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## Notice of Intent to Certify Sole Source

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**To:** Interested Parties  
**From:** Michele Blocker, Interim Executive Director  
**CC:** ITS Project Number 45978  
**Date:** September 1, 2020  
**Re:** Sole Source Certification Number 4332 to provide Career-Technical Education (CTE) CompTIA Academic Vouchers for the Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB)  
**Contact Name:** Robert Martinez  
**Contact Phone Number:** 601-432-8002  
**Contact E-mail Address:** [Robert.Martinez@its.ms.gov](mailto:Robert.Martinez@its.ms.gov)

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### Sole Source Certification Award Details

Regarding Information Technology Services (ITS) Sole Source Certification Number 4332 for the Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB), please be advised that ITS intends to award PearsonVUE Voucher Store as the sole source provider of Career-Technical Education (CTE) CompTIA Academic Vouchers through December 31, 2023, in an amount not to exceed \$742,500.00. Please be advised that ITS will determine if additional upgrades are within scope during the certification period and may increase the spending authority accordingly. Should PearsonVUE Voucher Store change its name during this certification period, then ITS will determine if a recertification is necessary. For an explanation regarding Mississippi state law, policy and procedures for sole source procurements, refer to Attachment C: Sole Source Procurement Overview.

### Sole Source Criteria

1. The product or services being purchased must perform a function for which no other product or source of services exist:

**As a community college system that receives federal funding under the Carl Perkins Act from the U.S. Department of Education, MCCB must report various program outcomes to include technical skill attainment. One of the requirements of this reporting is that no secondary data is accepted for this outcome measure. MCCB must have access to the student assessment data directly. Additionally, MCCB is registered as an Academic Partner with CompTIA.**

**CompTIA certifications are recognized by industry locally, nationally, and internationally giving the CTE graduates a very portable credential that is recognized anywhere in the world where they might seek employment. One very important employer of Information Systems Technology graduates in Mississippi and surrounding states is the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). The CompTIA A+, Network+, and Security+ certifications are on the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) list of baseline certifications in accordance with DoD Directive 8570.**

**The customer's sole source certification request is included as Attachment A.**

2. The purchaser must be able to show specific business objectives that can be met only through the unique product or services:

**CompTIA offers vendor-neutral IT certifications and has remained a leading voice for the Information Technology industry. CompTIA has its own industry review panels that advise CompTIA on industry trends and make recommendations to changes in the body of knowledge for each of these certification exams. Advisory committee members for CompTIA include representatives of Intel, Verizon, Texas Instruments, North Carolina Technology Association, Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, and Symantec. Each exam is developed under the guidance of groups of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) dependent upon their area of expertise as it relates to the exam under development and/or revision.**

**During curriculum writing team meetings for the programs of study, the industry certification exams selected for technical skill attainment were mapped to the curriculum to ensure alignment between student learning outcomes and test objectives. These writing team meetings were attended by college faculty from the programs under review as well as business and industry representatives. These curriculum frameworks were approved and validated in accordance with the MCCB Policy and Procedures for the Office of Curriculum and Instruction. The approved curriculum frameworks showing the mapping of the testing exams to the program of study can be found at <http://sbcjc.cc.ms.us/OCI/currdownload.aspx>**

**Offering the CompTIA certifications will allow:**

1. CTE graduates to receive CompTIA certifications at the lowest possible price;
2. MCCB to have direct access to student assessment data as required by the U.S. Department of Education in compliance with the Carl Perkins Act;
3. CTE graduates to have increased employment opportunities as a result of their CompTIA certifications to include DoD and other government/military contractors; and,
4. Increased employment rates for CTE graduates and increases job placement rates for CTE programs, which is another outcome required by the U.S. Department of Education in compliance with the Carl Perkins Act.

