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Developing a Standardized Process for Customized Training Requests and Contracts

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Division of Program Management

Background

As the central administrative agency for state government, the South Carolina Department of Administration's (Admin) mission is: Lead to identify efficiencies. Collaborate to provide services to enhance security and trust. Innovate to increase effectiveness. Many of Admin's divisions work closely with other state agencies to advance the state's efforts to better serve South Carolinians. Admin utilizes the concepts of shared services and centralization to help agencies efficiently and securely carry out common government functions, allowing agencies to focus on their core missions. The Division of Program Management houses the state's training team which develops and provides professional growth development for state employees.

After many years of falling under the Division of State Human Resources, the Statewide Training team was reorganized to report to the Director of Program Management through the agency's Director of Training. This reorganization created a vacancy, which I have filled as the Director of Statewide Training. The Statewide Training team provides training courses to public sector managers, supervisors, human resources professionals and individuals who want to increase their knowledge and skills and become more productive and effective in the workplace. In support of the Admin's mission of shared services, the Statewide Training team collaborates with multiple state agencies to develop and customize the delivery of courses to meet the needs of the agency.

As indicated in the table below, the Statewide Training team's customized training for fiscal year 2017-2018 comprised 44% of the total number of classes that were offered. In fiscal

year 2018-2019, that increased to nearly 53%. We are currently at the half-way point of the 2019-2020 fiscal year, and the customized courses are at nearly 40% of the total number of classes scheduled.

Ending Fiscal Year	Number of Classes	Number of Customized Classes	Percentage
FY18	124	55	44.4%
FY19	162	85	52.5%
FY20	131	52	39.7%

With this increase in the number of customized classes offered, the Statewide Training team saw a 67% increase in the revenue generated from the end of fiscal year 2018 to the end of fiscal year 2019. We are projecting that our revenue from customized trainings will be just shy of our fiscal year 2019 revenue.

Since the customized offerings make up a sizable portion of the revenue the Statewide Training team generates, having a well-organized, efficient process is important in ensuring that we are meeting our customers' needs and their expectations. Focusing on continuing to provide great customer service will make our customers want to continue to do business with us.

There is currently no standard process to receive customized training requests, create training proposals, and track requests and contracts for our customized trainings. The Statewide Training team needs a standard process that can be measured in a consistent manner.

This project was chosen because developing a tracking mechanism for requests received by the Statewide Training team will ensure that we are responding timely to requests and close

the gaps on any potential mishandling of requests or contracts. It will also allow us to operate more effectively and communicate better amongst our team and with our customers. This project goals aligns directly with the agency's mission as developing a solution allows my team to continue to collaborate with other agencies in providing training services more efficiently. We are seeking an innovative solution, which will in turn increase our effectiveness.

Data Collection

Before implementing any changes to our process, I documented our current activities when we receive a training request until the point that the contract is finalized by our agency's management. I developed a process flow chart to provide a visual representation of the steps in our process (See appendix A). My hope in developing the process flow chart was to give everyone on my team a clear understanding of our current process and to seek to locate if and when deviations occur in our process. I also wanted to identify any non-value-added steps and bottle-necks.

I learned from the process map that our process has ten major steps that occur. Based on these major steps, I developed a tracking spreadsheet to get a better understanding of the amount of time that we spend at each step and to see if there were any delays in our process that we could improve.

To see what others are doing internally and potentially what other agencies are doing to manage their contracts, I met with our agency's Project Management Office (PMO) team. The PMO team assists customers with information technology project management. This was conducted as a face to face meeting to discuss the steps required if my team chose to pursue

an automated contract management solution. I also contacted another state agency procurement's office to see what they are using to manage their contracts.

Data Analysis

Upon analyzing the current state of our process, I learned found that our process consists of ten major steps that occur. I developed a tracking spreadsheet to get a better understanding of the amount of time that we spend at each step to see if there were any delays in our process that we could improve. I also looked for any non-value added steps in our process. In analyzing the data, I found that we received a total of 22 training inquires between June 4 and October 14, 2019. These requests came in various formats as displayed in Appendix B. I received 50% of the requests directly from customer through email. Twenty three percent of the requests for information were received by the other training staff and the another 14% came through phone calls. The remaining 14% came from our website and the Division of State Human Resources consultants.

I initially planned to solicit customer feedback on expectations on their ability to communicate with my team. Upon analyzing the results, while it appears that the preferred method is to contact me directly, customers still use our website to gather information, they contact our shared inbox to solicit information, and they contact the staff that work on the Statewide Training team directly. Our relationships with our customers are extremely important, so having open communication access to our services is critical. No changes are required to our communications medium.

I evaluated to see the number of requests for information that did not result in a contract. This was relevant since outstanding requests requires someone on the Statewide Training team to follow-up, which creates another sub-process and additional tracking. Of the 22 requests that we received, six of the requests did not result in a contract for a class to be taught. This will information is helpful in identifying a solution because following up with customers creates a subprocess and additional documentation that must be maintained to ensure that the Statewide Training team is keeping the lines of communication open with our customers.

In analyzing our training requests and contracting processes as documented in Appendix A, I noticed that there were deviations in how my team proceeded depending on the course that was requested, the timeframe the course will need to be taught, and if the requesting agency had to seek approvals internally before proceeding with contracting services. Oftentimes no training proposal was created for one of our most requested courses, Supervisory Practices. This cuts the amount of time it takes for agencies to respond back to us to proceed with contracting; however, this class usually results in us producing two contracts: one for an outside instructor to teach the course and the standard customized services contract that provide to all customers. This is important because creating an additional contract requires that the team create an additional document that has to signed and tracked.

The data collected shows that the greatest delays in our process occur when customers are calling for general information and must seek permission from their leadership to move forward. As shown in Appendix C, this took, on average, thirteen days. The second highest delay occurred when the agencies were reviewing the training proposal, which takes on

average nine days (See Appendix D). While these situations are out of our control, they did bring upon the realization that our team needs some way of tracking customer contacts to ensure that we do not miss opportunities to follow up with our customers or spend additional time continuously following up on leads that will not lead to a contract. In addition, with the timeframe being so long, it also points out the fact that we need a centralized storage location for customer notes gathered during conversations and follow-ups. Having a centralized storage location will be beneficial to the team so that anyone can provide status update or resume working with a customer when a team member is out of the office.

