

Request for Qualifications (RFQ)

Senior Advisor – Talent Development (Contracted Vendor)

1. Introduction

The Mississippi Office of Workforce Development, known as Accelerate Mississippi (AccelerateMS), seeks formal proposals from qualified vendors to provide strategic advisory services related to talent development, industry engagement, economic development, and employer-driven solutions. This engagement will provide strategic expertise, industry insights, and statewide coordination to strengthen Mississippi's workforce pipelines.

2. Scope of Work

Strategic Workforce and Talent Development

- Advise on employer-driven workforce development strategies and talent pipeline development
- Review workforce program design, funding models, and service delivery structures
- Identify opportunities to improve alignment between workforce investments and labor market demand
- Recommend strategies to improve workforce participation, credential attainment, and employment outcomes
- Provide expertise related to workforce system modernization and performance improvement

Industry Engagement and Talent Solutions

- Advise on the structure and operation of employer-facing workforce services
- Review Talent Solutions Center concepts, operations, staffing models, and performance measures
- Provide recommendations related to employer engagement, account management, and industry partnerships
- Assist with development of responsive workforce solutions for priority industries and emerging sectors

Economic Development and Competitiveness

- Provide strategic guidance regarding workforce readiness for business recruitment and expansion projects
- Advise on workforce strategies supporting site selection and economic development initiatives
- Review labor market, talent availability, and workforce competitiveness considerations related to industry growth
- Recommend approaches to strengthen Mississippi's competitive position in attracting and retaining industry investment

Industry Sector Strategy Development

- Advise on development and implementation of sector-based workforce strategies
- Provide expertise regarding manufacturing, technology, healthcare, construction, logistics, energy, aerospace, defense, and other priority sectors
- Assist in identifying emerging workforce trends and industry needs
- Recommend best practices for aligning workforce investments with targeted industry growth

Organizational and Leadership Advisory Support

- Serve as a strategic advisor to AccelerateMS leadership
- Participate in planning sessions, executive meetings, and stakeholder discussions as requested
- Provide an independent perspective on major workforce and economic development initiatives
- Review proposed policies, programs, and strategic initiatives and provide recommendations

3. Preferred Qualifications

Preference may be given to proposers demonstrating experience in one or more of the following:

- Executive leadership in workforce development, economic development, manufacturing, education, or industry
- Workforce strategies supporting economic development and business recruitment
- Employer engagement and industry partnership development
- Manufacturing competitiveness and talent development
- Site selection, business expansion, or industry recruitment
- Talent attraction, retention, and deployment strategies

4. Quote Requirements

All quotes must include the following:

- Pricing Structure – Fixed monthly or total project fee, OR hourly rate(s) for services provided. Any travel, administrative, or additional costs must be clearly identified.
- Service Capacity and Availability – Estimated weekly/monthly hours of service available. Availability to attend in-person and virtual meetings with stakeholders.
- Relevant Experience – Brief summary (1 page max) of prior work in advanced manufacturing or related sectors. Indicate experience with workforce development, employer engagement, or state/national industry associations.
- References – Contact information for two (2) clients or employers for whom similar advisory work was performed.

5. Evaluation Criteria

Quotes will be evaluated on the following basis:

Criteria	Weight
Experience Supporting Industry Growth and Economic Development	35%
Understanding of Mississippi's Workforce and Econ. Dev. Priorities	30%
Service Availability/capacity	20%
Cost and Value	15%

AccelerateMS reserves the right to negotiate final pricing and deliverables.

4. Contract Period

- Start Date: September 1, 2026
- End Date: August 31, 2027
- Extension: Subject to performance and funding availability

5. Budget Cap

The value of the contract(s) shall not exceed \$125,000 during the project term, unless otherwise approved in writing by the Executive Director of AccelerateMS.

AccelerateMS anticipates awarding one or more contracts under this solicitation and reserves the right to select advisors possessing differing areas of expertise to meet needs.

7. Submission Instructions

All responses must be submitted in PDF format via email to info@acceleratems.org no later than: August 23, 2026, at 12:00 PM CT

Late submissions will not be considered. Please include "RFQ – Senior Advisor" in the subject line of your email.