**The customer's sole source certification request is included as Attachment A.**

3. The product or services must be available only from the manufacturer and not through resellers who could submit competitive pricing for the product or services:

**CompTIA is the owner and creator of certification examinations and learning materials. PearsonVUE Voucher Store is the only authorized testing agent to provide CompTIA exams. PearsonVUE Voucher Store supplies vouchers to**

**educational entities that join the CompTIA Academy as a partner. The MCCB's CompTIA Academy Member ID is 766439.**

**The Vendor's sole source certification letter is included as Attachment B.**

**Schedule**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Date</b>
First Advertisement Date	09/01/2020
Second Advertisement Date	09/08/2020
Response Deadline From Objectors	09/16/2020 at 3:00 P.M. Central Time
Notice of Award/No Award Posted	Not before 09/16/2020

**Project Details**

In 2016, following the adoption of the National Certifications Standards and Procedure Manual (2013), the MCCB adopted national certifications as the measure of technical skill attainment for CTE Programs where such a certification existed. Coordination of the new systemwide initiative is a relative new role for the MCCB, and it includes two key elements:

1. negotiation for the lowest possible fees for student testing vouchers and testing software purchased as a community college system, and
2. access to testing results for students to prepare college level and system level reports on the programmatic outcomes measure of technical skill attainment.

In September 2017, ITS, on behalf of MCCB, issued Notice of Intent to Certify Sole Source Number 4036 for CTE Vouchers at a cost of \$230,595.00. MCCB wishes to purchase additional CTE Vouchers through December 31, 2023.

**Submission Instructions and Format of Response from Objecting Parties**

Interested parties who have reason to believe that the Career-Technical Education (CTE) CompTIA Academic Vouchers should not be certified as a sole source should provide information in the following format for the state to use in determining whether or not to proceed with awarding the Sole Source contract to PearsonVUE Voucher Store.

- 1.1 Interested Party Information
  - 1.1.1 Contact Name, Phone Number and email address
  - 1.1.2 Company Website URL, if applicable
- 1.2 Objection to Sole Source Certification
  - 1.2.1 Interested parties must present specific objections to the Sole Source certification using the criteria listed above.
  - 1.2.2 A statement regarding the Interested Party's capabilities as related to this Sole Source Certification Request.
- 1.3 Comments will be accepted at any time prior to Wednesday, September 16, 2020, at 3:00 p.m. (Central Time) to Robert Martinez at [Robert.Martinez@its.ms.gov](mailto:Robert.Martinez@its.ms.gov) or at the Mississippi Department of Information

Technology Services, 3771 Eastwood Drive, Jackson, Mississippi 39211. Responses may be delivered by hand, via regular mail, overnight delivery, e-mail or by fax. Fax number is (601) 713-6380. ITS WILL NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR DELAYS IN THE DELIVERY OF RESPONSES. It is solely the responsibility of the Interested Parties that responses reach ITS on time. Interested Parties may contact Robert Martinez to verify the receipt of their Responses. Responses received after the deadline will be rejected.

1.4 Interested Party responses should include the following information:

**SUBMITTED IN RESPONSE TO**  
**Sole Source Certification No. 4332-45978**  
**Accepted until September 16, 2020 @ 3:00 p.m.,**  
**ATTENTION: Robert Martinez**

If you have any questions concerning the information above or if we can be of further assistance, please contact Robert Martinez at 601-432-8002 or via email at [Robert.Martinez@its.ms.gov](mailto:Robert.Martinez@its.ms.gov).

Attachment A: Customer Sole Source Certification Request  
Attachment B: Vendor Correspondence  
Attachment C: Sole Source Procurement Overview