I also tracked the steps that we have the greatest control over, the amount of time that it takes us to write a contract and obtain signatures. As captured in Appendix E, it takes our training coordinator on average of nearly three days to write the contract. The data shows that it takes nearly seven days for my team to receive the contract back from our agency leadership approving us to do the work (See Appendix F). These steps are currently managed through email. The process map in Appendix A shows that the documents are handled multiple times between the State Director of Training and the Division of Program Management Division Director. Our team would benefit from a solution which allows electronic signatures and tracking workflow as items progress through the approval channels. This will eliminate the duplicate handling of paper documents.

Knowing these facts about our process and subprocesses will be crucial as we work toward developing a desired state for our process. The desired state would be used if a decision is made to automate the process. Overall, from the time that we receive the initial

contact to the date that the we send the contract to the agency for signature, it takes about 24 days (See Appendix G).

During my meeting with the Project Management Office (PMO) team, I found that the Project Management Office team was in the implementation phase of their contract management project, which is very similar to what we need in for the Statewide Training team. The Project Management Office team is within my division and historically has headed efforts with the implementation of new software initiatives. The team also shared that they are working with another unit within my division on a comparable tracking system for that unit.

Finally, to see what other agencies are doing to manage their contracting process, I contacted the procurement director with another state agency that is comparable in size to my agency. They were in the initial research stages with another vendor and were conducting their first meeting to begin discussions on how the vendor contract management solution could be implemented within their agency.

The data collected and analyzed shows a need for our team to have a solution that tracks both our training proposals and contracts and provides a centralized location for storage of information. This repository can be used to provide speedy access to the statuses of proposals and contracts. In addition, our team needs a solution to capture the required signatures to streamline the approval process, reduce the duplication in handling the same document, and decrease the amount of time it takes to submit a contract to our customer for their approval.

Implementation Plan

Since it appears that my agency, and more specifically my division, has already taken steps in implementing a contract management system, before any steps to implement a solution can be taken, I must have a conversation with my Deputy Director to get an understanding of her vision of future projects. If the agency will be eventually implementing the system already being used by the PMO team, then there will be no need to engage another vendor. This decision will affect the anticipated costs as a vendor cannot be selected without executive leadership guidance and approval. Research will also need to be done on the procurement process so that the project team knows and understand all regulations that will guide the purchase of any software if a new vendor will be required. These decision points, in turn, will affect the timeframes below.

Once a vendor has been selected, I anticipate the additional steps below will need to be taken in order to implement my proposed solution.

Action	Responsible Party	Timeframe
Establish the project team and define key stakeholders	Serphia	3/2/2020
Define a desired workflow process	Project Team	3/16/2020
Define required system functionality that meet the user's needs to perform tasks	Project Team	4/6/2020
Determine which parts of the process that need to be automated and identify current documents that will need to be converted to electronic forms	Project Team	4/6/2020
Identify users and licensing requirements	Project Team	4/20/2020
Identify possible reporting data that will need to be gathered	Project Team	4/20/2020
Determine any known IT requirements (storage location, hosting site, etc.) that could affect project	Project Team	5/11/2020
Develop requirements for user testing	Project Team	5/11/2020

In addition to all our customers being external to our agency, we oftentimes contract with outside instructors to teach some of our courses. It is important that the project team determine our user base accurately. We could potentially expand the users to include individuals external to the agency so that we could export and important documents utilizing the system and obtain electronic signatures. This can be a potential obstacle, as IT security requirements could potentially limit external individuals' ability to access the system. A plan would need to be established on how access will be provided to outside users.

One of the greatest resources that I have is our Project Management Office team. Their input and insight will be most beneficial as they have already gone through the implementation of their system. In addition, the PMO team maintains standards for project management within our organization, so their assistance will be useful in navigating the steps required to implement a project. The Agency Relationship Management team leads our agency's efforts in assisting agency partners with information technology planning, so I can foresee a benefit to

utilizing this group on my project team since the core focus is on assisting others with information technology planning.

A communication plan will need to be developed as the project is underway for those individuals who will be required to utilize the system. The Statewide Training team will need to be instructed on how to use the system as well training will need to be conducted with the those involved in the workflow approval process. If external customers will be allowed access, then the project team will have to develop materials to inform the users how to import and export documents.

Evaluation Method

To determine how effective the automation of our contracting process has been we will monitor the turnaround times to see if improvements are made in the areas over which we have control. The initial monitoring should be implemented immediately upon going live in the system. Since the identification of a reporting mechanism was identified as part of the system requirements in the implementation plan, my team will be able to review the turnaround time monthly and eventually less frequently once we are comfortable with the results. Meetings will be held to review the data and discuss how the new process is working amongst the Statewide Training team. Our team will make any tweaks to our process that we deem necessary.

Summary and Recommendations

In summary, this project supports the Department of Administration's continued effort of working closely with other state agencies using the concept of shared services to help

