

## Notice of Intent to Certify Sole Source

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**To:** Interested Parties

**From:** David C. Johnson

**CC:** ITS Project Number 47156

**Date:** November 1, 2022

**Re:** Sole Source Certification Number 4495 to provide upgrades, maintenance, and support for the Aware case management system for the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS)

**Contact Name:** Jasmine Grice

**Contact Phone Number:** 601-432-8198

**Contact E-mail Address:** [jasmine.grice@its.ms.gov](mailto:jasmine.grice@its.ms.gov)

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### Sole Source Certification Award Details

Regarding Information Technology Services (ITS) Sole Source Certification Number 4495 for the MDRS, please be advised that ITS intends to award Alliance Enterprises, Inc. as the sole source provider of upgrades, maintenance, and support for the Aware case management system through December 31, 2023, in an amount not to exceed \$439,264.00. MDRS has made a business decision to continue receiving upgrades, maintenance, and support for the Aware case management system. Please be advised that ITS will determine if additional enhancements, upgrades, and support are within scope during the certification period and may increase the spending authority accordingly. Should Alliance Enterprises, Inc. change their 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 B: 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:

**The AWARE Software has been in production in the State since 2000 and is referred to as AACE. Alliance Enterprises, Inc. is the only vendor who can make modifications to the AWARE software. Alliance Enterprises, Inc. is responsible for federally mandated changes to the AWARE software. The Maintenance agreement gives the Agency access to multiple software and enhancements and support throughout the contract.**

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

**Automated Accessible Casework Environment (AACE) is the MDRS's branded version of the Aware Vocational Rehabilitation Case Management System. Aware is proprietary software owned and licensed by Alliance Enterprises, Inc. It is the Agency's main Case Management System used by Vocational Rehabilitation, Vocational Rehabilitation for the Blind, Office of Special Disability Programs, Assisted Technology, AbilityWorks, and Addie McBryde Rehabilitation Center. AACE is used for managing information about MDRS's clients to determine them eligible for the MDRS programs. It produces reports for Management and Federal/State requirements. As part of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), MDRS has integrated the AACE system to the Common Intake and Reports system established by NSPARC. The other partners included are the Common Intake system are the Mississippi Community College Board, Mississippi Department of Human Service, Mississippi Department of Human Services, Mississippi Employment Security Commission, and local work force partners. MDRS has various other interfaces into the AACE system to reduce redundancy.**

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:

**Alliance Enterprises, Inc. is the only vendor who is authorized to provide product updates (which include corrections or patches) and/or Upgrades (which include enhancements and new features.) In addition, Alliance Enterprises, Inc. is the only vendor who has direct access to all source code and technical documentation. The Vendor's sole source certification letter is included as Attachment A.**

4. Explanation of why the amount to be expended for the services is reasonable.

**Alliance Enterprises, Inc. has proposed a fixed-bid, deliverable based contract. Alliance Enterprises, Inc. will assume the risk if the work takes longer than anticipated.**

5. Explanation of what the agency did to obtain the best possible price for these services.

**Alliance Enterprises, Inc. has developed designs for future product improvements to align with new Federal regulations. Therefore, the State will not incur costs for the consultant to listen to all user group meetings and study the designs. This will save the State 20- 30 hours of billable hours. Alliance Enterprises, Inc. is developer of the system, has all technical documentations and subject matter experts. Therefore, the State will not incur costs for the consultant to learn the Aware system including the data model. This will save the State a minimum of 50 hours of billable hours. Alliance Enterprises, Inc. works remotely on multiple projects at one time. Therefore, the State will not incur costs of the consultant "down time" between meetings with the State. Alliance Enterprises, Inc. provides a variety of job functions to fulfill this project including Account Manager, Project Manager, Sr. Business Systems Analyst, and Sr. Technical Architect. The State does not incur the costs to ramp up each of these individuals or pay their rate while not fully engaged in the project.**

## Schedule

Task	Date
First Advertisement Date	11/01/22
Second Advertisement Date	11/08/22
Response Deadline From Objectors	11/16/22 at 3:00 P.M. Central Time
Notice of Award/No Award Posted	Not before 11/17/22

## Project Details

In August 1998, the ITS Board granted sole source approval to the Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services (MDRS) to acquire consulting services, system modifications, and training services from Alliance Enterprises, Inc. These modifications and services were applied to MDRS's Automated Accessible Casework Environment (AACE) system.

In September 2003, the ITS Board granted sole source approval to MDRS to acquire consulting services from Alliance Enterprises, Inc. for the expansion in functionality of the Independent Living Module for the Office of Special Disability Programs (OSDP). In October 2003, the ITS Board granted an expansion and extension of the existing services agreement with Alliance Enterprises, Inc. as the sole source provider of maintenance and support services for the AACE system. In August 2015, ITS advertised Notice of Intent to Certify Sole Source No. 3806 for manufacturer maintenance for the AACE system and integration to the Division of Medicaid's Long-Term Services and Support (LTSS) system. No objections were received from Interested Parties, therefore ITS certified the request as a sole source. In December 2018, ITS issued Notice of Intent to Certify Sole Source Number 4156 for manufacturer maintenance, support, and enhancements to the AACE system through December 31, 2021.

In January 2020, ITS issued Notice of Intent to Certify Sole Source Number 4272 for software, training, and support for the AACE system through February 28, 2023. MDRS wants to procure upgrades, support, and maintenance for the AACE system. The total amount spent to date is \$10,402,763.00.

## Submission Instructions and Format of Response from Objecting Parties

Interested parties who have reason to believe that the upgrades, maintenance, and support for the Aware case management system 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 Alliance Enterprises, Inc.

### 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 Tuesday, September 20, 2022, at 3:00 p.m. (Central Time) to Jasmine Grice at [jasmine.grice@its.ms.gov](mailto:jasmine.grice@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 Jasmine Grice 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. 4495-47156**  
**Accepted until November 16, 2022 @ 3:00 p.m.,**  
**ATTENTION: Jasmine Grice**

If you have any questions concerning the information above or if we can be of further assistance, please contact Jasmine Grice at 601-432-8198 or via email at [jasmine.grice@its.ms.gov](mailto:jasmine.grice@its.ms.gov).

Attachment A: Vendor Correspondence

Attachment B: Sole Source Procurement Overview



September 9, 2022

Paula Brown  
Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services  
PO Box 1690  
Jackson, MS 39215

RE: Vendors Authorized to Upgrade, Maintain, and Support *Aware*

Dear Mrs. Brown:

You requested a list of vendors who are authorized to upgrade, maintain, and support the *Aware* Vocational Rehabilitation Case Management System.

Currently, Alliance Enterprises, Inc. is the only vendor who is authorized to provide Updates (which include corrections or patches) and/or Upgrades (which include enhancements and new features) as *Aware* is a proprietary product. In addition, Alliance is the only vendor who has direct access to all source code and technical documentation.

This product has been customized over the years for the unique needs of MDRS. The main core part of the code is for VR and VRB but other modules have been added. Alliance maintenance includes updates to remain compliant with Federal Reporting updates. For MDRS we have added several Modules that make their system unique. These include Service Module, Medicaid Waiver interfaces, Personal Care Attendants, and data exchange with MS System which is used by core partners. The partners for MDRS are MS Department of Employment Security, the College Board and Human Services.

If you need any other explanation or assistance in this subject matter, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

*Karen Dunn*

Signed: 9/9/2022

Karen Dunn  
Chief Executive Officer

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Alliance Enterprises	2590 Willamette Dr NE	T: 360-456-7000
allianceenterprises.com	Lacey, WA 98516	F: 360-456-7100

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 A.

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.

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.