8. Contact Information

For questions or clarifications regarding this RFQ, please contact:

Courtney Taylor

AccelerateMS

Email: bfields@acceleratems.org

9. Other Terms and Conditions

AccelerateMS reserves the right to reject any or all submissions, to waive minor irregularities, and to request additional information as needed. No costs incurred in the preparation of a submission will be reimbursed.

Award decisions will be based on documented evaluation results and the determination of best value in accordance with applicable procurement standards.



It is expressly understood and agreed that by issuing this Request for Qualification AccelerateMS has no obligation to issue an award or enter a contract, and it, in its sole discretion, may withdraw or amend this Request for Qualification before doing so.

Discussions may be had with applicants determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for the award; however, submissions may be accepted without such discussions.

Invoices shall be emailed to maryannmyers@acceleratems.org.

All goods and services must meet the specifications outlined in this RFQ. Non-confirming goods and services must be replaced at the vendor's expense.

Vendor acknowledges, accepts, and agrees to comply with the State of Mississippi's Standard Terms and Conditions, as set forth in Exhibit A, and agrees these are fully incorporated into any contract entered by the Parties related to this RFQ. Failure to comply with these terms and conditions may result in the termination of any contract entered.

Exhibit A
State of Mississippi Terms and Conditions
for
Cooperative, Competitive, and Negotiated Contracts

A. PRECEDENCE

The STATE OF MISSISSIPPI TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR COMPETITIVE, NEGOTIATED, and COOPERATIVE CONTRACTS shall take precedence over the Vendor's Proposal and any agreements, and should ambiguities, conflicts, or questions of interpretation of these documents arise, they shall be resolved first by reference to the STATE OF MISSISSIPPI TERMS AND CONDITIONS for COMPETITIVE, NEGOTIATED, and COOPERATIVE CONTRACTS. AccelerateMS is an entity of the State of Mississippi.

B. E-PAYMENT

Vendor agrees to accept all payments in United States currency via the State of Mississippi's electronic payment and remittance vehicle. AccelerateMS agrees to make payment in accordance with Mississippi "Timely Payments for Purchases by Public Bodies" laws, which generally provide for payment of undisputed amounts by AccelerateMS within 45 calendar days of receipt of invoice. Mississippi Code Annotated § 31-7-301, et seq.

C. AVAILABILITY OF FUNDS

It is expressly understood and agreed that the obligation of AccelerateMS to proceed under this agreement is conditioned upon the appropriation of funds by the Mississippi State Legislature and receipt of the appropriated funds. If the funds anticipated for the continuing time fulfillment of the agreement are, at any time, not forthcoming or insufficient, regardless of the source of funding, AccelerateMS shall have the right upon 10 business days' written notice to Vendor to terminate this agreement without damage, penalty, cost or expense to AccelerateMS of any kind whatsoever. The effective date of termination shall be as specified in the notice of termination.

D. RECORD RETENTION AND ACCESS TO RECORDS

Vendor shall maintain such financial records and other records as may be prescribed by AccelerateMS or by applicable federal and state laws, rules, and regulations. Provided Vendor is given reasonable advance written notice, and such inspection is made during normal business hours of Vendor, AccelerateMS or any duly authorized representatives shall have unimpeded, prompt access to any of Vendor's books, documents, papers, and/or records which are relevant to this agreement. All records related to this agreement shall be retained by Vendor for three years after final payment is made under this agreement and all pending matters are closed; however, if any audit, litigation or other action arising out of or related in any way to this project is commenced before the end of the three year period, the records shall be retained for one year after all issues arising out of the action are finally resolved or until the end of the three year period, whichever is later.

E. APPLICABLE LAW

The contract shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of Mississippi, excluding its conflicts of laws, provisions, and any litigation with respect thereto shall be brought in the courts of Mississippi.