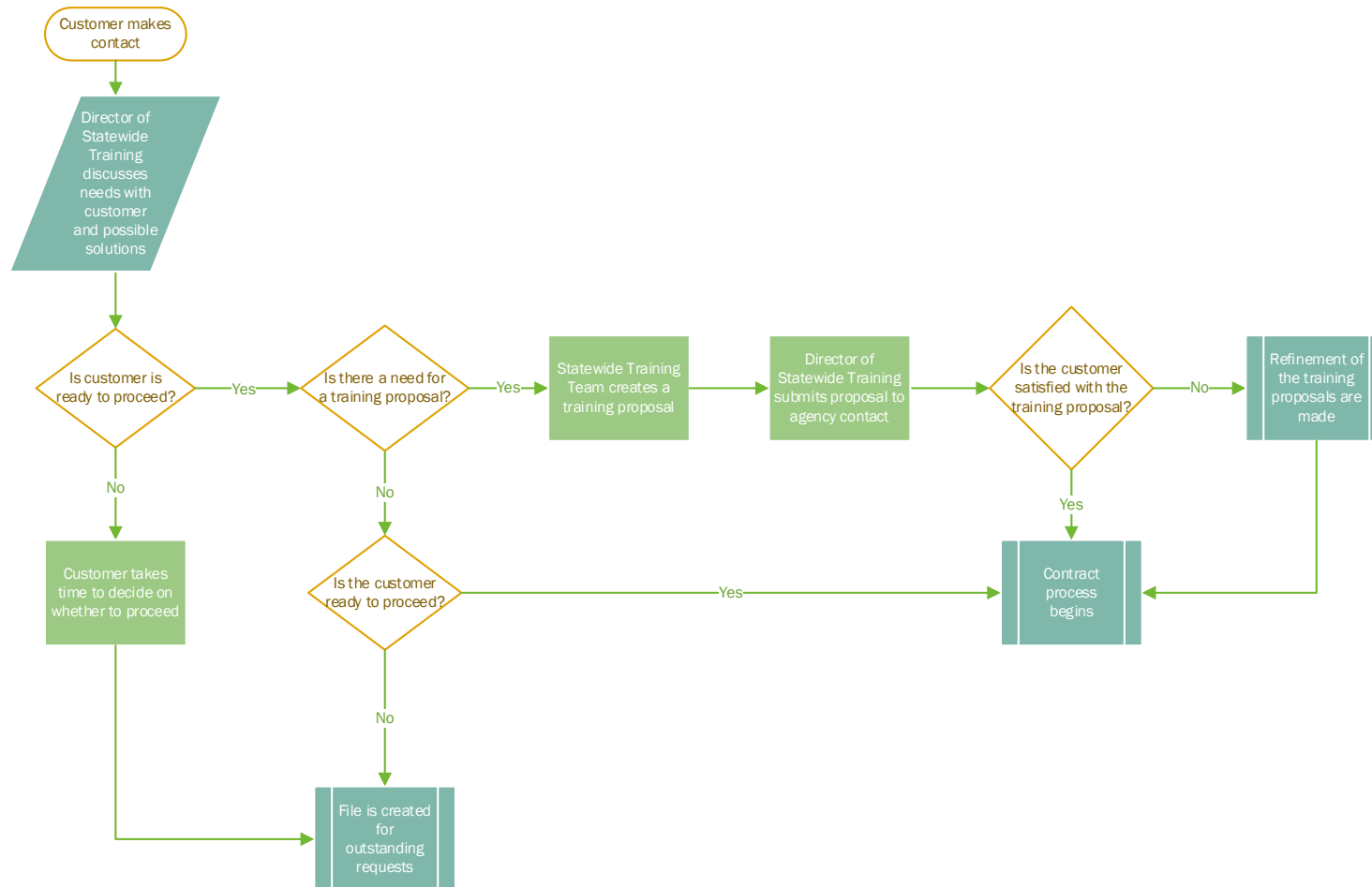
agencies efficiently carry out their functions. Automating our process will allow my team to serve our customers more efficiently and effectively. Several steps will be omitted using an automated system, namely the need to continuously monitor the outstanding customer contact requests and contracts that are in queue to be signed by my team's executive leadership (See Appendix H). Having templates (see appendix I) available through an automated system will also eliminate the need to create a new contract each time. This can potentially eliminate mistakes in writing contracts and gives my team more flexibility on who can write a contract. Currently, we rely on our training coordinator to write most contracts since we need one central contact to serve as recipient. Additionally, the training coordinator consistently monitoring the status of all contracts.

Automating the contracting process will allow our team to remove the additional steps required to write a contract for outside instructors. By simply having an option to select that an outside contractor will be teaching the course and a predesigned template, the system can generate a separate contract and deliver it through workflow following the same process as the Customized Training Services contract. With all documents maintained in one central repository, my team will only be required to add the necessary data needed for the next part of our process. We could potentially add functionality such as updating our training calendar and having access to the training calendar when we are away from the office. These are a few examples of how automating our process will allow my team to serve our customers more efficiently and effectively in addition to making our administrative tasks more manageable.

