

Mississippi State University

Notice of Proposed Sole Source Purchase

245-145

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

1. Commodity or commodities to be purchased (make, model, description):

Piestar, Inc.'s Piestar DPx and RFX knowledge management systems

2. Explanation of the need to be fulfilled by this item(s), how is it unique from all other options, and why it is the only one that can meet the specific needs of the department:

The Mississippi Research Alliance lead by the MSU EPSCoR office is seeking to use Piestar services called DPx and RFX knowledge management systems for collaborative data and project management, monitoring, and evaluation, including application and proposal reviews for MSU Grant #G00008775. The MRA team at MSU is responsible for soliciting and issuing subawards to multiple institutions, and these systems will help issue and track these awards. The systems will also help the project management team track milestone progress throughout the project lifecycle. This comprehensive data must be reported to NSF every year. NSF Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR), EPSCoR Collaborations for Optimizing Research Ecosystems (E-CORE), and EPSCoR Research Incubators for STEM Excellence (E-RISE) programs have strict and complex reporting requirements, necessitating the coordinated data collection of program outputs such as component personnel, publications, presentations, disaggregated data, and other outputs from distributed research teams at numerous institutions. Piestar systems are heavily customized to align with NSF policies, compliance, and reporting requirements and procedures. Using Piestar systems will greatly simplify the management of our program. No other software system is available with comparable features and capabilities. Piestar, Inc. is uniquely able to provide both software and experienced technical support services due to many years of experience working with projects funded by NIH, NIST, NSF, USAID, and USDA. Piestar systems were originally created in 2013 at Kansas State University. In 2014, Piestar, Inc. was formed to support and market the Piestar systems. Due to the historical relationship between Piestar, Inc. and NIH, NIST, NSF, USAID, and USDA research programs, Piestar systems are exclusively customized to meet the data collection, project management, monitoring, evaluation, proposal review, and reporting needs for our program.

3. Name of company/individual selling the item and why that source is the only possible source that can provide the required item(s):

Piestar, Inc. is the company selling these information systems. Efforts to find a similar product from another vendor have been unsuccessful due to the specific nature of the Piestar systems and how they are tailored to the information gathered in support of NIH, NIST, NSF, and USAID projects. No other company offers systems similar to Piestar and the way they serve these projects specifically.

4. Estimated cost of item(s) and an explanation why the amount to be expended is considered reasonable:

\$38,000 is the cost for the first year of the subscription. If renewals are made in the future, they will be slightly lower than this first year. price. The total award amount of this NSF project is \$8 million, and the scope of work calls for a large portion of this amount to be given to different MS higher learning institutions via subawards in order to encourage participation in the creation of a statewide research network. The Piestar DPx and Rfx systems help issue and track these awards along with different quantitative data metrics that must be reported to NSF. The immediate value added to the project along with the economic impact of such a network alone would be justification for this cost.

5. Explanation of the efforts taken by the department to determine this is the only source and the efforts used to obtain the best possible price:

The department has had an agreement before with Piestar on the Track I of this Track II NSF EPSCoR project which lasted from 2018-2023. That was when they found out that Piestar was the only vendor to offer such information systems. When the project leadership team decided again that Piestar's services could be valuable for this Track II project, searches to find a similar product were unsuccessful. Piestar prides themselves on being the only vendor to offer systems that are tailored to these types of Federally Sponsored Projects.

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:

Jennifer Mayfield, CPPO
Director and CPO, Procurement & Contracts
jmayfield@procurement.msstate.edu
Subject Line must read "Sole Source Objection"

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, MSU determines that the commodity in the proposed sole source request can be provided by another person or entity, then MSU 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 MSU determines after review that there is only one (1) source for the required commodity, then MSU will appeal to the Public Procurement Review Board. MSU will have the burden of proving that the commodity is only provided by one (1) source.