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The Variables Impacting New Course Development

Education and professional development is a major part of why all of us are involved with IRWA. That's why it is so imperative that a lot of care goes in to developing and planning our educational offerings. Our goal is to ensure that the professional educational needs of all our diverse members are met and even exceeded. So you might be wondering, who is it that determines when a new course needs to be developed, and what is the process used to approve and develop it.

Each year, the International Professional Development Committee works with IRWA Headquarters staff in conducting an annual course assessment. There is a great deal of information to evaluate, some of which includes course statistics, evaluation reports, instructor and course material analyses, as well as the course proposal applications received throughout the year.

The findings from the annual assessment help us identify which courses are most needed. The IPDC prioritizes the courses based on the selected developer's availability, financial constraints and what's required for developing the course materials. The IPDC then projects the number of courses to be developed, revised and reviewed and develops an annual budget projection as well as a prioritized list of courses to submit to the International Executive Committee for consideration.

The need for a new course can stem from a variety of reasons. There may be an emerging topic that requires some specialized skills and training or a need for a more advanced course on a topic. In some cases, changing technology has created new opportunities that should be explored in course format. In addition to the standard method involving a response to a Request for Proposal, we receive unsolicited applications for new courses as well as recommendations from various Task Forces or International Committees.

Another method by which a new course will come about is when a seminar, presentation or workshop put on by a Chapter, Region or individual is determined to have enough content to garner member interest, to be financially viable and meet a current or future educational need that fills a gap in the existing IRWA

curriculum. If the IPDC determines it should be added to the IRWA curriculum, then IRWA HQ staff will coordinate the initial development and the pilot delivery of the new IRWA course.

The Standard Course Proposal Application Process is a six-step process:

1. A new course Request for Proposal is disseminated to interested stakeholders.
2. Qualified applicants submit an application to the IPDC.
3. IPDC and appropriate International Committee review the proposal.
4. IPDC selects qualified course developer.
5. Funds are requested and secured from the Education Foundations.
6. IRWA Headquarters staff coordinates and executes the contract and issues a letter of decision to the selected developer.

As far as timing is concerned, the variables involved with new course selection and prioritization make it difficult to establish a typical timeframe. While the IPDC and IRWA staff make every effort to expedite the process, it can easily take a year or more until a new course is piloted and offered to members.

For more information, the most recent IPDC Policies and Procedures Manual from August 2012, can be found on the IRWA website on the IPDC resources page. Included in the manual are appendices and tables that outline the application and review/approval process involved in developing new courses.

Following a 30-year career working for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in the Real Estate Division of the St. Louis District, Cynthia retired in 2012. She has experience in property management, disposal, acquisition and relocation assistance, and assisted with acquiring easements for the levee rehabilitation project in New Orleans, LA. Serving in her third year on the IPDC, Cynthia is also a member and former Chair of the International Asset Management Committee.

