

**Mississippi State University**  
**Notice of Proposed Sole Source Purchase**

**256-053**

**1. COMMODITY OR COMMODITIES TO BE PURCHASED (MAKE, MODEL, DESCRIPTION):**

In Person Trainings on the following topics & dates:

March 17, 2026 “*Crucial Teams*”

April 15-16,2026 “*Crucial Conversations for Mastering Dialogue*”

October 27, 2026 “*Crucial Conversations for Accountability*”

Training sessions include certified trainer, ebooks, training materials, license, SDI-a personality assessment, SDI platform access, digital learner guides, digital model cards, digital course completion certificate, six-week ongoing learning experience, online resources, access to videos, weekly emails with tips and skill building resources, articles & webinars access, CDs, DVDs, downloadable files, workbooks.

**2. EXPLANATION OF THE NEED TO BE FULFILLED BY THIS ITEM, HOW IT IS UNIQUE FROM ALL OTHER OPTIONS, AND WHY IT IS THE ONLY ONE THAT CAN MEET THE SPECIFIC NEEDS OF THE DEPARTMENT:**

MSU Extension Early Childhood Programs serve diverse communities through multiple program models, all of which rely on strong, adaptive leadership to deliver high-quality services and respond to evolving needs. As programs grow in scope, complexity, and reach, there is a critical need to intentionally build leadership capacity across all levels of the organization. Investing in a shared leadership framework strengthens alignment, improves decision-making, supports staff development, and ensures consistency in how leaders guide teams, manage changes, and sustain program excellence.

As a higher-education-affiliated organization and a provider of educational services to children and families, it is essential that leadership development for our staff reflects the same level of rigor, quality, and intentionality that we expect in our program delivery. Crucial Learning offers premium learning experiences, high-quality facilitation, exceptional customer support, and measurable outcomes. The

organization maintains a ninety-three percent customer satisfaction rate and has partnered with nearly half of the Forbes Global 2000, demonstrating both credibility and proven impact at scale.

Alternative vendors were reviewed but do not meet the specific needs of MSU Extension Early Childhood Programs. Most offer generic leadership training without a strong foundation in social science or the ability to customize content for the complexity of early childhood and community-based programs. Crucial Learning uniquely combines evidence-based methodology, tailored content, and scalable delivery to build a shared leadership framework across all programs, making them the only vendor able to meet the intended outcomes.

**3. NAME OF COMPANY/INDIVIDUAL SELLING THE ITEM(s) AND WHY THAT SOURCE IS THE ONLY POSSIBLE SOURCE THAT CAN PROVIDE THE REQUIRED ITEM(s):**

VitalSmarts, LC, dba Crucial Learning, 320 River Park Drive, Suite SWB, Provo, UT 84604

VitalSmarts, which changed its name to [Crucial Learning](#) in August 2021, owns several key intellectual assets primarily related to its corporate training and leadership development programs.

Its intellectual assets include:

- **Trademarks:** VitalSmarts owns trademarks for its flagship course names, including **Crucial Conversations** and **Crucial Accountability** and **Crucial Teams**.
- **Copyrighted Materials:** The company holds copyrights for its extensive training materials, course content, books, and related documentation.
- **Proprietary Research and Methodology:** Crucial Learning's courses are based on over 25 years of social science research into behavior modification and organizational change, which forms a core part of its proprietary methodology.
- **Software and Platforms:** The company utilizes software and hardware platforms to deliver its services and materials online, which are also part of its owned assets.
- **Book Intellectual Property:** VitalSmarts (now Crucial Learning) has licensed or owned intellectual property rights related to bestselling books such as *Crucial Conversations*, *Crucial Accountability*, *Influencer*, and *Change Anything*, authored by its co-founders and vice presidents of research. These assets are typically protected as copyrights, trademarks, and potentially

trade secrets, and government agencies have noted that their material is exclusively copyrighted and not available for subcontracting.

**4. ESTIMATED COST OF ITEM(s) AND AN EXPLANATION WHY THE AMOUNT TO BE EXPENDED IS CONSIDERED REASONABLE:**

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| 3 In-Person Trainings including License for 35 participants and training materials = | \$28,700.00 |
| 3 In-Person Trainer Delivery Fees =  | \$32,800.00 |
| Travel and Expenses for 3 Trainer Visits =   | \$ 8,400.00 |
| Sub Total =  | \$69,900.00 |
| 3 Shipping Charges for Course Materials =  | \$ 225.00   |
| Grand Total =  | \$70,125.00 |

Crucial Learning is the only known provider capable of delivering the specific training, curriculum, and instructional methodology required to meet the operational and compliance needs of our Early Childhood Program. The requested services are uniquely designed and proprietary to Crucial Learning and cannot be obtained from another vendor without significant modification, loss of functionality, or disruption to program outcomes.

Crucial Learning utilizes a proprietary, research-based curriculum delivered by certified expert facilitators who have extensive experience working with public-sector and early childhood organizations. The training content, learning activities, assessments, and instructional materials are developed and owned exclusively by Crucial Learning and are not licensed or distributed through third-party vendors. The proposed training includes customized, program-specific content tailored to address the unique challenges, regulatory environment, and workforce dynamics of our Early Childhood Program. In addition to instructor-led training, participants receive sixty (60) days of unlimited access to proprietary post-course learning resources, including digital job aids, reinforcement tools, eBooks, and customized materials designed to ensure retention, application, and long-term behavioral change. These resources are integral to the training and are not available independently from other sources. Comparable training programs do not offer the same integrated combination of customized curriculum, proprietary learning platform, certified facilitation, and post-training reinforcement necessary to achieve the required outcomes.

Substituting another vendor would require redevelopment of course content, retraining of staff, and interruption to program continuity, resulting in additional costs, delays, and diminished effectiveness.

**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:**

Other vendors were reviewed but none offered the specialized trainings and careful curated suite of learning solutions that will yield the greatest potential of addressing critical outcomes and success. Critical Learning offered the trainings that would be designed specifically for our program and pricing that was within the realm of our budget. Ultimately, the combination of customized training delivery, proprietary course materials, and extended post-training resources was the final determining factor in selecting Crucial Learning, as no other vendor could offer an equivalent or comparable solution.

This is the most in line with current accreditation standards and assessment practices. ARC-PA is cracking down hard on standard 83.03 -Supervised Clinical Practice experiences must provide sufficient patient exposure to allow each student to meet program expectations and acquire the competencies needed for entry into clinical PA practice. Other programs were not able to offer these required features.

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](mailto: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.