

Procurement Pathways



Sole Source Procurements

Defining Legitimacy - Clearing Up Misconceptions

When agencies need to move quickly or maintain continuity, it's tempting to think "sole source." But Mississippi's IT procurement rules set a high bar for when a sole source designation is actually allowed. Here's a quick guide to help you determine when a purchase meets the test.

What counts as a legitimate sole source? A supplier must be the one—and *only one*—capable of providing the required product or service. There is no viable competition or reseller in the marketplace. To qualify, the customer agency must demonstrate that: no other product or service performs the required function; business objectives can only be met through this uniquely available solution; the product or service is available exclusively from the manufacturer, not through resellers who could otherwise compete.

What a sole source is *not*. A product or service preferred for its quality. A vendor offering a better price. Or, a product functions "uniquely," but similar options exist that meet the same functional needs.

Single Source and Brand Specific are often confused with sole source. Single Source means other vendors exist, but one is chosen intentionally—this does not meet sole source requirements. Brand Specification is not sole source either. If multiple vendors (resellers) can supply the brand this becomes a scenario for a competitive procurement. A product only qualifies as a Sole Source if it is truly limited to a single vendor and properly justified.

WHAT A SOLE SOURCE IS. —AND IS NOT

WHAT A SOLE SOURCE IS



LICENSED/
PATENTED



ONE-OF-
A-KIND



SOLE
DISTRIBUTOR



COMPATIBILITY

WHAT A SOLE SOURCE IS NOT



QUALITY



PRICE



FUNCTIONALITY



TIMELINE

*Complete information found on p 108 in ITS Procurement Handbook.

Sole Source - Handbook Link



Sole Source Project - What to Expect**

- ☒ Project Initiation Email and Smartsheet Dashboard Link
- ☒ Notice of Intent to certify Sole Source
 - Drafted
 - QA
 - Approval
- ☒ Advertisement Draft
 - Drafted
 - QA
 - Mandatory 2-wk Posting
- ☒ Evaluation of Objections, if necessary.
- ☒ Notice of Award (verify Vendor is registered w/SoS)
 - Drafted
 - QA
 - Approval
 - Posted
- ☒ Contract Drafting Process begins now.

**What to Expect example does not include any possible Board approval and leaves off at Contract Drafting Process.

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Procurement Leadership



STAFF HIGHLIGHT

Renee Murray, CPM, PMP Procurement Services Director

Renee Murray has been a dedicated member of ITS since 1998, bringing nearly three decades of experience across strategic services, consulting, procurement, and digital innovation. Renee rejoined the Procurement Services Division in 2019 as the Vendor and Contract Management Team Lead, playing an instrumental role in launching and expanding Express Procurement Options available to ITS customers. Her deep understanding of IT procurement, agency needs, and vendor collaboration has made her a vital force in modernizing statewide technology procurement.

Renee now leads the procurement team with a clear vision: to streamline processes, strengthen vendor partnerships, and provide customer agencies with efficient, compliant procurement solutions that not only meet, but exceed the goals of the Procurement Modernization Advisory Committee.

ITS Board Meeting Schedule - FY27*

<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Deadline</u>	<u>Meeting Date</u>	<u>Deadline</u>
August 20, 2026	July 1	February 18, 2027	January 1
September 17, 2026	August 3	March 18, 2027	February 1
October 15, 2026	September 1	April 15, 2027	March 1
November 19, 2026	October 1	May 20, 2027	April 1
December 17, 2026	November 1	June 17, 2027	May 1
January 21, 2027	December 1		

*Board agenda item submissions have a new deadline.

Board Schedule Link



Mississippi Department of
Information Technology Services

ITS Board Members

The Mississippi Department of Information Technology Services (ITS) Board consists of members appointed by the Governor to five-year terms, ensuring state IT leadership.

- Bill Cook, Chair
- J. Keith Van Camp, Vice-Chair
- Mark E. Henderson
- Thomas A. Wicker
- Christa Alexander

Legislative Advisors

- Senator Bart Williams, Technology Committee, MS State Senate
- Representative Jill Ford, MS House of Representatives

Board Agenda Items

New Deadlines for FY27

Beginning with the August 2026 ITS Board meeting submission deadlines have taken effect. Project requests must now be submitted by the first day of the preceding month. Each submission must include a Smartsheet project request, a quote, a business case, and the agency must have an IT Security Risk Assessment within the past 3 years.

Procurement Modernization Act

PMAC IT Procurement Training Strategies

As the Procurement Modernization Advisory Council (PMAC) continues to unite agencies and advance enterprise-wide improvements, one of the most impactful roadmap destinations is the development of an updated IT Procurement Training Strategy. With more than thirty agencies actively participating in PMAC working sessions, a clear need has emerged: consistent, modernized, and accessible training that supports both new and experienced procurement professionals across Mississippi state government.

The enhanced training strategy will focus on equipping agency staff with the knowledge and tools needed to navigate IT procurement confidently and efficiently. This effort includes re-imagining training formats, updating instructional materials to reflect current best practices and statutory requirements, and providing role-based learning pathways aligned with the needs identified during PMAC's current-state assessments.