## Sole Source Certification Request

<b>Project Title: CompTIA Testing Vouchers Renewal</b>		<b>Stimulus (ARRA) Funds? Yes No <u>X</u></b>	
<b>Customer Contact Information</b>			
<b>Agency/Public University:</b> MS Community College Board <b>Address:</b> E & R Center, Room 519, Jackson, MS 39211		<b>Contact Person:</b> Kimberly Jones <b>Phone:</b> 601-432-6131 <b>Fax:</b> <b>Email Address:</b> <a href="mailto:kjones@mccb.edu">kjones@mccb.edu</a>	
<b>MAGIC Customer Number</b> (only required from state agencies): <b>700000104</b>		<b>Division/Dept.:</b> Workforce, Adult Education, Career Technical Education <b>Handmail:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
<b>Project Summary Narrative Description of Project</b> (include details of original acquisition if applicable): In 2016, following the adoption of the National Certifications Standards and Procedure Manual (2013), the Mississippi Community College Board (MCCB) adopted national certifications as the measure of technical skill attainment for Career Technical Education (CTE) Programs where such a certification existed. Coordination of the new system wide initiative is a relative new role for the MCCB, and it includes two key elements: 1. negotiation for the lowest possible fees for student testing vouchers and testing software purchased as a community college system, and 2. access to testing results for students to prepare college level and system level reports on the programmatic outcomes measure of technical skill attainment.  In September 2017, ITS, on behalf of MCCB, issued Notice of Intent to Certify Sole Source Number 4036 for CTE Vouchers at a cost of \$230,595.00. MCCB wishes to purchase additional CTE Vouchers through December 31, 2023.			
<b>ITS Acquisition Approval (CP-1) should be effective through this date</b> (Please allow time for all vendor invoices to be paid): 12/31/2023			
<b>Cost Estimates</b> <i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>Initial Costs</i>	<i>Ongoing Costs</i>	<b>Time Constraints</b> Item Needed by: 01/01/2021 Funds Expire:
<b>2021</b>		\$234,800.00	<b>Anticipated Lifecycle of Products/System</b> (i.e. estimated years of effective use): 3 years  <b>Discuss Funding</b> (e.g. how much of needed funding is definite; total project budget; any matching or other non-state funds). 100% of funding is secured. Initial contract will be paid with funds provided through a grant.
<b>2022</b>		\$247,400.00	
<b>2023</b>		\$260,300.00	
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$742,500.00</b>	
<b>Acquisition Details</b>			
<b>Items Requested</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Building Location(s)</b>
CompTIA A+ Exam 220-1001	450	Certification Tests	n/a
CompTIA A+ Exam 220-1002	450	Certification Tests	n/a
CompTIA Network +	400	Certification Tests	n/a
CompTIA Security+	300	Certification Tests	n/a
<b>Describe platform &amp; infrastructure</b> (connectivity; software/hardware platforms; utilization of State Data Center resources: mainframe, eGovernment portal, payment engine, document management, hosting). For equipment or hosting outside the State Data Center, attach justification: The CompTIA vouchers will be made available to the students through the colleges by MCCB. Colleges administering the tests or providing the vouchers have certified testing centers or will work with students to identify a testing center that's certified to administer the exams.			
<b>Progress to Date:</b> What has been done related to this project, including any communication with ITS staff (data/voice/procurement/other)? ITS has previously declared a sole source procurement with NCS Pearson for CompTIA vouchers. A new sole source letter was sent to ITS.			
<b>Sole Source Certification</b> Note: Certification must be renewed for each revision or continuation of previous Sole Source Approvals.			
<b>Specific business requirements to be met by the requested products or services:</b> CompTIA offers vendor-neutral IT certifications and has remained a leading voice for the Information Technology industry. CompTIA has their own industry review panels that advise CompTIA on industry trends and make recommendations to changes in the body of knowledge for each of these certification exams. Advisory committee members for CompTIA include representatives of Intel, Verizon, Texas Instruments, North Carolina Technology Association, Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, and Symantec. Each exam is developed under the guidance of groups of Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) dependent upon their area of expertise as it relates to the exam under development and/or revision.  During curriculum writing team meetings for the programs of study, the industry certification exams selected for technical skill attainment were mapped to the curriculum to ensure alignment between student learning outcomes and test objectives. These writing team meetings were attended by college faculty from the programs under review as well as business and industry representatives. These curriculum frameworks were approved and validated in accordance with the MCCB Policy and Procedures for the Office of Curriculum and Instruction. The approved curriculum frameworks showing the mapping of the testing exams to the program of study can be found at <a href="http://sbcjc.ms.us/OCI/curdownload.aspx">http://sbcjc.ms.us/OCI/curdownload.aspx</a>			
Offering the CompTIA certifications will allow:			