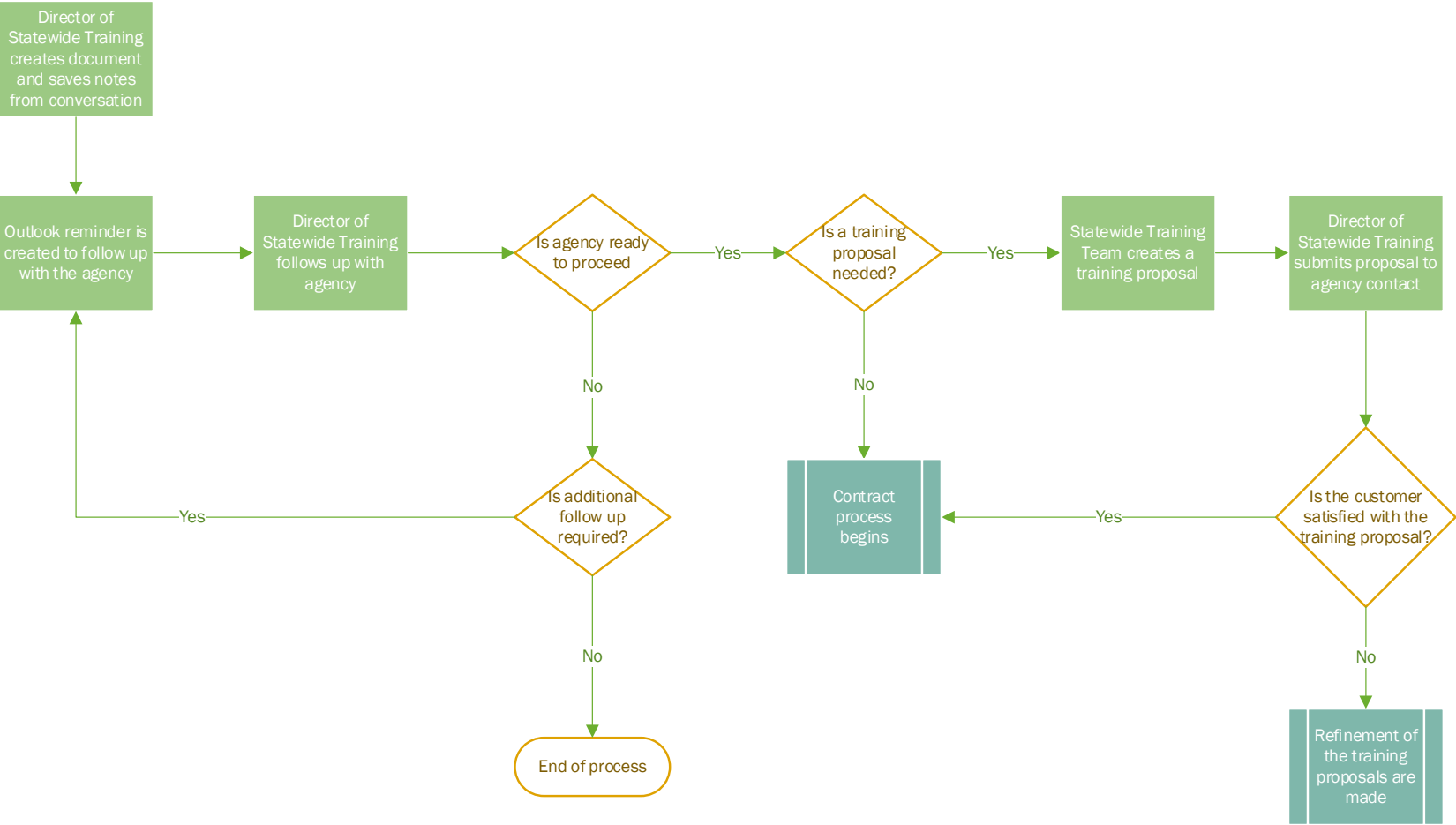
Appendices

Appendix A

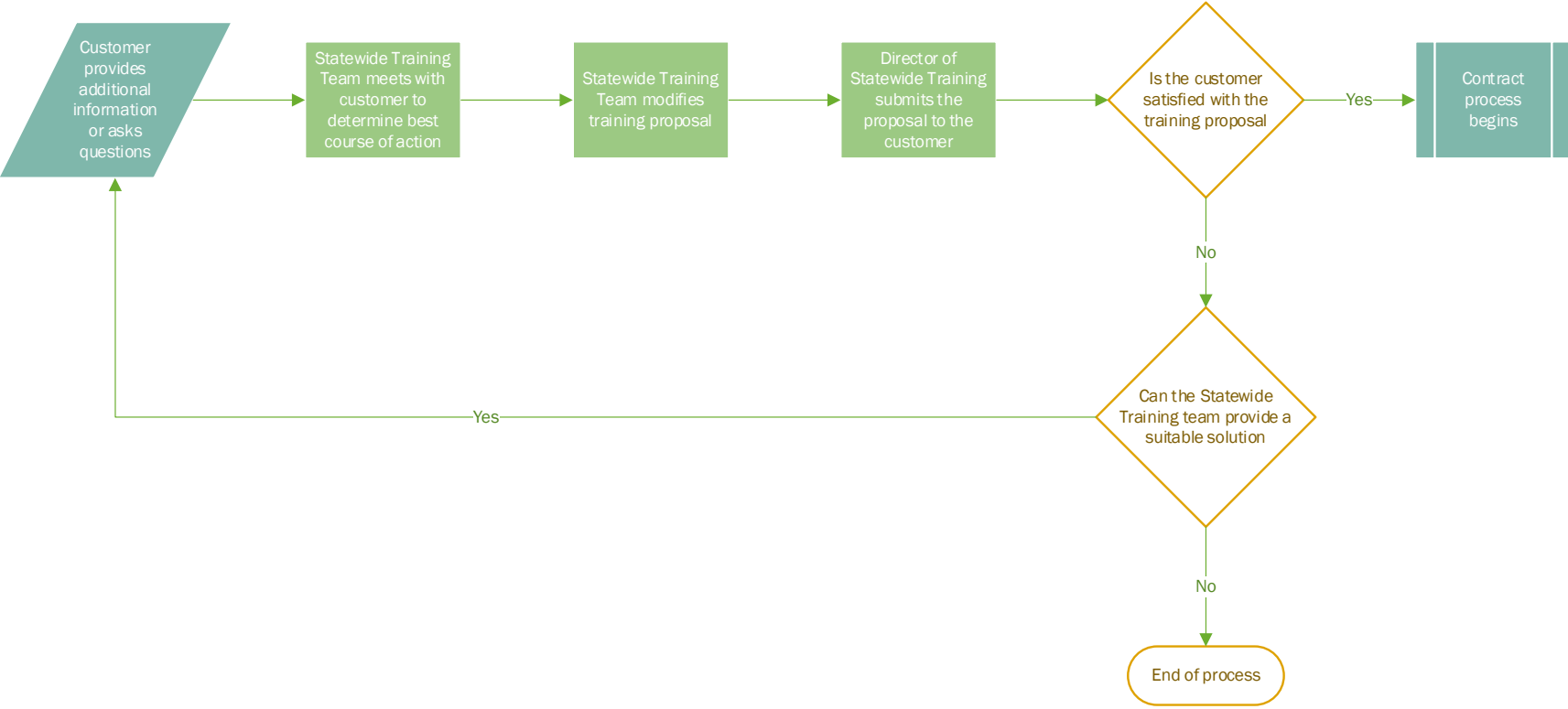
Current process when the Statewide Training Team receives a request for information for training services



