



Notice of Intent to Certify Sole Source

To: Interested Parties

From: Craig P. Orgeron, CPM, Ph.D. *CMO*

CC: ITS Project Number 48569

Date: October 29, 2024

Re: Sole Source Certification Number 4654 to provide an Online Military Personnel Platform for the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES)

Contact Name: Atrael Porter

Contact Phone Number: 601-432-8077

Contact E-mail Address: atrael.porter@its.ms.gov

Sole Source Certification Award Details

Regarding Information Technology Services (ITS) Sole Source Certification Number 4654 for the Mississippi Department of Employment Security (MDES), please be advised that ITS intends to award Tallo LLC, as the sole source provider of an Online Military Personnel Platform for one year upon contract execution, in an amount not to exceed \$397,000.00. If MDES opts to renew the Online Military Personnel Platform, this sole source certification shall be valid for up to two additional years following the first year of contract execution. Please be advised that ITS will determine if additional licenses, enhancements, upgrades, or support are within scope during the certification period and may increase the spending authority accordingly. Should Tallo LLC 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:

Tallo's proprietary online military personnel platform is the only end-to-end solution that provides job seekers with customized career pathways and employment opportunities matched to assessed skills and interest, utilizing proprietary software in an open/closed system, allowing connectivity only between verified participants and providing a unique solution that serves the military community and local employers. Further, the system offers users the ability to discover scholarships, internships, apprenticeships, and provides employers the ability to host virtual mentorship programs and virtual hiring events that support successful matching. While there are other similar platforms, they do not connect to real job opportunities

or help Mississippi address its pipeline needs nor do they layer information from job postings on their labor market insights.

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

Tallo's online platform leverages real-time labor market information in unique ways to provide career insights based on job postings, pathways connected to transferable skills, and insights at the regional, state, and national levels, providing real-time mentorship programs and offer programs that help foster relationships that could lead to valuable connections for future careers and professional development. The platform allows users to make real future career connections, participate in real-time mentorship programs, and communicate directly with companies that are seeking current and future employees.

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:

Tallo is the sole provider of the collection of services it offers through its online platform utilizing proprietary software. To the vendor's knowledge, similarly customized services are not available from other vendors.

Schedule

Task	Date
First Advertisement Date	10/29/24
Second Advertisement Date	11/05/24
Response Deadline From Objectors	11/13/24 at 3:00 P.M. Central Time
Notice of Award/No Award Posted	Not before 11/14/24

Project Details

MDES is seeking to pilot a project using the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Governor's Discretionary Funds to connect Veterans and military personnel to high-paying career opportunities with defense manufacturers and other aligned employers through an online platform.

In April, 2024, ITS issued Request for Information (RFI) No. 4621 on behalf of MDES for vendors to demonstrate their ability to provide an online platform that allows access for veteran and military families to connect with a community of high-quality jobs. ITS received one response to the RFI from Tallo, stating their system meets the specific functionality and special features requested, and the vendor has specific experience servicing the military population that MDES wishes to target.

Submission Instructions and Format of Response from Objecting Parties

Interested parties who have reason to believe that the Online Military Personnel Platform 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 Tallo LLC.

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, November 13, 2024, at 3:00 p.m. (Central Time) to Atrael Porter at Atrael.Porter@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 Atrael Porter 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. 4654-48569
Accepted until November 13, 2024 @ 3:00 p.m.,
ATTENTION: Atrael Porter**

If you have any questions concerning the information above or if we can be of further assistance, please contact Atrael Porter at 601-432-8077 or via email at Atrael.Porter@its.ms.gov.

- Attachment A: Sole Source Letter
- Attachment B: Sole Source Procurement Overview



11720 Plaza America Dr., Ste 9
Reston, VA, 20190
www.tallo.com
(855) 765-7836

Laura Ring

Deputy Executive Director of External Relations
Mississippi Department of Employment Security
LRing@mdes.ms.gov

August 2, 2024

Dear Laura Ring,

This letter is verification that Tallo, LLC meets the requirements of being a sole source provider in the State of Mississippi. Tallo is the sole provider of the collection of services it offers through its online platform that is the only end-to-end solution available in the market that provides job seekers with customized career pathways and employment opportunities matched to assessed skills and interests. With deep experience helping veterans discover and explore civilian careers, gain requisite certifications, and connect directly with employers for job opportunities, Tallo provides a unique solution that serves the military community and local employers. Further, Tallo offers users the ability to discover scholarships, internships, apprenticeships and offers employers the ability to host virtual mentorship programs and virtual hiring events that support successful matching. To our knowledge, similarly customized services are not available from other vendors.

Tallo utilizes proprietary software in an open/closed system, allowing connectivity only between verified participants. Tallo also leverages real-time labor market information in unique ways to provide career insights based on job postings, pathways connected to transferable skills, and insights at the regional, state, and national levels. These are crucial elements for the desired outcome to connect users to high-quality jobs. While there are other platforms that are open/closed, they are primarily used to connect interested parties to online courses, professional development, and credentials (e.g., ed2go, Guild, Credly, Penn Foster) or serve only as a career exploration and planning tool (e.g., OpenSesame, Parker Dewey, Xello, SchoolLinks, Scholarpath). These platforms do not connect to real job opportunities or help Mississippi address its pipeline needs. They also do not layer information from job postings on their labor market insights. Tallo's system allows users to make real future career connections, participate in real-time mentorship programs, and communicate directly with companies that are seeking current and future employees.

Sincerely,
Digitally signed by:

Allison Danielsen

04FF172829F148D
Allison Danielsen

CEO

8/2/2024 | 6:11 AM PDT

Attachment B

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).

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 \$75,000 (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.