

## Notice of Intent to Certify Sole Source

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**To:** Interested Parties

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

**CC:** ITS Project Number 48670

**Date:** April 1, 2025

**Re:** Sole Source Certification Number 4668 to provide a Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) Fire Reporting Solution for the Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC)

**Contact Name:** Vershonda Grindle

**Contact Phone Number:** 601-432-8213

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

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### Sole Source Certification Award Details

Regarding Information Technology Services (ITS) Sole Source Certification Number 4668 for the Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC), please be advised that ITS intends to award Timmons Group, Inc. as the sole source provider of the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) Fire Reporting Solution for three years upon contract execution, in an amount not to exceed \$796,000.00. 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 Timmons Group, Inc. change their name during this certification period, then ITS will determine if a recertification is necessary.

### Sole Source Criteria

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

**Timmons Group, as listed in the Federal Financial Assistance Award of Domestic Grant 23-DG-11083128-410, is to carry out the development of the new Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system for Fire Reporting. The CAD Fire Reporting Solution will include integrations with several proprietary systems to pull in relevant data or send fire reporting data. Timmons Group, working with the US Forest Service, built and, as sole provider, maintains the following systems: the national spatial reporting system for all fuels management spatial data in the US; the national spatial reporting system for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funded Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) program; the national spatial reporting system for Forest Health accomplishment reporting (ForHealth); the national spatial reporting system for Forest Stewardship (SMART) accomplishment reporting; the national spatial reporting system for volunteer / rural fire department funding through the VFA / VFA and BIL plus-up funding**

programs; the current MFC RX Fire Burn Permit system that will integrate with the new CAD system including spatial data / locations; the national spatial reporting system for the Landscape Scale Restoration (LaSR) grant program; and the Northeast-Midwest Wildfire Risk Portal. Timmons Group has developed applications for the Southern Group of State Foresters, Wildlife Risk Portal, and the national wildlife reporting system for the USDA- Forest Service. Once completed, this new MFC system will be able to report data to each of these proprietary systems. This proprietary solution will integrate with the above proprietary systems provided by Timmons Group, therefore they are the only ones that can integrate this data.

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

The MFC Fire Reporting web application will provide a simple and intuitive fire response and reporting workflow for Operations Staff, Regional Admins, and System Administrators where users can report and track fire details, manage incoming/outgoing calls, manage resources and equipment, view a live dashboard, generate reports as needed, and view notifications. The Fire Reporting mobile application will provide situational awareness for Field Crew Members when they are responding to and working fires. Operations Staff will have access to the mobile application so that they can stay informed about active fires when they don't have access to the web application. The mobile app will include a live dashboard map, details about each fire, a personalized view of fires assigned to each crew member, and the ability to update selected fire details from the app. This solution is integral to wildfire reporting at a national level in partnerships with the Forest Service and National Associate of State Foresters. This expertise is critical to understanding the interdependencies between state and federal data and their respective reporting portals.

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:

Timmons Group has been, and is currently, the sole provider of National Forestry Performance Measures dashboards that aggregate data from reporting system to support NASF, and their partners, reporting to the White House, Office of Management and Budget and Appropriations Staff on behalf of State Forestry Agencies. Timmons Group is the only firm capable of integrating MFC's data into their required, national United States Forestry Service performance reporting systems. The Vendor's sole source certification letter is included as Attachment A.

## Schedule

Task	Date
First Advertisement Date	04/01/25
Second Advertisement Date	04/08/25
Response Deadline From Objectors	04/15/25 at 3:00 P.M. Central Time
Notice of Award/No Award Posted	Not before 04/16/25

## Project Details

MFC recently moved away from their current fire reporting system back to their previous tool for reporting fires. The previous tool was custom built for MFC, and they own the source code. The original tool provided a more streamlined data entry process that met MFC's needs; however this

tool is outdated, leading to issues with data accuracy and recovery. MFC would like to update both the technology and workflows in a new product moving forward.