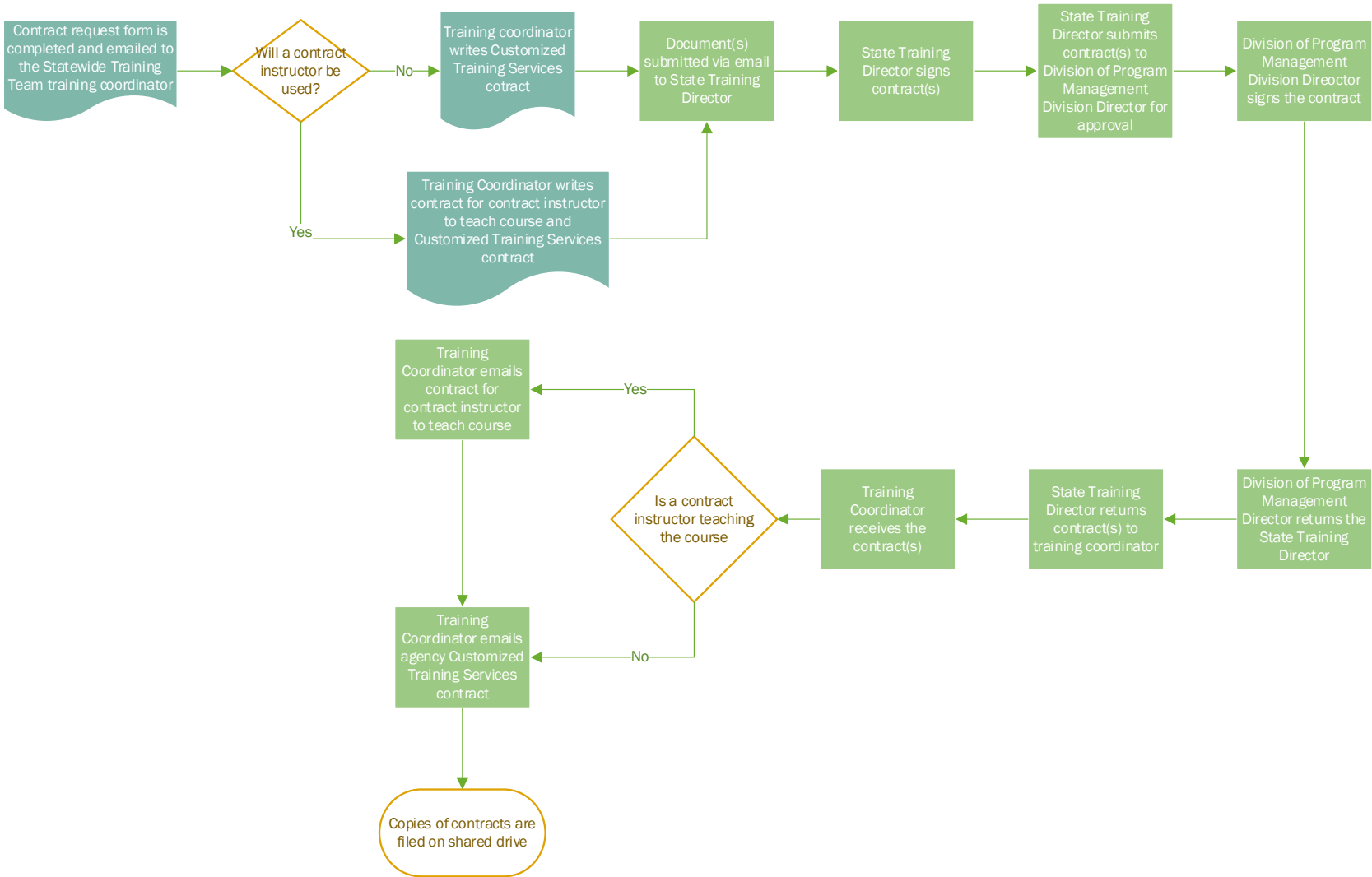
Tracking of Outstanding Requests for Information



Training Proposal Refinement Process



Contract Process



Appendix B

Customer contact to request information on training services



Appendix C

Number of days customers it takes to respond for customers calling for general information who still need permission from their leadership to move forward

Customer Request Number	Course Requested	Initial Contact Date	Statewide Training Team Response Date	Response to Proceed Received from Agency	Number of Days
1	Customer Service	7/23/2019	7/23/2019	8/7/2019	15
2	Supervisory Practices	8/22/2019	8/27/2019	8/28/2019	1
5	Associate Public Manager Program	9/11/2019	9/11/2019	9/24/2019	13
6	Supervisory Practices	6/4/2019	6/5/2019	7/10/2019	35
9	Supervisory Practices	7/9/2019	7/9/2019	7/29/2019	20
11	Emotional intelligence	10/14/2019	10/14/2019	10/16/2019	2
12	Emotional Intelligence	6/12/2019	6/25/2019	7/1/2019	6
Average Number of Days					13.14

Appendix D

Amount of time agencies take when reviewing the training proposal

Customer Request Number	Course	Training Proposal Sent to Agency	Agency Response Received	Number of Days
2	Customer Service	8/26/2019	9/17/2019	22
10	Time Management	10/1/2019	10/2/2019	1
17	Presentation Skills	7/1/2019	7/2/2019	1
18	Advanced Supervisory Practices	7/1/2019	7/16/2019	15
21	Emotional intelligence	7/23/2019	7/31/2019	8
Average Number of Days				9.40

Appendix E

Amount of time training coordinator takes to write a contract

Customer Request Number	Course	Contract Request Sent to Training Coordinator	Written Contract(s) Sent to State Director of Training	Number of Days
2	Customer Service	9/17/2019	9/18/2019	1
9	Effective Meetings	9/13/2019	9/18/2019	5
10	Time Management	10/3/2019	10/4/2019	1
11	Supervisory Practices	10/8/2019	10/9/2019	1
12	Supervisory Practices – <i>Instructor Contract</i>	10/8/2019	10/9/2019	1
13	Associate Public Manager Program	9/24/2019	9/25/2019	1
15	Supervisory Practices	7/12/2019	7/17/2019	5
16	Supervisory Practices – <i>Instructor Contract</i>	7/12/2019	7/17/2019	5
17	Presentation Skills	7/25/2019	7/25/2019	0
18	Advanced Supervisory Practices	7/22/2019	7/24/2019	2
19	Supervisory Practices	7/29/2019	7/30/2019	1
20	Supervisory Practices – <i>Instructor Contract</i>	7/29/2019	7/31/2019	2
21	Emotional intelligence	7/31/2019	7/31/2019	0
22	Supervisory Practices	8/28/2019	9/3/2019	6
23	Supervisory Practices – <i>Instructor Contract</i>	8/28/2019	9/5/2019	8
24	MBTI	10/16/2019	10/18/2019	2
25	Process Improvement	10/10/2019	10/21/2019	11
26	Emotional intelligence	10/23/2019	10/23/2019	0
Average Number of Day				2.88

