended relationship between PERLS and TLA?

A: PERLS should be TLA compliant, to the extent possible (i.e., to the extent the TLA specs are defined). As a stretch goal, PERLS should participate in the TLA empirical testing and other integration events—if this does not distract from the primary PERLS development goals.

4. Do we follow the format as per the base BAA?

A: Yes.

5. Are there any specific guidelines or is contractor-specified format still acceptable?

A: Contractor-specified format is still acceptable.

6. What is the expected timeline for this effort?

A: The limits for BAA proposals may range from 6 months to 5 years.

7. Should we infer that this effort should be front-loaded?

A: No response. The task should be bid as the offeror best sees fit to accomplish the requirements.

8. How do we account for potential future PERLS transition work?

A: There is no such requirement at this time, but any proposal should address the ability to proceed from this effort to an operational capability.

9. This BAA includes both research and engineering efforts. Is there a particular balance of those with respect to developing new capabilities critical to this effort?

A: No; however, any additional research should directly support the transition of the PERLS system into an operational capability. Discover and innovation research is not appropriate for this effort. Research proposals will be evaluated based on the value-added to the overall effort.

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10. Any guidance on cost?

A: No.

11. Does cost need to be covered in the white paper?

A: Yes, to the level of detail to evaluate if the proposal will be feasible (for example, a level 1 Work Breakdown Structure).

12. The document calls for measurable milestones. Given that this is a research effort, what is the intent there?

A: The intent is to manage risk to the overall effort. The work should be structured towards key deliverables (capabilities or products) with intermediate assessments of progress for identifying issues early on.

13. Is the recommendation capability considered to be a critical one?

A: The self-regulated learning characteristic of PERLS is one of the defining features of this capability, which indicates its relative importance.

14. Is crowd-sourcing for generating micro-content critical to this effort?

A: Yes, but it is one of several components listed there – part of this research will be learning about each of these.

15. The document mentions APIs for 3rd party content – is there a set of specs/standards other than TLA?

A: TLA itself is a set of specifications and standards for the future learning ecosystem, which will evolve over time.

16. Can we assume a fully cooperative set of partners; e.g. for the Kirkpatrick Level II experiment?

A: We presume this question is asking about access to empirical testing human subjects. In this case, the answer is yes. However, this is an example of the importance clearly defining the necessary Government Furnished support required for the offeror's proposal to succeed. That is, if it is clearly requested in the white paper and proposal, then the Government can identify the necessary participants and empirical testing partners.

17. Adaptability of the recommender system to learning technologies?

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A: This is focused on requiring proof and validation that the system provides recommendations based on user input, interaction cues, external data points, situational context, etc. Such proof could be provided in various ways, but the point was to require validating and documenting the recommendation engine(s) and adapted content based on various inputs and resulting in relevant outputs provided to users.

18. What is the intent of the phrase “user-adapted content”?

A: It reflects the adaptability of the recommender system to accommodate self-regulated learning for the user.

19. Self-regulated content best practices refers to methods and concepts; does that exclude the development of tools for creating self-regulated content?

A: No, there was a bias for phrasing in capabilities over time, but note the next clause includes a reference to tools.

20. Are costs for options counted against the overall effort?

A: Yes. The total cost of the proposed effort will be evaluated, and each task will be assessed for value individually.

21. The requirement calls for integration with at least 3 external content sources. Does this preclude integrating with an app that includes content for more capability?

A: The proposal will not be penalized for this; it will be assessed for value added.

22. Is there a need for metadata processing?

A: Yes, as a value-added element of the proposal.

23. Should this effort attempt to integrate with this year’s TLA demonstration?

A: This was assessed as too high risk for this year based on the short timeline. Any proposal to participate in this year’s demo must be assessed against any additional risk to the demo itself.

24. Is the TLA requirement mandatory or to be included as an option?

A: This is not mandatory. Offerors may include the TLA integration in the base and/or option periods.

25. Is it advantageous to include broader TLA participation such as generating xAPI data, record stores, etc. for other community use?

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A: This is desirable as a standing practice, but it is not a requirement.

26. What is the target audience?

Department of Defense military and civilian personnel.

27. Is there a down-select at the white paper and/or proposal phase?

A: A down-select is common at the white paper phase and can happen at the proposal phase.

28. Was there a formal evaluation of PERLS at the end of the previous effort?

A: Yes, documented in a 2017 I/ITSEC paper, *A Mobile Strategy for Self-Directed Learning in the Workplace*, authors Michael Freed, Louise Yarnall, Aaron Spaulding, & Melinda Gervasio.

29. What languages is the code written in?

A: The PERLS project uses 3 languages, in addition to the typical CSS / HTML for web browsers:

- 1- JavaScript (NodeJS, KOA, and React)
- 2- Java (build with Gradle – pronounced “Gray-dle”)
- 3- Swift

The services are stood up with Docker, with the system being configured with Docker-Compose.

30. Are the three external content sources defined?

A: No, and you can use existing platforms.