<p>1. CTE Graduates to receive CompTIA certifications at the lowest possible price;</p> <p>2. MCCB to have direct access to student assessment data as required by the U.S. Department of Education in compliance with the Carl Perkins Act;</p> <p>3. CTE Graduates to have increased employment opportunities as a result of their CompTIA certifications to include DoD and other government/military contractors; and,</p> <p>4. Increased employment rates for CTE programs, which is another outcome required by the U.S. Department of Education in compliance with the Carl Perkins Act.</p>		
<p><b>Explain why these products or services are the only ones that can meet your needs</b> (include unique features/special functionality):</p> <p>As a community college system that receives federal funding under the Carl Perkins Act from the U.S. Department of Education, MCCB must report various program outcomes to include technical skill attainment. One of the requirements of this reporting is that no secondary data is accepted for this outcome measure. MCCB must have access to the student assessment data directly. Additionally, MCCB is registered as an Academic Partner with CompTIA.</p> <p>CompTIA certifications are recognized by industry locally, nationally, and internationally giving the CTE graduates a very portable credential that is recognized anywhere in the world where they might seek employment. One very important employer of Information Systems Technology graduates in Mississippi and surrounding states is the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD). The CompTIA A+, Network+, and Security+ certifications are on the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) list of baseline certifications in accordance with DoD Directive 8570.</p>		
<p><b>Explain why the source is the only entity that can provide the products or services</b> (Include other products/vendors researched or evaluated):</p> <p>CompTIA is the owner and creator of certification examinations and learning materials. PearsonVUE Voucher Store is the only authorized testing agent to provide CompTIA exams. PearsonVUE Voucher Store supplies vouchers to educational entities that join the CompTIA Academy as a partner. The MCCB's CompTIA Academy Member ID is 766439.</p>		
<p><b>Vendor's Certification of Sole Source attached:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No      <b>Vendor's proposal submitted:</b> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No</p>		
<p><b>MAGIC Vendor Code(s) Vendor must be in MAGIC before a CP-1 can be issued.</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>Place Order To</b>  <b>Vendor Name:</b> NCS Inc-Pearson  <b>Vendor Address:</b> 13036 Collections Center Drive  Chicago, IL 60693</p> </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p><b>Remit To</b>  <b>Vendor Name:</b> NCS Pearson Inc-Bloomington  <b>Vendor Address:</b> Pearson Clinical Assessment, 5601 Green Valley Drive  Bloomington, MN 55437</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p><b>Place Order To</b>  <b>Vendor Name:</b> NCS Inc-Pearson  <b>Vendor Address:</b> 13036 Collections Center Drive  Chicago, IL 60693</p>	<p><b>Remit To</b>  <b>Vendor Name:</b> NCS Pearson Inc-Bloomington  <b>Vendor Address:</b> Pearson Clinical Assessment, 5601 Green Valley Drive  Bloomington, MN 55437</p>
<p><b>Place Order To</b>  <b>Vendor Name:</b> NCS Inc-Pearson  <b>Vendor Address:</b> 13036 Collections Center Drive  Chicago, IL 60693</p>	<p><b>Remit To</b>  <b>Vendor Name:</b> NCS Pearson Inc-Bloomington  <b>Vendor Address:</b> Pearson Clinical Assessment, 5601 Green Valley Drive  Bloomington, MN 55437</p>	

By my signature, I certify that, to the best of my professional knowledge: the requested product or services are a sole source as outlined in the ITS Procurement Handbook, Rule 207.2:013-030 Procurement Types: Sole Source, and as outlined in Mississippi Code annotated Section 31-7-13. In addition, I acknowledge that there is a charge for ITS procurement services associated with this request which will be billed to the requestor by ITS and that my agency/public university is responsible for these charges/costs.

Andrea Mayfield / Executive Director      [Signature]      8-18-20  
Name (Agency Head or Public University CIO)/Title      Signature      Date



TO: Academic Customers

FROM: Jill Thielmann

DATE: June 29, 2020

RE: Sole Source information - CompTIA Certification Exam Vouchers and learning materials

CompTIA is a trade association representing the information technology industry. One of the functions of our organization is the establishment of technology standards and the creation of high stakes certification examinations.

We are the owner and creator of our certification examinations and learning materials. We contract exams voucher and learning product sales through our ecommerce vendor, Pearson VUE. Exam vouchers are available through their online voucher store and learning products and exam vouchers are available through the CompTIA online Store managed by Pearson VUE.