F. ANTI-ASSIGNMENT/SUBCONTRACTING

Vendor acknowledges that it was selected by AccelerateMS to provide the commodity or perform the services required hereunder based, in part, upon Vendor's special skills and expertise. Vendor shall not assign, subcontract, or otherwise transfer this agreement, in whole or in part, without the prior written consent of AccelerateMS, which may, in its sole discretion, approve or deny without reason. Any attempted assignment or transfer of Vendor's obligations hereunder without consent of AccelerateMS shall be null and void. Approval of a subcontract by AccelerateMS shall not be deemed to be approval of the incurrence of any additional obligation of AccelerateMS. Subcontracts shall be subject to the terms and conditions of this agreement and to any conditions of approval that AccelerateMS may deem necessary. Subject to the foregoing, this agreement shall be binding upon the respective successors and assigns of the parties

G. COMPLIANCE WITH EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IN EMPLOYMENT POLICY

Vendor understands that AccelerateMS is an equal opportunity employer and therefore, maintains a policy which prohibits unlawful discrimination based on race, color, creed, sex, age, national origin, physical handicap, disability, genetic information, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state, or local laws. All such discrimination is unlawful, and Vendor agrees during the term of the agreement that Vendor will strictly adhere to this policy in its employment practices and provision of services.

H. COMPLIANCE WITH LAWS

Vendor shall comply with, and all activities under this agreement shall be subject to, all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations, as now exist and as may be amended or modified.

I. REQUIRED PUBLIC RECORDS AND TRANSPARENCY

Upon execution of a contract, the provisions of the contract which contain the personal or professional services provided, the unit prices, the overall price to be paid, and the term of the contract shall not be deemed to be a trade secret or confidential commercial or financial information pursuant to Mississippi Code Annotated § 25- 61-9(7). The contract shall be posted publicly on www.transparency.ms.gov and shall be available at AccelerateMS for examination, inspection, or reproduction by the public. The Vendor acknowledges and agrees that AccelerateMS and this contract are subject to the Mississippi Public Records Act of 1983 codified at Mississippi Code Annotated §§ 25-61-1, et seq. and its exceptions, Mississippi Code Annotated § 79-23-1, and the Mississippi Accountability and Transparency Act of 2008, codified at Mississippi Code Annotated §§ 27-104-151, et seq.

J. E-VERIFICATION

If applicable, Vendor represents and warrants that it will ensure its compliance with the Mississippi Employment Protection Act and will register and participate in the status verification system for all newly hired employees. Mississippi Code Annotated §§ 71-11-1 and 71-11-3. Vendor agrees to provide a copy of each verification upon request of AccelerateMS subject to approval by any agencies of the United States Government. Vendor further represents and warrants that any person assigned to perform services hereafter meets the employment eligibility requirements of all immigration laws. The breach of this clause may subject Vendor to the following:

- (1) termination of this contract and exclusion pursuant to Chapter 15 of the Public Procurement Review Board Office of Personal Service Contract Review Rules and Regulations;
- (2) the loss of any license, permit, certification or other document granted to Vendor by an agency, department, or governmental entity for the right to do business in Mississippi; or
- (3) both. In the event of such termination, Vendor would also be liable for any additional costs incurred by AccelerateMS due to Contract cancellation or loss of license or permit to do business in the state.

K. INDEPENDENT CONTRACTOR STATUS

Vendor shall, at all times, be regarded as and shall be legally considered an independent contractor and shall at no time act as an agent for AccelerateMS. Nothing contained herein shall be deemed or construed by AccelerateMS, Vendor, or any third party as creating the relationship of principal and agent, master and servant, partners, joint ventures, employer and employee, or any similar such relationship between AccelerateMS and Vendor. Neither the method of computation of fees or other charges, nor any other provision contained herein, nor any acts of AccelerateMS or Vendor hereunder creates or shall be deemed to create a relationship other than the independent relationship of AccelerateMS and Vendor. Vendor's personnel shall not be deemed in any way, directly or indirectly, expressly or by implication, to be employees of AccelerateMS. Neither Vendor nor its employees shall, under any circumstances, be considered servants, agents, or employees of AccelerateMS, and AccelerateMS shall be at no time legally responsible for any negligence or other

wrongdoing by Vendor, its servants, agents, or employees. AccelerateMS shall not withhold from the contract payments to Vendor any federal or state unemployment taxes, federal or state income taxes, Social Security tax, or any other amounts for benefits to Vendor. Further, AccelerateMS shall not provide to Vendor any insurance coverage or other benefits, including Workers' Compensation, normally provided by AccelerateMS for its employees.