Other solutions evaluated were overly complex, failed to meet MFC's specific needs, and had high annual maintenance costs. Additionally, most off-the-shelf systems are designed for law enforcement and do not cater to the specific needs for wildfire response, resource tracking, and cost assessment. After extensive research, The Timmons Group, Inc. was identified as the ideal provider, as they possess both the forestry expertise and development skills needed to meet MFC's unique requirements.

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

Interested parties who have reason to believe that the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) Fire Reporting Solution 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 Timmons Group, 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, April 15, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. (Central Time) to Vershonda Grindle at [vershonda.grindle@its.ms.gov](mailto:vershonda.grindle@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 Vershonda Grindle 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:

<p><b>SUBMITTED IN RESPONSE TO</b> <b>Sole Source Certification No. 4668-48670</b> <b>Accepted until April 15, 2025 @ 3:00 p.m.,</b> <b>ATTENTION: Vershonda Grindle</b></p>
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If you have any questions concerning the information above or if we can be of further assistance, please contact Vershonda Grindle at 601-432-8213 or via email at [Vershonda.Grindle@its.ms.gov](mailto:Vershonda.Grindle@its.ms.gov).

Attachment A: Vendor Correspondence  
Attachment B: Sole Source Procurement Overview



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1/10/2025

Russell D. Jones  
Chief of Staff  
MS Forestry Commission

Dear Mr. Jones,

This letter is in support of your pending wildfire reporting / computer-aided dispatch solution for Mississippi Forestry Commission (MFC). Timmons Group has worked successfully with MFC, and their partners nationally, for over 20 years on wildfire, forestry and natural resource management technical solutions.

We are providing a list of accomplishments that only Timmons Group can state and are the sole provider for:

- Timmons Group developed and currently maintains the SGSF Wildfire Risk Portal (WRAP) and the underlying wildfire risk data in the portal.
- Timmons Group, working with the USFS and DOI-OWF, built the national spatial reporting system for all fuels management spatial data in the US as the replacement for the National Fire Plan Operating System (NFPORS). This includes all wildfire treatment data from every State Forestry agency, all bureaus in the DOI and the USFS FACTS database.
- Timmons Group, working with the USFS, developed the national spatial reporting system for the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funded Community Wildfire Defense Grant (CWDG) program that includes 1 Billion in funding for wildfire mitigation.
- Timmons Group, working with the USFS, built and currently maintains the national spatial reporting system for Forest Health accomplishment reporting that all State Forestry agencies use nationally (ForHealth).
- Timmons Group, working with the USFS, built and currently maintains the national spatial reporting system for Forest Stewardship (SMART) accomplishment reporting that all State Forestry agencies use nationally.
- Timmons Group, working with the USFS, built and currently maintains the national spatial reporting system for volunteer / rural fire department funding through the VFA / VFA and BIL plus-up funding programs that all States use nationally.
- Timmons Group built the current MFC RX Fire Burn Permit system that will integrate with the new CAD system (including spatial data / locations).
- Timmons Group, working with the USFS and the Northeast-Midwest State Foresters Alliance, built and maintains the NE-MW Wildfire Risk Portal.
- Timmons Group has been, and is currently, the sole provider of National Forestry Performance Measures dashboards that aggregate data from reporting system to support NASF, and their partners, reporting out to the White House, OMB and Appropriations Staff on behalf of State Forestry Agencies.
- Timmons Group, working with the USFS, built the national spatial reporting system for the Landscape Scale Restoration (LaSR) grant program provided to all State Forestry Agencies.

Timmons Group is the only firm capable of integrating MFC's data into their, required, national USFS performance reporting systems.

Regards,

Lowell Ballard – Director of Geospatial Solutions, Timmons Group  
[Lowell.ballard@timmons.com](mailto:Lowell.ballard@timmons.com)

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ENGINEERING | DESIGN | TECHNOLOGY

## 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](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 \$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.