Appendix F

Amount of time required to obtain leadership signatures

Customer Request Number	Course	Contract Request Sent to State Director of Training	Contract Received from State Director of Training	Number of Days
2	Customer Service	9/18/2019	10/4/2019	16
9	Effective Meetings	9/18/2019	10/4/2019	16
10	Time Management	10/4/2019	10/7/2019	3
11	Supervisory Practices	10/9/2019	10/10/2019	1
12	Supervisory Practices – <i>Instructor Contract</i>	10/9/2019	10/10/2019	1
13	Associate Public Manager Program	9/25/2019	10/4/2019	9
15	Supervisory Practices	7/17/2019	7/22/2019	5
16	Supervisory Practices – <i>Instructor Contract</i>	7/17/2019	7/18/2019	1
17	Presentation Skills	7/25/2019	7/25/2019	0
18	Advanced Supervisory Practices	7/24/2019	7/25/2019	1
19	Supervisory Practices	7/30/2019	7/31/2019	1
20	Supervisory Practices – <i>Instructor Contract</i>	7/31/2019	7/31/2019	0
21	Emotional intelligence	7/31/2019	8/16/2019	16
22	Supervisory Practices	9/3/2019	9/3/2019	0
23	Supervisory Practices – <i>Instructor Contract</i>	9/5/2019	9/5/2019	0
24	MBTI	10/18/2019	11/4/2019	17
25	Process Improvement	10/21/2019	10/21/2019	0
26	Emotional intelligence	10/23/2019	11/4/2019	12
Average Number of Days				6.93

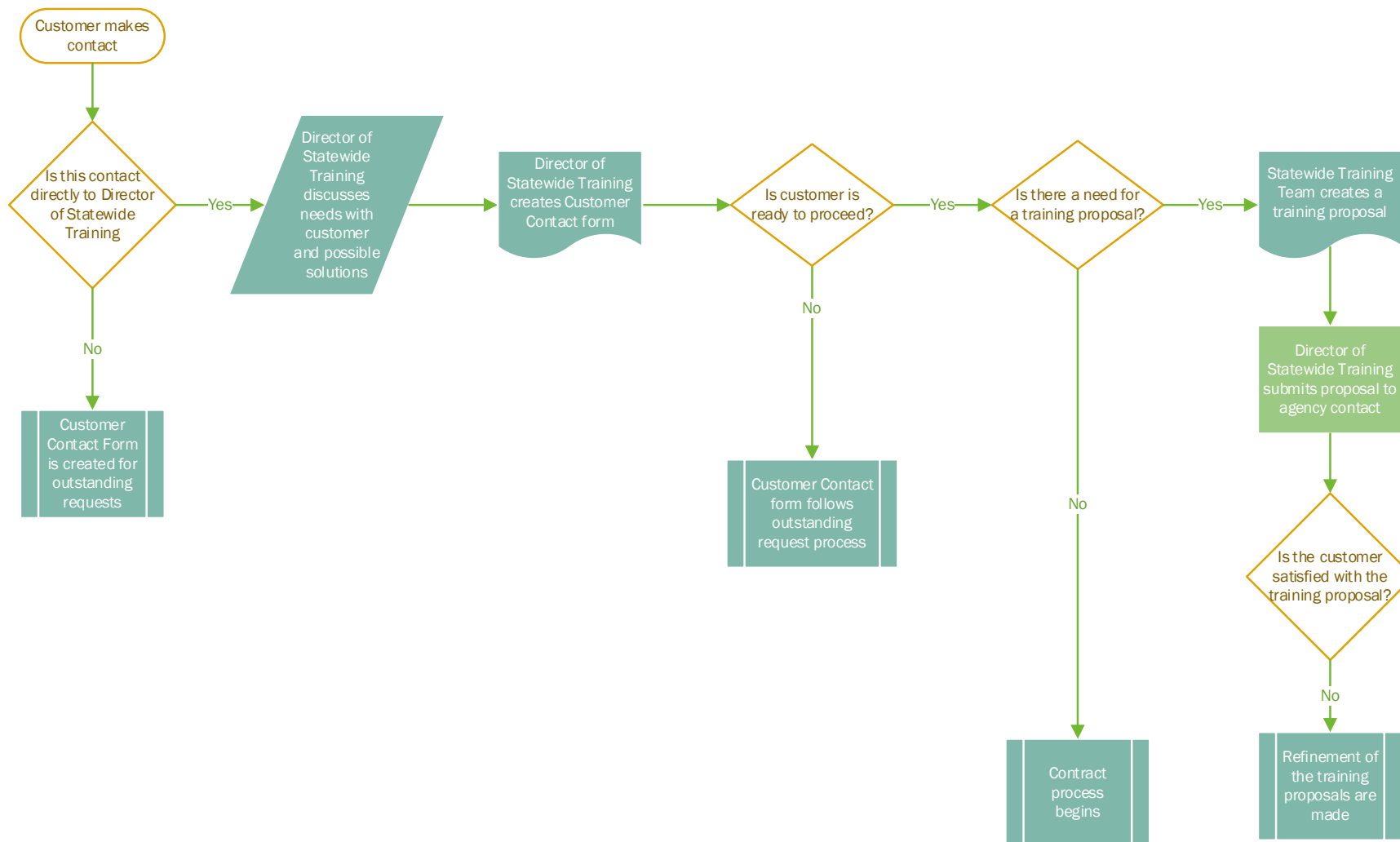
Appendix G

Number of days from customers' initial contact until signed contract received from leadership

