**Sole Source CONTRACT Filing Justification Template**

*Use the following justification template for preparing to file sole source contracts in the* [*Sole Source Contracts Database*](https://sscd.des.wa.gov/Logon/Logon.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2f) *(SSCD). Once completed, copy and paste the answers into the corresponding SSCD question and answer fields. You will also need to include a copy of this completed form in the documents you post to your agency website and in* [*WEBS*](https://pr-webs-customer.des.wa.gov/)*.*

What is a sole source contract?

*"Sole source"* *means a contractor providing goods or services of such a unique nature or sole availability that the contractor is clearly and justifiably the only practicable source to provide the goods or services. (RCW 39.26.010)*

*Unique qualifications or services are those which are highly specialized or one-of-a-kind.*

*Other factors which* ***may*** *be considered include past performance, cost-effectiveness (learning curve), and/or follow-up nature of the required goods and/or services.* ***Past performance alone does not provide adequate justification for a sole source contract****. Time constraints may be considered as a contributing factor in a sole source justification, however will not be on its own a sufficient justification.*

Why is a sole source justification required?

*The State of Washington, by policy and law, believes competition is the best strategy to obtain the best value for the goods and services it purchases, and to ensure that all interested vendors have a fair and transparent opportunity to sell goods and services to the state.*

*A sole source contract does not benefit from competition. Thus the state, through RCW 39.26.010, has determined it is important to evaluate whether the conditions, costs and risks related to the proposal of a sole source contract truly outweigh forgoing the benefits of a competitive contract.*

***Providing compelling answers to the following questions will facilitate DES’ evaluation.***

Specific Problem or Need

* What is the business need or problem that requires this contract?

In a typical year, over 273,000 students attend the Washington Community and Technical Colleges. Nearly half of all Community and Technical College students drop out within a year, and only slightly more than 40 percent finish within six years. The unfinished 60 percent represents people who have stalled on their way to completing their education and the career opportunities that provides. SBCTC's three mission areas are:

Basic Education for Adults (includes GED®, English as a Second Language, and basic reading, math, writing skills)

Workforce education (training students for direct entry into a career)

Academic transfer (preparing students to transfer to a university)

A critical component of our mission is not just providing the educational opportunities, but also seeing students and learners through to completion of their educations. With this goal in mind, SBCTC plans to award a contract to InsideTrack to implement effective methods to reach the dropout population and enable them to reenroll and successfully complete their educational pathways. In addition, Inside Track would provide training to college staff on how to effectively support each reenrolled student and address factors that contributed to them previously leaving the community or technical college.

Sole Source Criteria

* Describe the unique features, qualifications, abilities or expertise of the contractor proposed for this sole source contract.

InsideTrack has a unique wrap around approach to successful engagement by combining student contact with and staff development. On the staff side, the InsideTrack Coaching Skills Workshop focuses on a specific coaching skill from their coaching methodology and delivers the content into short, focused program formats with opportunities to strategize for skill application. Their multifaceted approach ensures that training participants are able to apply their coaching skills and knowledge to their specific college roles and responsibilities.

On the student engagement side, InsideTrack Re-enrollment Coaches work with students to assess their knowledge, skills and beliefs around their ability to successfully return to school. By leveraging their noncognitive coaching methodology, InsideTrack Re-enrollment Coaching helps students develop strategies needed to succeed in college and beyond. They have programming that supports students in developing a personalized plan for returning to school, while at the same time supplying colleges with the knowledge and training to better understand and serve returning students. The ongoing student support is a major factor that helps to increase successful outcomes.

InsideTrack was able to achieve a 30% student contact rate in North Carolina and 20% of those contacted reenrolled. If we are able to mirror that success rate here in Washington, colleges could serve thousands of impacted students for reenrollment.

* What kind of market research did the agency conduct to conclude that alternative sources were inappropriate or unavailable? Provide a narrative description of the agency’s due diligence in determining the basis for the sole source contract, including methods used by the agency to conduct a review of available sources. Use DES’ Market Research Template if assistance is needed.

SBCTC Education Division staff are all experienced and well versed subject matter experts in the arena of public higher education and our agency is responsible for data reporting on completion rates. We regularly conduct research, are tasked with writing reports, attend conferences, and look into potential solutions to student completion rates. In fact, we are currently in the process of an RFP for a Student Success Software Tool (currently in the evaluation stage). In 2020, the Washington state legislature appropriated funds to SBCTC though the Workforce Education Investment Act (E2SHB 2158) to implement the guided pathways framework across the 34 community and technical colleges. The efforts provided by Inside Track would be instrumental in meeting guided pathways outcomes and provide a wholistic approach to find ways to support current and former students at our colleges. After years of looking into different ways to engage our dropout student population, the unique solution that this contractor employs presents potentially the most effective method of engagement we have found to date. We need to contract with them to leverage their methodology, expertise, and experience with their approach.

* As part of the market research requirements, include a list of statewide contracts reviewed and/or businesses contacted, date of contact, method of contact (telephone, mail, e-mail, other), and documentation demonstrating an explanation of why those businesses could not or would not, under any circumstances, perform the contract; or an explanation of why the agency has determined that no businesses other than the prospective contractor can perform the contract.