L. MODIFICATION OR RENEGOTIATION

The parties agree to renegotiate the agreement in good faith if federal and/or state revisions to any applicable laws or regulations make changes in this agreement necessary. This agreement may be modified only by written agreement signed by the parties hereto and approval by the Public Procurement Review Board, if required

M. TERMINATION

Termination for Convenience. AccelerateMS may, when the interests of AccelerateMS so require, terminate this contract in whole or in part, for the convenience of AccelerateMS. AccelerateMS shall give written notice of the termination to Vendor specifying the part of the contract terminated and when termination becomes effective. Vendor shall incur no further obligations in connection with the terminated work and on the date set in the notice of termination Vendor will stop work to the extent specified. Vendor shall complete the work not terminated by the notice of termination and may incur obligations as are necessary to do so.

Termination for Default. If AccelerateMS gives the Vendor a notice that the commodity or personal or professional services are being provided in a manner that is deficient, the Vendor shall have 30 days to cure the deficiency. If the Vendor fails to cure the deficiency, AccelerateMS may terminate the contract for default and the Vendor will be liable for the additional cost to AccelerateMS to procure the commodity or personal and professional services from another source. Termination under this paragraph could result in Vendor being excluded from future contract awards. Any termination wrongly labeled termination for default shall be deemed a termination for convenience.

N. STOP WORK ORDER

AccelerateMS may, by written order to Vendor at any time, require Vendor to stop all or any part of the work called for by this contract. This order shall be for a period of time specified by AccelerateMS. Upon receipt of such an order, Vendor shall forthwith comply with its terms and take all reasonable steps to minimize any further cost to AccelerateMS. Upon expiration of the stop work order, Vendor shall resume providing the services which were subject to the stop work order, unless AccelerateMS has terminated that part of the agreement or terminated the agreement in its entirety. AccelerateMS is not liable for payment for services or commodity which were not rendered or received due to the stop work order.

O. ORAL STATEMENTS

No oral statement of any person shall modify or otherwise affect the terms, conditions, or specifications stated in this contract. All modifications to the contract shall be made in writing by AccelerateMS, agreed to by Vendor, and approved by the Public Procurement Review Board, if required.

P. OWNERSHIP OF DOCUMENTS AND WORK PAPERS

AccelerateMS shall own all documents, files, reports, work papers and working documentation, electronic or otherwise, created in connection with the project which is the subject of this agreement, except for Vendor's internal administrative and quality assurance files and internal project correspondence. Vendor shall deliver such documents and work papers to AccelerateMS upon termination or completion of the agreement. The foregoing notwithstanding, Vendor shall be entitled to retain a set of such work papers for its files. Vendor shall be entitled to use such work papers only after receiving written permission from AccelerateMS and subject to any copyright protections.

Q. INDEMNIFICATION

To the fullest extent allowed by law, Vendor shall indemnify, defend, save and hold harmless, protect, and exonerate AccelerateMS, its commissioners, board members, officers, employees, agents, and representatives, and the State of Mississippi from and against all claims, demands, liabilities, suits, actions, damages, losses, and costs of every kind

and nature whatsoever including, without limitation, court costs, investigative fees and expenses, and attorneys' fees, arising out of or caused by Vendor and/or its partners, principals, agents, employees and/or subcontractors in the performance of or failure to perform this agreement. In AccelerateMS's sole discretion, upon approval of the Office of the Mississippi Attorney General and AccelerateMS, Vendor may be allowed to control the defense of any such claim, suit, etc. In the event Vendor defends said claim, suit, etc., Vendor shall use legal counsel acceptable to the Office of the Mississippi Attorney General and AccelerateMS. Vendor shall be solely responsible for all costs and/or expenses associated with such defense, and AccelerateMS shall be entitled to participate in said defense. Vendor shall not settle any claim, suit, etc. without the concurrence of the Office of the Mississippi Attorney General and AccelerateMS, which shall not be unreasonably withheld.

R. THIRD PARTY ACTION NOTIFICATION

Vendor shall give the customer prompt notice in writing of any action or suit filed, and prompt notice of any claim made against Vendor by any entity that may result in litigation related in any way to this agreement.

S. RECOVERY OF MONEY

Whenever, under the contract, any sum of money shall be recoverable from or payable by Vendor to AccelerateMS, the same amount may be deducted from any sum due to Vendor under the contract or under any other contract between Vendor and AccelerateMS. The rights of AccelerateMS are in addition and without prejudice to any other right AccelerateMS may have to claim the amount of any loss or damage suffered by AccelerateMS on account of the acts or omissions of Vendor.