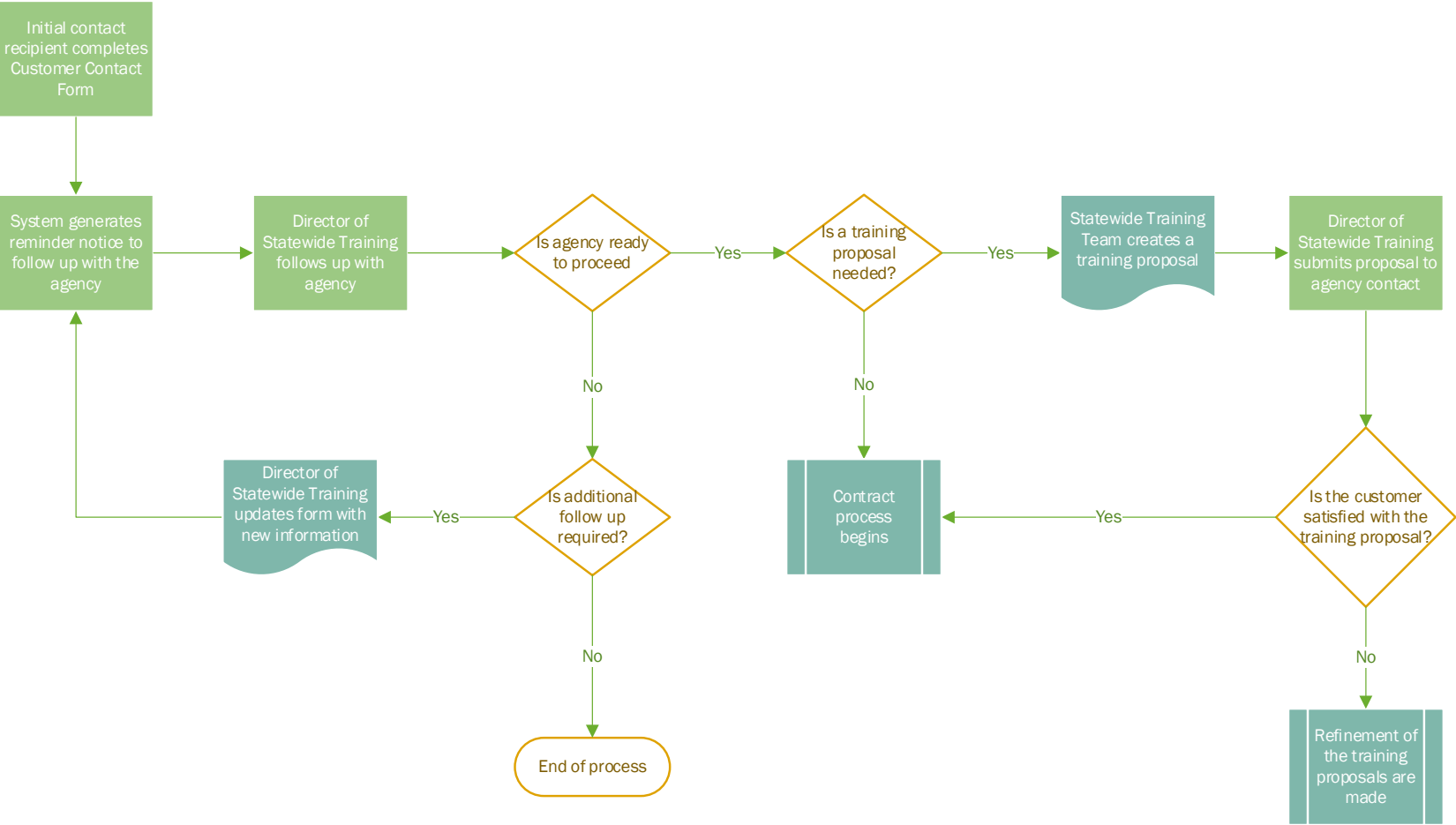
Customer Request Number	Course	Initial Contact Date	Contract Received from State Director of Training	Number of Days
2	Customer Service	7/23/2019	10/4/2019	73
9	Effective Meetings	9/12/2019	10/4/2019	22
10	Time Management	9/30/2019	10/7/2019	7
11	Supervisory Practices	10/4/2019	10/10/2019	6
12	Supervisory Practices – <i>Instructor Contract</i>	10/4/2019	10/10/2019	6
13	Associate Public Manager Program	9/11/2019	10/4/2019	23
15	Supervisory Practices	6/4/2019	7/22/2019	48
16	Supervisory Practices – <i>Instructor Contract</i>	6/14/2019	7/18/2019	34
17	Presentation Skills	6/18/2019	7/25/2019	37
18	Advanced Supervisory Practices	6/25/2019	7/25/2019	30
19	Supervisory Practices	7/9/2019	7/31/2019	22
20	Supervisory Practices – <i>Instructor Contract</i>	7/22/2019	7/31/2019	9
21	Emotional intelligence	7/9/2019	8/16/2019	38
22	Supervisory Practices	8/22/2019	9/3/2019	12
23	Supervisory Practices – <i>Instructor Contract</i>	8/22/2019	9/5/2019	14
24	MBTI	10/8/2019	11/4/2019	27
25	Process Improvement	10/8/2019	10/21/2019	13
26	Emotional intelligence	10/14/2019	11/4/2019	21
Average Number of Days				24.56

Appendix H

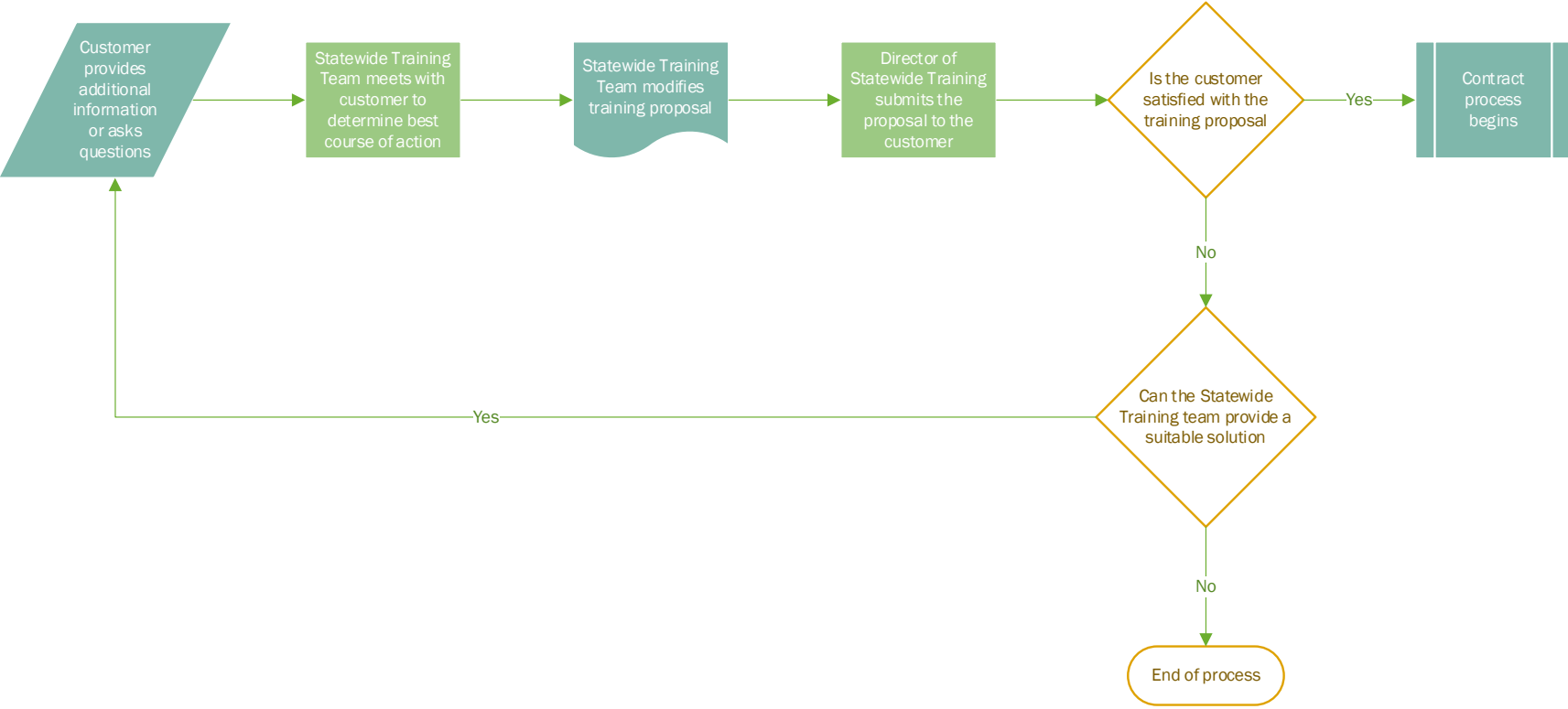
Proposed desired state when the Statewide Training Team receives a request for information for training services



