

Request for Proposals: ICMA Voluntary Credentialing Program – New Global Certification Programs

INTRODUCTION

Imagine a world where cities and counties hum with vitality, where communities flourish, and residents feel empowered. This vision drives the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), a leading organization for local government professionals dedicated to making this dream a reality.

Founded in 1914, ICMA has championed the cause of professional local government for over a century. With a global reach and a membership exceeding 13,000 city, town, and county managers, their staffs, and other stakeholders, ICMA serves as a powerful force for leadership, management, innovation, and ethics in the public sector.

ICMA's mission is clear: to promote resilient, well-functioning communities worldwide. This mission translates into a dedication to empowering local leaders who are the driving force behind thriving communities. Through a comprehensive set of initiatives, ICMA provides:

- Professional development programs: ICMA offers a wide range of training and educational resources to equip local government professionals with the skills and knowledge needed to excel in their roles.
- Research and publications: ICMA conducts cutting-edge research on critical issues facing local governments and shares its findings through publications, conferences, and other forums.
- Technical assistance: ICMA provides expert guidance and support to local governments on various issues, from budgeting and finance to community planning and economic development.
- Advocacy: ICMA champions the interests of local governments at the national and international levels, ensuring that their voices are heard and their needs are met.

ICMA is more than just an organization; it's a catalyst for positive change. By supporting and empowering local leaders, ICMA fosters a future where communities thrive, residents prosper, and the very essence of local government—serving the needs of its people—shines through.

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES

For over 20 years, the [ICMA Voluntary Credentialing Program](#) has recognized local government managers who meet educational and experience requirements and are committed to bettering themselves and the communities they serve. This voluntary program provides these top-level executives with a framework to assess their strengths and weaknesses and build a plan for professional development that is grounded in [ICMA's 14 Practices for Local Government Management and Leadership](#). By investing in their development and earning this prestigious distinction, ICMA credentialed

managers contribute to building stronger, more resilient communities for all. Many local governments recognize the value of this designation in their searches to fill vacant senior executive managers roles.

The Credentialing Program is exclusive to those in the highest levels of local government – typically in chief administrative officer (CAO) and assistant chief administrative officer (ACAO) positions. The Credentialing Advisory Board, which consists of ICMA’s members, provides peer review of professional development plans and annual reports for those seeking or renewing their ICMA Credentialed Manager designations.

The increasing complexity of local governance challenges across the world requires a well-equipped and qualified workforce capable of addressing diverse issues and driving positive change at all levels of local government organizations. To address this, ICMA is now engaged in the exploration of launching two new certification programs to empower mid- and early-career local government professionals on the global stage. *Global in this RFP context includes both ICMA’s US and international markets.* These two new certification programs aim to:

- Establish globally recognized standards of knowledge and competence for local government professionals.
- Provide a rigorous and accessible pathway for career development and advancement.
- Strengthen the capacity of local governments to deliver effective and efficient services to their communities.
- Provide local government professionals who are not on the CAO career path a means to achieve and maintain a meaningful certification to bolster their job prospects.

Our objective with this engagement is to validate our assumption that, if appropriately structured, priced and marketed, this professional certification program will be in high demand in the global local government market; to understand the amount of time and resources it will take to bring it to market; and to estimate the expectations of the return on the investment.

This Request for Proposals seeks a qualified and experienced consultant organization to assist us with this due diligence, which is envisioned to be accomplished in three phases, as follows:

PHASE I: MARKET ANALYSIS

As is always the case with new products and services, there is a high level of risk associated with this proposed certification program. This phase of the project is meant to better understand and mitigate the risks by conducting the due diligence necessary to make an informed “go/no-go” decision.

The consultant will conduct a thorough global market analysis to define ICMA's value proposition and determine whether two new certifications are needed in the global local government industry and whether this undertaking would be beneficial for ICMA. The market analysis should first focus on our primary market, the U.S., and then extend into potential international opportunities. ICMA will provide guidance on potential international markets based on our current and historical presence in certain countries. The chosen consultant should have sufficient global experience and an understanding of ICMA's programs and services to recommend starting markets.

PHASE II: PRODUCT FRAMEWORK

Assuming the partnership with our chosen consultant is successful with the first phase, and based on the knowledge acquired from the market analysis, the consultant will help shape the certification experience and assist ICMA in defining the learning product framework that will utilize ICMA's learning management system. The desired outcome is the architecture of a certification ecosystem that is appealing and practical for ICMA's global audiences.

PHASE III: BUSINESS PLAN

The consultant will assist us with producing a robust business plan for the production and rollout of the two certificate programs. The business plan would, among other things, determine our domestic and international pricing models for each certification component, detail the amount of upfront investment necessary to develop and bring this product to market, lay out multi-year financial projections, and provide a roadmap for successfully launching the product into ICMA's US market and other international markets as mutually agreed upon between ICMA and the consultant.