We are engaging a specific vendor for their unique methodology, expertise, and approach to solving a difficult problem we face - re-engaging, reenrolling, and supporting the dropout student population from community and technical colleges (though they can replicate it at the 4 year level as well). It is a distinct and unique method, novel training, and original support model not offered by anyone else our researchers or subject matter experts are aware of. Their approach is a one of one that we would like to deploy. While "higher education consultants" of many different shades do exist, there are no other vendors to contact for this specific approach.

* Per the Supplier Diversity Policy, DES-090-06: was this purchase included in the agency’s forecasted needs report?

No.

* Describe what targeted industry outreach was completed to locate small and/or veteran-owned businesses to meet the agency’s need?

As mentioned above, SBCTC staff attend multiple higher education conferences, several of which have businesses who provide different services in the areas of interest to our organization. We conduct research including looking into various methodologies and approaches to different areas of interest to our Community and Technical Colleges, which increases our own awareness of what past, current, and novel or new ideas exist, and we are responsible for reporting on various areas regarding our education completion rates an outcomes. By putting ourselves out there in higher education conferences we regularly engage the vendor community that serves higher education. We do have some contracts with small businesses, but because of the uniqueness of this particular service we have the contractor who happens to not be a small business.

* What considerations were given to unbundling the goods and/or services in this contract, which would provide opportunities for Washington small, diverse, and/or veteran-owned businesses. Provide a summary of your agency’s unbundling analysis for this contract.

The services are specialized to the degree that the specific training and services needed to be provided by the single organization, so unbundling was not feasible. InsideTrack is not a small business, but it is a smaller non-profit organization with a very specific specialized area of expertise.

* Provide a detailed and compelling description that includes quantification of the costs and risks mitigated by contracting with this contractor (i.e. learning curve, follow-up nature).

By using InsideTrack, SBCTC would obtain a $50,000 grant on top of our initial $50,000 investment into the project. That amount of funding would be able to provide services to more colleges in our system and start them on track to improving completion rates for dropout students. If students who have formerly dropped out reenroll, it improves funding through tuition and other financial support for every student who returns to the college - each student representing a net positive of thousands of dollars in funding. What is more compelling is the long term financial net positive impact to the students who re-enroll and obtain the skills and degrees to allow them better employment opportunities.

* Is the agency proposing this sole source contract because of special circumstances such as confidential investigations, copyright restrictions, etc.? If so, please describe.

Not Applicable

* Is the agency proposing this sole source contract because of unavoidable, critical time delays or issues that prevented the agency from completing this acquisition using a competitive process? If so, please describe. *For example, if time constraints are applicable, identify when the agency was on notice of the need for the goods and/or service, the entity that imposed the constraints, explain the authority of that entity to impose them, and provide the timelines within which work must be accomplished.*

Not sure this is really applicable to the situation since time delays are not the reason we would forego a competitive process, but there is a critical time component to our request. SBCTC has been offered a dollar for dollar match up to $100,000 to contract with InsideTrack. The offered money has to be claimed and the contract must be in place by January 13, 2025. The offer was made to SBCTC on November 21st, 2024 and our Education Division staff met with the Contracts Officer on November 26th, 2024 to discuss the project. After Thanksgiving our office worked together to get contract documents and answers to these questions done. We are allowed to start the contract on January 13th and still receive the funds, but we are supposed to try to secure contract approval as soon as possible.

* What are the consequences of not having this sole source filing approved? Describe in detail the impact to the agency and to services it provides if this sole source filing is not approved.

If the filing is not approved, SBCTC loses out on a free $50,000 grant that would fund reenrollment coaching training for college staff and reenrollment coaching services for former students who have dropped out of college. The bigger impact is the loss of being able to leverage Inside Track’s unique approach and solution to improving completion rates at our community and technical colleges. Our staff look at many different approaches and theories to completion and are really convinced of the efficacy of InsideTrack's methodology. It is worth more than a chance to try this for the sake of our drop out population and we lose the opportunity if this filing is not approved.

But also we lose the $50k match.

Sole Source Posting

* Sole Source Posting on Agency Website - Provide the date in which the sole source posting, the draft contract, and a copy of the Sole Source Contract Justification Template were published on your agency’s website.
  + If failed to post, please explain why.
* Provide the date in which the sole source posting, the draft contract, and a copy of the Sole Source Contract Justification Template were published in WEBS.

12/19/2025

* + If failed to post, please explain why.
* Were responses received to the sole source posting in WEBS?
  + If one or more responses are received, list name of entities responding and explain how the agency concluded the contract is appropriate for sole source award.

Reasonableness of Cost

* Since competition was not used as the means for procurement, how did the agency conclude that the costs, fees, or rates negotiated are fair and reasonable? Please make a comparison with comparable contracts, use the results of a market survey, or employ some other appropriate means calculated to make such a determination.

The market for general consulting and training services for the implementation of higher education programs is fairly mature. Additionally, SBCTC offers its own college training for Adult Basic Education. Based on other consultants hired by SBCTC for projects, the rates charged by InsideTrack are in line with what a private 3rd party would charge for similarly scoped services. Additionally, the injection of the $50,000 grant to defray the cost of the project makes it a bargain.