

The University of Southern Mississippi
Notice of Proposed Sole Source Purchase
SSP 20_030

The University of Southern Mississippi anticipates purchasing the item(s) listed below as a sole source purchase. Anyone objecting to this purchase shall follow the procedures outlined below.

1. **Description of the commodity that USM is seeking to procure:** BrightEdge is the global leader in enterprise content performance. As a SaaS technology, SEO platform BrightEdge enables web teams to drive traffic, conversions, and revenue from their largest marketing channel – organic search. BrightEdge will allow USM to increase relevant traffic and conversions through the website in the form of increased applications to undergraduate, graduate, and certificate online programs.

2. **Explanation of why the commodity is the only one that meets the needs of the agency:**

Data set: Propriety index of over 3 billion search terms, free form research of any domain in the world to understand true visibility. Any website, not just your own, can have keywords filtered by associated pages, search volume, ranking, listing type, and various other methodologies

Alerting: Anomaly Detection allows you to get automatic alerts across all data sets in BrightEdge when performance changes are detected. These include keyword performance (rank changes), analytics performance anomalies (i.e. "revenue for page X is decreasing by 25%) or content opportunities (ie: kw/page X are high value opportunities). These can be customized per user and sent directly to your email. Then, there is a "2-click workflow" to get to action.

Reporting: Customized reports can be automatically sent weekly or monthly. We have event tag (speech bubbles) that tie all of your actions to impact while pulling in your analytics which is unique to BrightEdge. We can map out your patient applicant journey including your analytics to bucket and identify the intent of a search and what portion of the funnel they are in (awareness, consideration, and application).

Recommendations: Patented and prioritized recommendation engine that scans and sifts through the top 10 HTMLs and cross compares your page to give true recommendations that are up to date and provided weekly.

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Task management: Built in task management allows you to assign tasks to unlimited users directly from the platform. This is a huge time savings in intra/inter team communication like marketing to IT.

Page groups: We set up page groups to bucket site sections to prioritize recommendations and have a 1:1 match up in reporting visibility.

Compensating for KW not provided (Secure search): Only BrightEdge enables true measurement of actual traffic and conversions in a 100% “keyword not provided environment.” Moreover, BrightEdge provides the unique workaround to Secure Search by calculating individual keyword performance. Integrations include Google Analytics, Adobe Analytics, Core metrics and custom or generic integrations for almost any other solution on the market.

Universal listing and visual parsing of Google: We track actual placement among all types of search results - local 3-pack, quick answers, images, video, shopping, app pack, top stories, AMP, news, places, carousel, site links; switch between blended and classic rank. BrightEdge is able to crawl and see Google the way a human being does – we can determine, and analyze above and below fold results and if organic listings are above the fold to make sure any paid campaigns and effort are worthy of your efforts.

Customer support and training: As a standard, BrightEdge assigns a 1:1 Dedicated Client Services Manager partners with your team offering high-touch, unlimited and thorough training and execution support.

Opportunity Forecasting: This is not only great to forecast what the ROI will be but it also shows you exactly what juice is worth the squeeze and which pages you should focus on optimizing first in order to receive the most significant lift in traffic and conversions. Without BrightEdge, you would not have visibility into what topics and what pages will give you the best opportunity to increase your organic footprint

Competitive insights: Patented technology discovers niche competitors for groups of keywords, % of and # of keywords for which they rank, and new keyword opportunities. This includes in-depth analysis per competitive domain, URL(s) at the page level that lead to their market share. BrightEdge analyzes who you compete against in search, not just your specific market competitors.

3. **Explanation of why the source is the only source is the only person or entity that can**

provide the required commodity: We as an organization need to accurately predict

what target keywords are best for us to go after based on the competitive landscape on

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Google. We also need to predict and understand how this can impact our paid advertisement campaign to ensure our dollars are being allocated to the channel that provides us the best return. As a lean team, we need to be able to spread our time across many projects and BrightEdge provides a way to drive substantial conversions and revenue through the website in a matter of a few hours per week, giving the team ample amounts of time to spend on other projects and priorities. We need to capture students at every point in their applicant journey to ensure we are a thought leader in the space and drive those students down funnel to convert. BrightEdge helps us understand where our target audience is in their process so we can target them, provide them with the information they are looking for, and get them to convert into an applicant. USM would need to use multiple tools, which have served as ineffective in overall SEO performance and site health. The use of BrightEdge would eliminate such tools and would serve in greatly capacity to the university's goal of increased student enrollment. BrightEdge, unlike current solutions, is able to understand the voice of your student across multiple hyper local markets.

4. Explanation of why the amount to be expended for the commodity is reasonable:

The total cost of BrightEdge, which includes their unlimited support, would far exceed the cost of trying to hire a team to replicate their patented software. The below highlights a small fraction of the time and monetary savings to justify the requested expense amount:

- If we were to do all of the analysis and data crunching that goes into the three step approach (keyword research, recommendations, and reporting) it would take the team between 75-120 hours per week in order to see the lifts in rankings, traffic and

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conversions that you will receive with BrightEdge. By leveraging this process, we will start seeing significant lifts in both traffic and conversions as well as time on site by only spending 3-5 hours a week across the entire team.

- Even if we were to spend the 70-120 hours a week doing the manual analysis you would still not have fully visibility into any topic or page on your website that you want to focus on through that you receive through the data cube. In addition, implementing the on-page optimizations would ultimately still be based off of SEO best practices, while with BrightEdge the insights we receive is off of the competitive landscape and what the winning pages are doing to optimize their pages.
- The BrightEdge opportunity forecasting feature is not only great to forecast what the ROI will be but it also shows you exactly what juice is worth the squeeze and which pages we should focus on optimizing first in order to receive the most significant lift in traffic and conversions. Without this feature we would not have visibility into what topics and what pages will give you the best opportunity to increase our organic footprint
- With out BrightEdge our teams would still be working in silos vs working through a platform which eliminates wasted team meetings trying to delineate who is doing what, what has been done, and what is next. Since we will be streamlining the entire process in one platform and provided with task management capabilities, we will know exactly what is being done by when and what the impact of those changes has been
- BrightEdge has the ability to tie analytics to action so for the first time we can measure real life metrics as it pertains to our sites performance and the work we are doing.

5. Efforts that the agency went through to obtain the best possible price for the

commodity: As a part of the purchasing process, we have asked for a best and final offering from BrightEdge for which we were able to obtain an atypical discount to help meet our budget numbers while not having to significantly impact our Paid Ad strategy.

Advertisement Schedule	Date
1st scheduled	5/1/2020
2nd scheduled	5/8/2020

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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:

Steve Ballew
Director of Procurement & Contracts
steve.ballew@usm.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, USM determines that the commodity in the proposed sole source request can be provided by another person or entity, then USM 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 USM determines after review that there is only one (1) source for the required commodity, then USM will appeal to the Public Procurement Review Board. USM will have the burden of proving that the commodity is only provided by one (1) source.