Please see the following sections for additional information regarding each of the phases.

PHASE I: MARKET ANALYSIS

Anticipated/Estimated Timeline: TBD in Collaboration with Consultant

PHASE 1: MARKET ANALYSIS | PURPOSE

In close collaboration with ICMA, the consultant will conduct a thorough global market analysis to define ICMA's value proposition and determine whether two new certifications are needed in the global local government industry and whether this undertaking would be beneficial for ICMA.

1. Understand the Market Size and Growth Potential:
 - Quantify the current size and value of the global local government certification program market.

- Analyze historical growth trends and forecast future growth potential, identifying key drivers and regional variations.
 - Assess the relative size and growth of different market segments, such as program type, target audience, and delivery format.
2. Identify and Evaluate Key Players:
- Profile the major players offering local government certification programs, including international organizations, non-profits, government agencies, and private businesses.
 - Analyze their market shares, strengths and weaknesses, program offerings, competitive strategies, and geographic reach.
 - Assess the competitive landscape and identify potential opportunities for collaboration or disruption.
3. Analyze the Demand for Different Program Types:
- Categorize local government certification programs based on focus areas (e.g., leadership, finance, sustainability), target audiences (e.g., mayors, city managers, other local government staff), and delivery formats (e.g., online, in-person).
 - Identify the relative demand for different program types across regions and segments.
 - Analyze emerging trends in program offerings and delivery methods.
4. Uncover Drivers and Restraints of Market Growth:
- Identify the key factors driving demand for local government certification programs, such as urbanization, professionalization emphasis, and public service expectations.
 - Analyze potential roadblocks hindering market growth, such as cost and accessibility barriers, lack of awareness, and fragmented regulations.
 - Evaluate the impact of external factors such as political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal (PESTLE) factors on market dynamics.
5. Identify Opportunities for Expansion and Innovation:
- Analyze emerging trends and innovations shaping the market, such as micro-credentials and technology-enabled learning.
 - Identify potential niche markets with underserved needs and opportunities for program development.
 - Assess the feasibility and potential of new business models and program offerings.

6. Inform Strategic Decision-Making:

- Provide valuable data and insights to help ICMA determine feasibility and return on investment for this endeavor.
- Guide ICMA in identifying promising opportunities and assessing potential risks in the market.

PHASE I: MARKET ANALYSIS | SCOPE OF WORK

1. Geographic Scope:

- Define the specific regions to be covered in the analysis, considering factors like:
 - Concentration of local government activity.
 - Existing awareness and demand for certification programs.
 - Regional variations in program types and delivery methods.
 - Availability of data and research resources.

2. Program Type Scope:

- Specify the types of local government certification programs to be included in the analysis based on:
 - Focus areas (e.g., leadership, finance, sustainability, public engagement, economic development, etc.).
 - Target audiences (e.g., all levels of local government professionals).
 - Learning and exam delivery formats (e.g., online, in-person, blended).
 - Exclusions based on specific criteria (e.g., non-accredited programs, niche programs).

3. Data Sources and Methodology:

- Outline the research methodology to be employed, including:
 - Primary research: Interviews with key stakeholders and program providers.
 - Secondary research: Analysis of existing market reports, government data, and academic literature.
 - Data collection tools: Surveys, questionnaires, and online databases.
 - Data analysis techniques: Statistical analysis, qualitative coding, and trend identification.

4. Deliverables:

- Clearly define the specific deliverables of the project, including:

- Market sizing and growth report: Comprehensive analysis of market size, growth trends, and forecasts for different segments.
- Competitive landscape analysis: Profiles of major players, market share analysis, and competitive dynamics.
- Program type and demand analysis: Assessment of the demand for different program types across regions and segments.
- Drivers and restraints analysis: Identification and evaluation of key factors impacting market growth.
- Future trends and opportunities analysis: Exploration of emerging trends and potential opportunities for new entrants and existing players.
- Executive summary and presentation deck: Concise summaries of key findings and insights for stakeholder communication.

5. Exclusions and Limitations:

- Specify any aspects explicitly excluded from the scope of work, such as:
 - Specific program providers or programs not meeting defined criteria.
 - In-depth analysis of local regulations and policies.
 - Forecasting of future political or economic events.

6. Communication and Collaboration Expectations:

- In close collaboration with ICMA, establish and manage clear communication channels and protocols for regular project updates and stakeholder feedback.
- In close collaboration with ICMA, define the roles and responsibilities of both the consultant and the client throughout the project lifecycle.