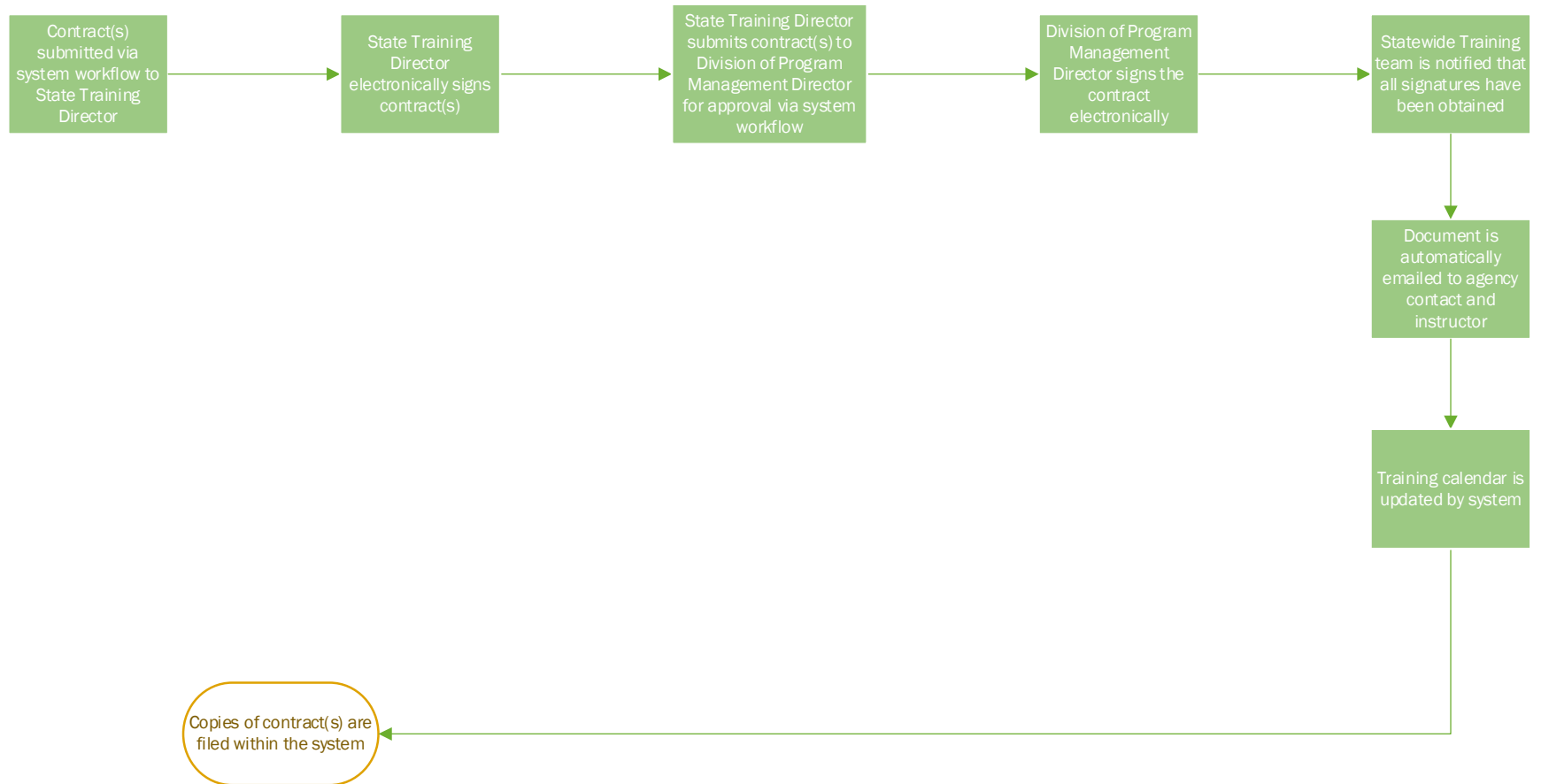
Tracking of Outstanding Requests for Information



Training Proposal Refinement Process



Contract Process



Appendix I

Draft Customer Contact and Training Proposal/Contract Request Forms



Customer Contact Form

Date Initial Contact Recipient

Customer Name Agency

Client Information

Phone Email Address

Address

City State. ZIP Code

Title

Service Requests

Additional Information





Training Proposal/Contract Request Form

Completed previously on Customer Contact Form

Service Requests

Min/Max

Time

Facilitator(s)

Cost

Additional Info

