Overview

This request for quotations is seeking a researcher to verify and assemble information from 10-15 Commonwealth reports into an Excel-based spreadsheet (for use in Google Sheets). These reports list and review existing training resources suitable for the ten ‘Action Groups’ under the Commonwealth Blue Charter (see below). The contractor will also provide text for a succinct user manual to guide the user through the various keyword and filter options. This information will be housed online, as an ocean training catalogue for Commonwealth country officials.

(There is a second related contract is to develop the online user interface. As that the skills to create a database-driven website are distinct from the skills to collate and organise the information going into the database, these are two separate contracts. However, a contractor may bid on both, separately, if so qualified.)

Under these two separate but related contracts, the Commonwealth Secretariat is seeking to engage qualified consultants to develop a comprehensive online training catalogue to assist the 10 ocean-focussed ‘Action Groups’ under the Commonwealth Blue Charter access relevant trainings. This online training catalogue should be easily navigated through a simple layout with clear structure and amply hyperlinked content.

Background

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 54 independent and equal sovereign states and home to 2.4 billion people. The Commonwealth Secretariat is an independent organisation working with the 54 member countries and assists them together to promote prosperity, democracy and peace, amplify the voice of small states, and protect the environment.

The Commonwealth Secretariat’s Trade, Ocean and Natural Resources Directorate assists its member countries to sustainably manage their natural resources, in the ocean and on land, for the benefit of present and future generations. The Secretariat provides technical assistance and support member countries in the development of policies, laws, design of fiscal regimes and strengthening national institutions.

The Commonwealth Blue Charter is an agreement by Commonwealth countries to actively cooperate in addressing the myriad of ocean-related issues and commitments that they face. The world’s ocean is essential to life on our planet. Billions of people depend on it for their
livelihoods, yet human activity is increasingly putting the health of this crucial natural resource in peril. These are not issues that any single country can solve alone.

In April 2018, the Commonwealth Blue Charter was adopted by member countries, to guide cooperative action on ocean issues. Commonwealth Blue Charter Action Groups are member-driven, led by Commonwealth Blue Charter ‘Champion’ countries. Through working together, Action Groups unlock the experiences and knowledge of their member countries and partners.

To date, 15 countries have stepped forward to be Champions on 10 topics of their choosing:
- Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance (marine plastic pollution)
- Coral Reef Protection and Restoration
- Mangrove Ecosystems and Livelihoods
- Marine Protected Areas
- Ocean Acidification
- Ocean and Climate Change
- Ocean Observation
- Sustainable Aquaculture
- Sustainable Blue Economy
- Sustainable Coastal Fisheries.

Over the past year, the Commonwealth Blue Charter’s 10 Action Groups have been setting priorities and developing their individual Action Plans, taking into account their regional needs and resource requirements. To support Commonwealth country officials, the Commonwealth Secretariat has identified and populated online training resources for each of the 10 Action Groups.

Objectives & Purpose of the Consultancy

The objective of this consultancy is to review and organise content from 10-15 existing reports (of about 10-20 pages each) into an Excel-based spreadsheet (to be uploaded to Google Sheets). This request for quotations (RFQ) is made up of two separate but related contracts. Interested parties may submit letters of interest to either or both of them.

1) **Research (this RFQ):** design and populate a spreadsheet that lists training opportunities. The researcher will need to verify and summarise annotated information in existing reports, as well as write text for a succinct user manual on how to search / filter on various fields.

2) **[Technical development of online frontend and backend (see other RFQ):** Developing an online interactive interface that will guide users through available training options -the visible (website-based) part of the catalogue; and developing an updateable database that will feed the frontend and populate the catalogue with training options -the invisible database part of the catalogue.]

The ocean training catalogue will be a user-friendly package with a clear user manual and an annotated searchable database.
The spreadsheet should capture the following information (note - this is just an indicative list, and will be discussed further with the successful consultant(s)):

- Name of training
- Relevance to each of the 10 Action Groups (yes/no)
- Relevance to ~5 crosscutting themes (to be provided to the contractor) (yes / no)
- Type of training courses available (virtual, in-person or combination)
- Cost (if any)
- Geographical focus (global, regional, national)
- Length of training
- Speed of internet connection required (fast / medium /slow - as already identified in the reports)
- Links:
  - Main link to training home page
  - Additional links to supplementary materials, if applicable
  - Link to application forms (if available), and
  - contact persons
- Brief outline of application process, if applicable
- Key timelines (open and closing dates if any)
- Type of organisation offering the training
- Commentary (as derived from the reports, which may fall under a couple headings, to be determined in further discussions)

Expected Deliverables and Location

a) A draft work plan to be agreed with the Commonwealth Blue Charter Team
b) First draft/mock-up of the fields in a spreadsheet (basic Excel is sufficient, without macros or widgets), with a few examples, for review by the Secretariat;
c) Final completed spreadsheet;
d) Draft user manual text (no more than 10 pages, and preferably less);
e) Final text;
f) PowerPoint presentation of the catalogue that can be presented online to the users (Commonwealth governments);
g) Final report to the Commonwealth Secretariat that includes recommendations on how to keep the online catalogue / database up to date and relevant, as well as providing all necessary supporting data such that it can be maintained by the Secretariat.

The work may be conducted from any location within the Commonwealth. The appointed consultant team should provide their own computer equipment, computer applications and internet connection.

Duration and Timeframe

The consultancy is expected to take place between 15 March and 30 April 2021.
A proposed overall work plan will be agreed with the Commonwealth Blue Charter team at the start of the contract.

A suggested activity schedule for the assignment is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deliverable</th>
<th>Final Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Submit draft workplan and outline for the spreadsheet fields</td>
<td>26 March 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit first draft of the spreadsheet (with example data)</td>
<td>09 April 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit first draft of the guidance text</td>
<td>09 April 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit the fully populated spreadsheet</td>
<td>19 April 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit the guidance text</td>
<td>19 April 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revisions / updates as required</td>
<td>By 28 April 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PowerPoint presentation</td>
<td>By 28 April 2021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submission of final report including recommendations on database upkeep</td>
<td>By 30 April 2021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If this suggested timeline is not achievable, alternative timings should be proposed in the proposal submitted.

**Project Management and Reporting**

The project will be coordinated through the Oceans and Natural Resources (ONR) Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat. The successful consultant will be expected to work in close consultation with the Commonwealth Blue Charter team within ONR.

**Estimated Budget**

The total budget payable under this contract will be between £2500 and £3500 (including VAT or other applicable taxes). Maximum budget cannot exceed more than £4000 (including all taxes). Payment will be made upon satisfactory completion of work signed off by the Commonwealth Secretariat and within 30 days upon submission of the invoice.

**Qualifications & Competencies**

The preferred consultant or consultancy firm should hold the profile below:

- At least five (5) years of experience in research and/or education;
- An understanding of marine issues (science, policy, or law) is advantageous;
- Experience working with or in (preferably Commonwealth) government(s) is advantageous.
To Apply for this Consultancy

Please submit the following:

- A short cover letter explaining your relevant experience, as well as reflections on this assignment and your approach for completing this work (1-2 pages);
- Other considerations you would like to draw to our attention.
- CV(s) of the person(s) to deliver this work.

Evaluation will be based on competency, experience, and cost. Priority will be given to consultants that are Commonwealth citizens or entities registered in a Commonwealth country.

Quotations should be sent to bluecharter@commonwealth.int no later than 7 March 2021.