T. FAILURE TO ENFORCE

Failure by AccelerateMS at any time to enforce the provisions of the contract shall not be construed as a waiver of any such provisions. Such failure to enforce shall not affect the validity of the contract or any part thereof or the right of AccelerateMS to enforce any provision at any time in accordance with its terms.

U. REPRESENTATION REGARDING CONTINGENT FEES

By responding to the solicitation, executing the contract the offeror or Vendor represents that it has not retained any person or agency on a percentage, commission, or other contingent arrangement to secure this contract. If the offeror or Vendor cannot make such a representation, a full and complete explanation shall be submitted in writing with the offeror's response, to the Agency prior to contract execution.

V. REPRESENTATION REGARDING GRATUITIES

Offeror or Vendor represents that it has not, is not, and will not offer, give, or agree to give any employee or former employee of AccelerateMS a gratuity or offer of employment in connection with any approval, disapproval, recommendation, development, or any other action or decision related to the solicitation and resulting contract. Offeror or Vendor further represents that no employee or former employee of AccelerateMS has or is soliciting, demanding, accepting, or agreeing to accept a gratuity or offer of employment for the reasons previously stated; any such action by an employee or former employee in the future, if any, will be rejected by the offeror or Vendor. Offeror or Vendor further represents that it is in compliance with the Mississippi Ethics in Government laws, codified at Mississippi Code Annotated §§ 25-4-101 through 25-4-121, and has not solicited any employee or former employee to act in violation of said law.

W. CHANGE IN SCOPE OF WORK

AccelerateMS may order changes in the work consisting of additions, deletions, or other revisions within the general scope of the Agreement. No claims may be made by the Vendor that the scope of the project or of the Vendor's services has been changed, requiring changes to the amount of compensation to the Vendor or other adjustments to the Agreement, unless such changes or adjustments have been made by written amendment to the Agreement signed by AccelerateMS and the Vendor.

If the Vendor believes that any particular work is not within the scope of the project, is a material change, or will otherwise require more compensation to the Vendor, the Vendor must immediately notify AcclerateMS in writing of this belief. If AcclerateMS believes that the particular work is within the scope of the Agreement as written, the Vendor will be ordered to and shall continue with the work as changed and at the cost stated for the work within the Agreement.

X. VENDOR PERSONNEL

AcclerateMS shall, throughout the life of the Agreement, have the right of reasonable rejection and approval of staff or subcontractors assigned to the work by the Vendor. If AcclerateMS reasonably rejects staff or subcontractors, the Vendor must provide replacement staff or subcontractors satisfactory to AcclerateMS in a timely manner and at no additional cost to AcclerateMS. The day-to-day supervision and control of the Vendor's employees and subcontractors is the sole responsibility of the Vendor.

Y. TRADE SECRETS, COMMERCIAL AND FINANCIAL INFORMATION

It is expressly understood that Mississippi law requires that the provisions of this Agreement which contain the commodities purchased or the personal or professional services provided, the price to be paid, and the term of the Agreement shall not be deemed to be a trade secret or confidential commercial or financial information and shall be available for examination, copying, or reproduction.

Z. TERMINATION UPON BANKRUPTCY

This Agreement may be terminated in whole or in part by AcclerateMS upon written notice to Vendor, if Vendor should become the subject of bankruptcy or receivership proceedings, whether voluntary or involuntary, or upon the execution by Vendor of an assignment for the benefit of its creditors. In the event of such termination, Vendor shall be entitled to recover just and equitable compensation for satisfactory work performed under this Agreement, but in no case shall said compensation exceed the total Agreement price.

AA. NO LIMITATION OF LIABILITY

Nothing in this agreement shall be interpreted as excluding or limiting any liability of the Vendor for harm arising out of the Vendor's or its subcontractors' performance under this agreement.

BB. PROPERTY RIGHTS (for the contract)

Property rights do not inure to Vendor until such time as services have been provided under a legally executed contract. Vendor has no legitimate claim of entitlement to the provision of work hereunder and acknowledges that AcclerateMS may terminate this contract at any time for its own convenience.