

USM SSP 26_017 Notice of Proposed Sole Source Purchase of Career Coach + Widget Builder.

http://www.ms.gov/dfa/contract_bid_search/Bid

RFx: 3150006661

Comments/objections will be received as required per Section 31-7-13 (C) of the Mississippi Code until 8:00 a.m. (Central Time) on February 23, 2026.

Any person or entity that objects and proposes that the commodity listed is not sole source and can be provided by another person or entity shall submit a written notice to:

Jacob Cochran

Director of Procurement & Contracts 118 College Dr. Box 5003 Hattiesburg, MS 39406

bids@usm.edu

Phone: 601-266-4131

Subject Line must read "Sole Source Objection USM SSP 26_017"

The notice shall contain a detailed explanation of why the commodity is not a sole source procurement. Appropriate documentation shall also be submitted if applicable.

If after a review of the submitted notice and documents, USM determines that the commodity in the proposed sole source request can be provided by another person or entity, then USM will withdraw the sole source request publication from the procurement portal website and submit the procurement of the commodity to an advertised competitive bid or selection process.

If USM determines after review that there is only one (1) source for the required commodity, then USM will appeal to the Public Procurement Review Board. USM will have the burden of proving that the commodity is only provided by one (1) source.

Run Dates: 2/4, 2/11

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The University of Southern Mississippi anticipates purchasing the item(s) listed below as a sole source purchase. Anyone objecting to this purchase shall follow the procedures outlined below.

1. Description of the commodity that USM is seeking to procure:

USM seeks to purchase Lightcast Career Coach and Widget Builder, an integrated career exploration platform that enables students to identify careers aligned with their interests and skills, provides validated regional labor market and wage data, and directly connects careers to USM academic programs. The platform supports student decision-making, recruitment and advising efforts, and provides administrators with analytics to inform program planning and workforce alignment. This solution improves transparency between academic programs and career outcomes, supporting student retention and degree completion.

2. What efforts were made by the Agency to determine that the proposed provider is the only entity that can provide the commodity needed?

The Office of the Provost team researched peer institution websites to review approaches to career exploration and career data. In this review, products were identified that could support one element of the request, and not the full scope of what we seek. We aim to be efficient in finding one product that can support a holistic effort for career readiness initiatives. The product needs to provide validated and reliable real-time data, be user-friendly to potential and current students on the USM webpages, and provide the ability for degree program leads to make updates to career lists based on the goals of the

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program. No single alternative vendor was identified that provides all required features within one integrated platform.

3. What efforts were made to ensure the best possible price for the commodity was obtained?

Market research identified products offering only partial functionality at costs exceeding \$50,000 annually. Lightcast provides a comprehensive solution at approximately 40% lower cost while eliminating the need for multiple vendors, making the pricing reasonable and cost-effective.

4. Why is the commodity the only one that can meet the needs to the Agency?

Lightcast is the only vendor capable of providing this complete, integrated solution within a single platform. The following proprietary capabilities are not collectively available from any competing vendor:

- Proprietary Unsuppression Methodology that produces reliable labor market and wage data not available through public datasets
- Validated Program-to-Career Mapping developed through more than a decade of higher education partnerships
- Military-to-Civilian Career Mapping, supporting veteran and military-affiliated students
- Pathways-Integrated Interest Assessment connecting interests directly to academic programs and careers
- Guided Résumé Builder aligned with real-time employer demand

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- Embedded Web Delivery through widgets and APIs that ensure consistent information across institutional platforms

5. Why is the amount expended for the commodity reasonable?

Because this solution will be accessible to prospective students, enrolled students, advisors, faculty, and program leaders across all degree programs, the institution-wide impact supports a strong return on investment and makes the cost reasonable.

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Advertisement Schedule	Date
1st scheduled	2/4/26
2nd scheduled	2/11/26

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Jacob Cochran
Director of Procurement & Contracts
Jacob.Cochran@usm.edu

Subject Line must read "Sole Source Objection 25_XXX"

The notice shall contain a detailed explanation of why the commodity is not a sole source procurement. Appropriate documentation shall also be submitted if applicable.

If after a review of the submitted notice and documents, USM determines that the commodity in the proposed sole source request can be provided by another person or entity, then USM will withdraw the sole source request publication from the procurement portal website and submit the procurement of the commodity to an advertised competitive bid or selection process.

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