

Mississippi State University
Notice of Proposed Sole Source Purchase

267-050

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):
WRK of Arkansas (manufacturer) – WRK Drift Tower System with corresponding polyester string material, fluorescent dye, and manufacturer delivery, set-up, and 3-day training for MSU personnel.

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 need to be fulfilled by these items is research data collection for off-target movement (i.e., “drift”) of agricultural products applied by air using Unmanned/Uncrewed Aerial Application Systems (UAAS – “spray drones”). The MSU Agricultural Autonomy Institute (AAI) has multiple ongoing sponsored research projects which require this research data collection in order to quantify and characterize off-target drift associated with UAAS. The WRK Drift Tower System is unique from all other options because it is the only tower product which is specifically designed and intended for data collection of off-target drift movement in aerial product applications. The only other “comparable” tower options are designed/intended for radio and telecoms infrastructure and are designed to withstand high winds and severe weather conditions – which adds significant cost. Nearest “comparable” tower option available for review here at a cost of over \$14K - <https://www.radioparts.com/trylon-5-95-0200-070?setCurrencyId=1&sku=5.95.0200.070&srsId=AU7gw4V65mkhRvL2M0uQW2bnuZLZrMfSZmAladYRnv5Yw3vgwYJq2N9Obbg>

Aerial product applications by UAAS (the focus of our ongoing research projects) are never performed in high winds and severe weather. Therefore the “comparable” tower options designed for these conditions are not applicable nor relevant to the ongoing research, and the added cost of the options would not be reasonable nor justifiable. By comparison, the WRK Drift Tower System is 1) specifically designed for our intended purpose, 2) includes the additional materials needed for testing, 3) includes 3-day manufacturer training to MSU personnel who will be using the system, 4) is referenced in existing scientific literature for comparable studies, 5) is endorsed by the National Agricultural Aviation Association (NAAA), and 6) available at a lower cost than the nearest “comparable” alternative option(s).

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

WRK of Arkansas – Dr. Dennis Gardisser. This is the only possible source that can provide the required items because Dr. Gardisser is the Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM, i.e., “builder”) of the WRK Drift Tower System and the sole-provider of manufacturer training for the system. Polyester string material(s) and fluorescent dye materials accompanying the WRK Drift Tower System can be secured through separate sources, however, these materials are included in the current WRK of Arkansas procurement are necessary to support the immediate setup and 3-day training items included in the sole-source procurement.

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

Estimated cost of equipment is \$12,025, which includes delivery, setup, and 3-day manufacturer training. This amount is considered reasonable because the nearest “comparable” tower option (see link in #2) would cost over \$2,000+ more than the WRK Drift Tower System and would require additional cost(s) for shipping/delivery, setup, or training

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:

Extensive efforts have been taken by the department to determine that WRK of Arkansas is the only source available for this product, and to ensure the best possible price is obtained. The department has evaluated numerous “comparable” options as previously discussed here. These options are comparable only in that they are a “tower”, but they are over-engineered for inclement weather well beyond our research needs and come at a significantly higher cost than the WRK Spray Drift Tower System. Additionally, the department has investigated building our own drift tower system as a potential alternative. The raw materials, tools, and hardware required to safely to build such a tower by the department would exceed the cost of the WRK Drift Tower System, and would not allow for simple break-down and consolidated storage of

the tower in order to transport to/from field testing sites as required for ongoing research and as the WRK Drift Tower System is already designed. Finally, none of the above alternatives allow for multi-day in-depth training on set-up and use of the drift tower system, which is critically important for scientifically accurate data collection. For these reasons, including affordability and cost effectiveness, a sole-source procurement of the WRK Drift Tower System is the best overall option for this equipment procurement and the research projects it will immediately support.

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 of Procurement Services, Chief Procurement Officer

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.