PHASE I: MARKET ANALYSIS | TIMELINE AND BUDGET

Proposals should include a detailed project timeline for the execution of the market analysis, outlining key milestones and deliverables, along with a competitive and transparent line-item budget and budget narrative for all project costs and revenues.

PHASE II: PRODUCT FRAMEWORK

Anticipated/Estimated Timeline: TBD in Collaboration with Consultant

PHASE II: PRODUCT FRAMEWORK | PURPOSE

In Phase II consultant will develop a comprehensive learning product framework for a new local government certification program. This framework will guide the creation of high-quality, engaging, and effective learning materials that equip local government professionals with the knowledge, skills, and ethical standards needed to excel in their roles and contribute to a more efficient, responsive, and equitable government.

PHASE II: PRODUCT FRAMEWORK | SCOPE OF WORK

1. Learning Product Framework Development:

- Working under close collaboration with ICMA, design a comprehensive learning product framework that encompasses different learning modalities, including online modules, case studies, simulations, webinars, in-person workshops, and mentorship opportunities.
- Specify the content, format, and delivery mechanisms for each learning product within the framework.
- Establish clear guidelines for content development, quality assurance, accessibility, and cultural sensitivity.
- Develop a robust assessment system to evaluate the effectiveness of the learning products and program as a whole.

2. Implementation Plan and Pilot Development:

- Create a detailed implementation plan outlining the development, testing, and launch of the learning products within the framework.
- Develop a prototype of one or two learning products from the framework to demonstrate its feasibility and effectiveness.
- Conduct pilot testing with a representative sample of the target audience to gather feedback and refine the framework as needed.

3. Deliverables:

- A comprehensive needs assessment report
- A detailed program design document
- A fully developed learning product framework
- Prototypes of one or two learning products
- A comprehensive implementation plan
- Pilot testing results and recommendations for improvement

7. Communication and Collaboration Expectation:

- In close collaboration with ICMA, establish and manage clear communication channels and protocols for regular Phase II updates and stakeholder feedback.
- In close collaboration with ICMA, define the roles and responsibilities of both the consultant and the client throughout the Phase II lifecycle.

PHASE II: PRODUCT FRAMEWORK | TIMELINE AND BUDGET

Proposals should include a detailed project timeline for the execution of the market analysis, outlining key milestones and deliverables, along with a competitive and transparent line-item budget and budget narrative for all project costs and revenues.

PHASE III: BUSINESS PLAN

Anticipated/Estimated Timeline: TBD in Collaboration with Consultant

PHASE III: BUSINESS PLAN | PURPOSE

In Phase III of this engagement the consultant, in close collaboration with ICMA will develop a comprehensive and strategic business plan for the U.S. market, as well as other specific researched markets. This plan will be instrumental in securing funding for project implementation, guiding our operational roadmap, and ensuring the long-term success of the program.

PHASE III: BUSINESS PLAN | SCOPE OF WORK

1. Business Model Development:

- Recommend program architecture and governance to provide a quality program that is sustainable given ICMA's size and resources.
- Help program providers make informed decisions about program development, pricing, and marketing strategies.
- Develop a clear and concise value proposition for the certification program, highlighting our unique selling proposition and competitive advantage.
- Define and articulate our target market, customer segments, and key customer value drivers.
- Design a comprehensive and sustainable revenue model, outlining different income streams and pricing strategies.
- Develop a detailed operational plan, including production or service delivery processes, key resources requirements, and staffing needs.

2. Financial Projections and Analysis:

- Create comprehensive financial projections for the program, including revenue forecasts, cost estimations, and profitability analysis.
- Develop a break-even analysis and identify key financial metrics for tracking performance.

3. Implementation and Risk Management:

- Develop a phased implementation plan outlining key milestones, timelines, and resource allocations for launching and scaling the program.
- Identify potential risks and challenges associated with the program and develop mitigation strategies to address them.
- Create a communication plan for stakeholders, including members, partner organizations, governance, and employees.

4. Deliverables:

- A comprehensive and professionally written business plan document, including executive summary, market analysis, competitive landscape, business model, financial projections, implementation plan, and risk management strategies.
- Supporting data and analysis documents, such as market research reports and financial models.
- Presentation materials summarizing key findings and recommendations.

5. Communication and Collaboration Expectation:

- In close collaboration with ICMA, establish and manage clear communication channels and protocols for regular Phase III updates and stakeholder feedback.
- In close collaboration with ICMA, define the roles and responsibilities of both the consultant and the client throughout the Phase III lifecycle.

PHASE III: BUSINESS PLAN | TIMELINE AND BUDGET

Proposals should include a detailed project timeline for the development of the business plan, outlining key milestones and deliverables, along with a competitive and transparent line-item budget and budget narrative for all project costs and revenues.

