



Fire Fighter Certification

2021-23 Biennial Budget Initiative

Issue:

Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS), the authorized testing agency for Wisconsin's Firefighter Certification has utilized the same proprietary testing software since 1996. The company that operated the software is no longer in business and has not provided support updates for more than four years. In addition, as of March 2018, the software is no longer compatible with Microsoft Suite of Applications. The WTCS IT staff have found ways to keep the software operable, but the band-aid is not user-friendly, reliable and is not expected to be functional by the end of the FY-2021.

Background

On April 26, 1977, the WTCS was designated as the agency authorized to establish, coordinate and supervise fire service education and training in the State of Wisconsin. The WTCS is authorized under Wisconsin Statutes 38.04(9) and 38.12(9) to provide the first responder training program in fire prevention and protection to be made available to members of volunteer and paid fire departments maintained by cities, villages and town. The majority of the first responder training and education is delivered on-site at all 16 technical college districts in Wisconsin.

Processing of the 13 firefighter certifications requires the WTCS to develop, send/receive and score 39 different examinations that are required to be changed every 6 months. The software tool WTCS uses assists in the creation and scoring of the firefighter examination, distributes to the 16 technical college districts, and serves as the student test bank. WTCS processed over 50,000 firefighter certifications the last three years and manages over 80,000 certification records for over 42,000 firefighters.

We estimate that the current software has one more year of functionality – at best. Many other states have transitioned to more innovative software applications to administer their fire fighter certifications. More up-to-date software applications will reduce the administrative burden, mailing time and cost, and provide additional functionalities for the System Office and all 16 technical college districts.

Up-to-date software will maintain all the functionalities of our existing software, plus provide a Learning Management System (LMS). A LMS will perform skills and cognitive testing online or offline; provide online course and content delivery for certification training; provide student and college access through virtual interface; manage personnel and students records and allow students and colleges to access and print certifications and training records directly.

Request:

An increase of \$50,000 to the WTCS firefighter training state operations appropriation (which is funded from the 2% fire dues program) in each year of the biennium to acquire up-to-date fire certification software.