Through collaboration with PMAC working groups, ITS is designing training approaches that emphasize clarity, consistency, and real-world application. The strategy aims to shorten procurement timelines, reduce process uncertainty, and ensure agencies have support from the very beginning of the procurement journey.

This initiative reflects PMAC's ongoing mission: to streamline practices, strengthen statewide coordination, and maximize the value of every technology investment. Stay tuned to Procurement Pathways for upcoming updates as this new training strategy takes shape—another step toward a more efficient, empowered, and future-ready procurement landscape for Mississippi.



ITS Procurement User Group

PUG Announcements

Procurement Pathways is not the only way an agency can stay up-to-date. The ITS Procurement department also offers the Procurement User Group - List-Serve (PUG).

PUG is an email notification list. Through the PUG emails, agencies are informed of ITS Procurement Training classes along with other announcements.

Information can be found on the About ITS page:

or scan the QR code contained within this newsletter. Along with signing up for the list-serve, ITS procurement questions may be directed to the ISS Help email.



Procurement Classroom



Defining a Project*

Questions to Consider

What are the conditions to consider grouping purchases into a single project?

Do they share:

1. **Timeframe** - Purchases happening in the same general period/budgetary year (e.g. all desktops needed.)
2. **Funding Source** - Different funding streams with different rules may require separate projects.
3. **Location** - If each site can operate independently or choose different solutions, they may be separate projects.
4. **Technical Requirements** - Different technical solutions (e.g., rugged laptops vs. office desktops) might form different projects.
5. **Potential for Volume Discounts** - If combining purchases reduces cost, they may be treated as one project.
6. **Business Function or Purpose** - Items supporting the same system or initiative may belong to the same project.

*Complete information found on p 45 in ITS Procurement Handbook.

Project Definition - Handbook Excerpt
Link

Understanding Lifecycle Cost **

When planning an information technology purchase, it's important to look beyond the up-front price. The lifecycle cost reflects the total investment you'll make over the entire useful life of the product or system—not just what you pay on day one.

Lifecycle cost includes:

- Initial, one-time costs like purchase price, freight, installation, and training.
- Ongoing costs such as maintenance after the warranty ends, help desk or vendor support, software upgrades, and any recurring usage fees.

A few examples:

Buying equipment with a 5-year lifespan costs more than the initial \$100,000 price tag; adding monthly maintenance and annual software fees brings the total lifecycle cost to \$165,000.

Software purchased through the Microsoft Enterprise Agreement is a 3-year commitment, so the lifecycle cost is simply the per-seat price times the number of seats times three years.

For a turn-key solution—hardware, system software, and consulting—the lifecycle cost includes all initial fees, all maintenance over the expected life, all consulting work (such as development and training), and any ongoing support needs.

**Complete information found on p 43 in ITS Procurement Handbook.

Lifecycle Definition - Handbook Excerpt
Link

UNDERSTANDING LIFECYCLE COSTS

When planning an information technology purchase, look beyond the up-front price to the total investment over its useful life.



INITIAL COSTS

- Purchase price
- Installation & training



ONGOING COSTS

- Maintenance & support
- Software upgrades



Q: Can an agency prepay for software?

ITS does allow multi-year prepayments for software and IT services—but only when they provide clear cost savings and include protections for the State and are approved by ITS. Before moving forward with any prepaid or multi-year vendor offer, review Rule 205.3: 009-010 (pp 72-73) in the ITS Procurement Handbook.

Have more questions? Email ISSHELP@its.ms.gov to confirm whether the deal makes financial sense, aligns with policy, and includes the required safeguards.

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[Prepayment - Handbook Excerpt Link](#)

**Q: Can additional purchases be made on an agencies current Sole Source.**

Yes. A Sole Source project request can be submitted to ITS for additional purchases. The additional purchases must align with the scope of the current Sole Source Certification.

All additional purchases must follow all project lifecycle cost guidelines.

[Sole Source - Handbook Excerpt Link](#)

Q: In the IT Hardware EPO-4671 solicitation states that "the Customer reserves the right to make additional purchases at the proposed prices for a six-month period," does this mean we can use this solicitation to purchase the same items at those quoted prices for the next six months?

Yes. However, should that vendor not be able to fulfill this purchase, the agency must contact the next best vendor. If that vendor is willing to honor the original pricing, the agency may proceed with that vendor.

This process can be repeated with subsequent vendors until one agrees to match the original pricing. At any point, the agency may also choose to restart the solicitation from the beginning if preferred.

[Instructions for Use - 4671 Link](#)

Q: Where can an agency get an answer to an IT procurement question?

The ISSHELP@its.ms.gov email is available for all IT procurement questions.

And check the Procurement Pathways FAQ section, questions here are real-world questions that may be an answer for which an agency is looking.

[Help Email Link](#)

Q: Can NASPO-SVAR be used to purchase Professional Services only?

No. Professional Services only is out-of-scope of the procurement. These agreements may not be used to purchase customized software or to purchase services to modify software. Software requiring additional development or programming in order to achieve the desired functionality is out-the-scope of these agreements.

[Instructions for Use - NASPO SVAR Link](#)