

## 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 48813

**Date:** July 22, 2025

**Re:** Sole Source Certification Number 4682 to provide hosting, maintenance, and support for a Grants Management System for the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE)

**Contact Name:** Vershonda Grindle

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

**Contact E-mail Address:** vershonda.grindle@its.ms.gov

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### Sole Source Certification Award Details

Regarding Information Technology Services (ITS) Sole Source Certification Number 4682 for the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), please be advised that ITS intends to award EMS LINQ, LLC as the sole source provider of hosting, maintenance, and support for a Grants Management System through October 31, 2028, in an amount not to exceed \$998,685.79. 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 EMS LINQ, 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:

**MDE was granted ownership of a grants management system, the Mississippi Comprehensive Automated Performance-based System (MCAPS), developed by HMB by the Ohio Department of Education in April 2014. The system offers a comprehensive planning tool that aligns school plans with a single Local Educational Agency (LEA) plan. In addition, the planning tool allows LEAs and schools to create relationships between plan elements and grant funds. This unique design allows LEAs to eliminate the redundancy that comes with creating separate plans for each grant application. MCAPS is tailored to the needs of Mississippi and is not an off-the-shelf grants management system.**

**EMS LINQ has the unique knowledge of not only the system's architecture and technical processes but also federal education grants expertise and MDE specific business process awareness. No known vendors possess a combination of these skills and experience to productively work with MDE to support its grants management processes.**

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

**The U.S. Office of Management and Budget requires MDE to meet uniformed administrative requirements, cost principles, and audit requirements for Federal awards. MDE has certain responsibilities with regards to administering the Federal awards received from any Federal Government Agency. According to 34 CFR §76.770, MDE must have procedures to ensure compliance with approving applications and amendments, as well as the evaluation of the applications. Having a single Grant Management System allows MDE to focus on updates and enhancements of one system to meet the unique needs of federally funded programs.**

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:

**EMS LINQ, LLC is the sole source vendor for the conceptualization, development, and implementation for the Mississippi Comprehensive Automated Performance-based System (MCAPS) at the MDE. As the sole source vendor for MCAPS, EMS LINQ is confident that its staff is the most qualified to provide the level of support that the MDE became accustomed to. The Vendor's sole source certification letter is included as Attachment A.**

## **Schedule**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Date</b>
First Advertisement Date	07/22/25
Second Advertisement Date	07/29/25
Response Deadline From Objectors	08/05/25 at 3:00 P.M. Central Time
Notice of Award/No Award Posted	Not before 08/06/25

## **Project Details**

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) desired to implement a web-based grants management system to reduce the administrative burden placed on Local Education Agencies (LEAs) when applying for grant funding, while at the same time increasing transparency of grant activities to ensure funds are spent in accordance with federal and state guidelines.

The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) successfully implemented a Grants Management System (GMS) that met the needs of MDE and its LEAs. HMB was the vendor contracted by ODE to design and build the GMS solution. Because the initial software was developed using federal funds, the underlying source code was provided to the State of Mississippi at no cost in 2014.

The system was hosted, supported, and maintained by HMB, with all services assigned to EMS LINQ, Inc. in July 2021. In 2014, MDE proceeded with this project as Sole Source and executed a Software License and Application Service Provider Agreement with HMB. Beginning in September 2015, ITS has issued several Notices of Intent to Certify Sole Source for hosting, maintenance, support, and additional modules of the grants management system to EMS LINQ, LLC. To date, MDE has spent \$3,417,981.54 for this system.

## Submission Instructions and Format of Response from Objecting Parties

Interested parties who have reason to believe that the grants management system hosting, maintenance, and support 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 EMS LINQ, 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 Tuesday, August 5, 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:

**SUBMITTED IN RESPONSE TO**  
**Sole Source Certification No. 4682-48813**  
**Accepted until August 5, 2025 @ 3:00 p.m.,**  
**ATTENTION: Vershonda Grindle**

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



2801 Via Fortuna  
Suite 400  
Austin, TX 78746  
737.PIC.LINQ

Issued: July 15, 2025

Mississippi Department of Education  
359 N. West St. – PO Box 771  
Jackson, MS 39205

RE: Project 48813 MDE MCAPS Online Grants Mgt System

To Whom it May Concern:

EMS LINQ, LLC and its subsidiary companies (collectively, "LINQ") is a company with an exclusive focus on developing software and services for K-12 schools, school districts, and other educational institutions or governmental entities. EMS LINQ, LLC ("LINQ") is the sole source from which schools, school districts, other educational institutions or governmental entities may purchase the LINQ software and accompanying support, including fixes and enhancements. LINQ is the sole owner of the proprietary source code, and no other entities are authorized to modify, provide services for or support the source code provided.

Regarding your inquiry into the LINQ software used by the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE), LINQ hereby confirms that it is the sole manufacturer and authorized distributor of:

**Mississippi Comprehensive Automated Performance-based System (MCAPS)**

- Originally developed and implemented at the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) by the eGrants Division of HMB Information Systems Developers.
- In July 2021, LINQ acquired that division, assumed all of HMB's eGrants-related contracts, and eGrants assigned full-time employees.

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- LINQ has continued to implement, enhance, host, and maintain grants management systems for state education agencies nationwide.

The Mississippi Department of Education is seeking qualified personnel to provide hosting, maintenance, and support services for MCAPS. As the sole source vendor for MCAPS, LINQ is confident that its staff is the most qualified to provide the level of support that the Department of Education became accustomed to during the development, implementation, and continued execution of MCAPS.

Additionally, any services provided using the LINQ software including, without limitation, hosting and implementation services for the LINQ product are only available through LINQ, unless LINQ provides explicit approval for an outside party to provide services on LINQ's behalf.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  
*Mark Fredericks*  
524E67D7FCB014BE...

Mark Fredericks

Controller

mfredericks@linq.com

737.PIC.LINQ

## 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.