The current year academic price list is attached. Please contact Jill Thielmann CompTIA Academy, at 630-678-8334 if you have any questions or need assistance with the ordering process.

Warm Regards,

Jill

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jill Thielmann", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Jill Thielmann | Sr. Manager US Academic Business Development

Office: 630.678.8334 | [CompTIA.org](http://CompTIA.org)

## Attachment C

The acquisition of information technology for all state agencies and institutions of higher learning (IHLs) is within the scope of the ITS law, found in Mississippi Code Section 25-53-1, et seq., and the policies and procedures established in accordance with this statute, found in the ITS Procurement Handbook posted on the ITS website ([www.its.ms.gov](http://www.its.ms.gov)).

ITS enabling legislation requires that information technology hardware, software and services be acquired in a manner that insures the maximum of competition among all manufacturers and suppliers of such equipment and services. Accordingly, ITS promotes full and open competition through the issuance of open specifications and the objective evaluation of Interested Party proposals to determine the lowest and best offering to meet an agency's or public university's business requirements. True competition protects the integrity and credibility of purchasing in the public sector and is essential in providing best value and adequate contractual protection for the purchasing entity. In certain limited situations, information technology acquisitions may be sole-sourced.

ITS utilizes the provisions of Public Purchasing Law for Sole Source and Emergency procurements of information technology. Mississippi Public Purchasing Law (Mississippi Code Section 31-7-13) specifies that noncompetitive items available from one source only be exempted from bid requirements (sole-sourced). ITS statute, in Section 25-53-5 (p), permits ITS to utilize provisions in Public Purchasing Law or regulations, when applicable.

Per Public Purchasing law, acquisitions must meet the following criteria to be authorized as sole source:

1. The product or services being purchased must perform a function for which no other product or source of services exists,
2. The purchaser must be able to show specific business objectives that can be met only through the unique product or services, AND
3. The product or services must be available only from the manufacturer and NOT through resellers who could submit competitive pricing for the product or services. The vendor's correspondence regarding this criterion for this project is included as Attachment B.

By policy as documented in the ITS Procurement Handbook, acquisitions of IT services must include the following information to be authorized as sole source:

1. An explanation about why the amount to be expended is reasonable, and
2. An explanation regarding the efforts by the purchaser to obtain the best possible price.

For state agencies, approval of all technology purchases with a lifecycle cost of \$5,000 or less, including sole source purchases, has been delegated to the agency. The ITS Procurement Limits Policies for Agencies (a section in the ITS Procurement Handbook) require a minimum of two competitive written bids or proposals for technology purchases with a lifecycle cost over \$5,000 but not over \$50,000 (not over \$25,000 for projects funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act). Since, for single source items, the procuring agency will be unable to obtain two written bids, ITS must certify all sole source acquisitions of information technology with a lifecycle cost greater than \$5,000.

Institutions of Higher Learning (IHLs) or public universities have been delegated the authority to certify sole source procurements up to \$250,000 lifecycle cost under the ITS Procurement Limits Policies for IHLs (a section in the ITS Procurement Handbook). For the certification of sole source procurements delegated to the CIOs at public universities, the public university must follow ITS' Sole Source Procedure, including advertisement of the intent to award as sole source. Institutions certifying a sole source purchase must ensure the criteria listed above are met and documented



in writing by the institution and the Interested Party prior to certifying a product or service as sole source. Sole source documentation must be reviewed and approved by the IHL's CIO for any sole-source certification above \$5,000. All sole source documentation should be retained in the public university's procurement file. Sole source requests above \$250,000 lifecycle cost require ITS approval.

Other than the delegations outlined above, all sole source technology procurements must be certified by ITS. The customer's Sole Source Certification Request for this project is included as Attachment A.

ITS thoroughly reviews Sole Source Certification Requests, determining if competing products and/or services exist. If so, ITS conducts a competitive procurement. If ITS' review confirms the sole source, then a Sole Source advertisement is issued, giving other Interested Parties an opportunity to identify competing products and/or services. Based upon the results of the Sole Source advertisement, ITS will either certify the request as a sole source or conduct a competitive procurement.