PROPOSAL CONTENT

Your proposal should clearly demonstrate your understanding of the project objectives and your ability to deliver a high-quality analysis. Please ensure your proposal includes the following sections:

1. **Cover Page:** Include company name, address, and name and contact information of proposed project lead.
2. **Executive Summary** Briefly summarize your organization, proposed approach, key findings (if applicable), and proposed timeline for each phase of the project. (Maximum one page)

3. **Company Overview:** Briefly introduce your company, its experience in market research and analysis, and its relevant expertise in adult learning, the public sector, or local government domain.
4. **Project Understanding:** Explain your understanding of the project objectives, scope of work, and deliverables as outlined in the RFP.
5. **Methodology:** Describe your proposed research methodology, including data collection methods (primary and secondary research), data analysis techniques, and tools to be used.
6. **Team:** Introduce the key personnel who will be working on the project, including qualifications of staff that will lead and implement the project, highlighting their relevant experience and expertise. (Maximum two pages) *Please include CVs of primary staff as attachments to your proposal narrative.*
7. **Timeline and Budget:** In an excel spreadsheet, provide a detailed project timeline and line-item budget breakdown for each phase, outlining key milestones and deliverables. Please be sure to include a detailed budget narrative that ties to your line-item budget. Please make sure to also PDF this excel budget and include at the end of your proposal narrative.
8. **References:** Provide a list of three recent clients for whom you have conducted similar projects, including contact information.

Additional Notes:

- Please include any additional information that you believe would be helpful in evaluating your proposal.
- We reserve the right to request additional information or clarification from any applicant before making a final decision.

PROPOSAL SUBMISSION FORMAT AND DEADLINE

Deadline for Proposal Submission: **Friday, March 8, 2024, at 5 pm EST** (Please note that proposals received after the deadline will not be considered.)

Proposal Format: Please submit your proposal electronically via email with the following documents:

1. ONE PDF of your company's proposal narrative, your budget SUMMARY (pdf'd from Excel) and a *table* summarizing your proposed milestones and deliverables. ***Naming Convention: NameOfCompany_VCP_Proposal_2024_Narrative***
2. Original Excel (XLS.) budget detailing project timeline and budget breakdown for each phase and outlining key milestones and deliverables tied to project costs. Please include a budget SUMMARY tab with major cost categories for the total project. ***Naming Convention: NameOfCompany_VCP_Proposal_2024_Budget***
3. Completed [ICMA Vendor Application Form](#)
Naming Convention: NameOfCompany_VCP_Proposal_2024_Vendor

4. Completed [W8](#) or [W9](#)

Naming Convention: NameOfCompany_VCP_Proposal_2024_W8/9

Proposal packages should be submitted via email to bbullock@icma.org, with a copy to WorkWithUs@icma.org.

Q&A

Deadline for questions or points of clarification regarding this RFP: **Friday, February 23, 2024, at 5 pm EST** (see “CONTACT INFORMATION” below). A Q&A document will be posted to the RFP page (<https://icma.org/requests-for-proposals>) no later than COB February 26, 2024 and will include all questions relayed to the contact below.

CONTACT INFORMATION

For any questions about the proposal submission process or requirements, please contact:

Brian Bullock, Managing Director, Worldwide Learning and Professional Development at bbullock@icma.org with a copy to WorkWithUs@icma.org

SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Technical qualifications and experience: Demonstrated expertise in global market research, analysis, relevant tech space, and the local government sector.	20%
Methodology: A clear and well-defined research methodology aligned with the project objectives and scope.	20%
Team: A strong team with relevant experience and expertise to successfully complete the project.	10%
Timeline and budget: A realistic and achievable timeline and budget proposal.	20%
Understanding of the project: A clear understanding of the project objectives and deliverables.	10%
Certification product development: Demonstrated success in developing a global certification program.	10%

Communication and presentation: A well-written proposal that is clear, concise, and easy to understand.

10%

CONSULTANT QUALIFICATIONS

Consultant should demonstrate experience in:

- Market Research
- Global Market Consulting
- Certification Program Expertise
- Learning Product Development
- Understanding of the Local Government Sector
- Adult learning

CONTRACT PROCESS

ICMA will likely award an umbrella contract that will outline the project's three phases and overall terms and conditions. Subsequent individual task orders will authorize work for each specific phase of the project. Task Order I will be issued simultaneously with the main contract and will cover Phase I of this RFP, detailing the precise deliverables, timeline, and budget for this phase. Subsequent task orders will be contingent on the results of Task Order I. ICMA reserves the right not to issue task orders for Phases II and III or to reopen competition for these phases if it chooses to do so.

We look forward to receiving your proposals!

End of RFP