



Sole Source Market Research Worksheet

PUBLISHED DATE: June 6, 2024

Per the [Sole Source Contracts Policy](#), section 10, agencies must conduct sufficient market research prior to filing a new sole source contract or an amendment that extends the period of performance or proposes scope changes. In order to demonstrate that a particular vendor is a sole source for a good/service, agencies must present compelling evidence to DES that the agency conducted market research for each contract term (including each/any term extension) and amendments. This **optional worksheet** can be used to assist with meeting this requirement.

Note: this worksheet is not an exhaustive list of market research techniques. If you have any questions or require assistance using this worksheet, please contact the Policy Team via email, DES.Contracting@des.wa.gov.

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A. Determining Business Need

Understanding the business need of your agency is the key to successful market research. Before drafting your sole source justification, take steps to understand the specific business need of the agency, the pool of potential vendors, the services they are able to offer, and whether sole source is the appropriate procurement route; per [RCW 39.26.010\(23\)](#), “the contractor is clearly and justifiably the only practicable source to provide the goods or services”. This is primarily accomplished through the following steps prior to market research:

- Understand previously delivered services (i.e., performance and specification requirements)
- Understand your target population (i.e., conduct stakeholder work to assess the needs of those that will receive the service and/or good)
- Understand the legal requirements (i.e., review legislative requirements, policy changes, environmental considerations)

Once you have determined the business need, you can proceed with conducting market research.

B. Market Research Techniques

1. Reviewing past solicitations

If your agency has procured the commodity or service in the past, reviewing the previous solicitation(s) can potentially provide evidence to support sole source determination, such as if there is a documented history of only one responsive/responsible vendor.

Has the agency purchased the good/service before? If yes, provide the results of the previous solicitation:

Date of purchase	Procurement Type	Notes supporting sole source determination
2021 (for 2021-2023 biennium)	Sole Source Contract	Mapping of kelps from imagery is an interpretive science, and varies substantially among observers; therefore, it was determined that having another contractor conduct this work would introduce unacceptable uncertainty to the comparability of data products across this long-term dataset.

		DES approved under filing #48275-00 (DNR contract #93-102292).
2019 (for 2019-2020 biennium)	Sole Source Contract	Consistency of this dataset (which can only be achieved by a specialized contractor conducting the work in the same way each year) is absolutely imperative for creating a useable dataset product that can be compared across years. Hence DNR requested and DES approved a sole source contract for this service under filing #47565-00 (DNR contract #93-097267).
2017 (for 2018-2019 biennium)	Sole Source Contract	The deliverables provided are specialized expert services of the contractor. The deliverables are an integrated package that cannot be contracted separately due to the expertise needed to analyze the imagery and continuity in collection and processing. Hence DNR requested and DES approved a sole source contract for this service under filing # 42520-00 (DNR contract #16-215).
2015 (for 2015-2017 biennium)	Sole Source Contract	Continuity in data collection, analysis, and interpretation is fundamental to the value of this long-term data stream.
2013 (for 2013-2014 biennium)	Sole Source Contract	For this contract, the deliverables provided are specialized expert services of the contractor that are consistent with the past 25+ years. Sole source posted in WEBS under customer reference number 2013_2014_kelp.
2011 (for 2011-2012 biennium)	Sole Source Contract	Consistent expertise is needed to analyze the imagery and to provide continuity in collection and processing. Sole Source posted in WEBS under Customer reference #12-182.
2009 (for 2009-2010 biennium)	Sole Source Contract	Having another contractor conduct this work would introduce unacceptable

		uncertainty to the comparability of data products across this long-term dataset.
2007 (for 2007-2008 biennium)	Sole Source Contract	Long-term continuity in data collection, processing, and mapping is required for this long-term data stream.
2005 (for 2005-2006 biennium)	Sole Source Contract	Consistency of this dataset (which can only be achieved by a specialized contractor conducting the work in the same way each year) is absolutely imperative for creating a useable dataset product that can be compared across years.
2003 (for 2003-2004 biennium)	Sole Source Contract	The deliverables provided are specialized expert services of the contractor, since the required data interpretation and analysis must be consistent over time.
2001 (for 2001-2002 biennium)	Sole Source Contract	The deliverables provided are specialized expert services of the contractor. Consistency is required for data analyses of kelp changes over decades.
Annually from 1989 until 2000 (except 1993)		Expertise in collecting aerial imagery; expertise in processing imagery to identify floating kelp species and distribution; expertise in analyzing floating kelp spatial data and producing maps and production data sets.

2. Internet search

Internet searches are helpful to understand what similar programs exist and what contractors or organizations might be able to meet your agency’s business needs. Many state governments publicly post their RFPs online, so you may be able to find good examples of RFPs for similar services.

Use a spreadsheet or table (see example below) to track businesses you identify through your internet search.

Search terms used: “kelp mapping contract”; “nearshore mapping contract”

Business name	Date & Method of Contact (phone, email, etc.)	Notes (can/cannot meet the business need, explanation)
Barnacle Foods	Website review, 10/23/24	Cannot meet business need. They do local mapping of kelp beds in Alaska using drones. Cannot meet business need as they use drones not aircraft and therefore cannot cover the large extent of the survey area.
NV5 Geospatial, Inc.	Website review, 10/23/24; familiar with capabilities due to ongoing Work Order under contract 93-102831	Cannot meet business need. Do not have specialized experience to identify and classify floating kelp canopies using the specialized methods needed for this project.
Dewberry Engineers Inc.	Website review, 10/23/24; found via https://govtribe.com/award/federal-vehicle/shoreline-mapping-support-services	Cannot meet business need. No evidence of specialized experience to identify and classify floating kelp canopies using the specialized methods needed for this project. Projects listed on their website include using LIDAR technology to create Digital Elevation Models, and infrastructure surveys, but do not include any marine vegetation mapping.

Record research results about the commodity/service industry that support sole source determination here:

While other companies provide aerial imaging services, none were found that have the experience and specific capability required to conduct the specialized image interpretation and analysis consistently with previous years.

3. Database searches

DES Statewide Contracts

1. Navigate to the [DES Statewide Contracts Search Tool](#)

2. Enter keyword(s) related to your commodity/service/business need.
3. Search terms used: "kelp", "kelp mapping", "nearshore mapping", "aerial imagery"
4. Record search results:

Statewide Contract No.	Contractor Name	Method of Contact (phone, email, etc.)	Notes (can/cannot meet the business need, explanation)
No statewide contracts found for any of these search terms.			

5. Did you locate a statewide contract that can meet your agency's business need? For more information, see [How to use statewide contracts](#). DES manages statewide contracts that leverage the state's collective buying power to help agencies save money, reduce risk, and streamline purchasing. Agencies should use statewide contracts and/or DES-approved cooperative agreements (i.e., NASPO ValuePoint contracts) before any other procurement method.

WEBS

Searching for Similar Solicitations posted by other agencies.

1. Navigate to the [Washington Electronic Business Solution \(WEBS\)](#) for Government Customers webpage.
2. Navigate to the "Search for Solicitations" tab.
3. Select relevant commodity codes:

Manage Commodity and NAICS Code(s) → Search Codes to add	
Code	Title
	1

4. Open solicitations from the search results to review details.
5. Call or email the agency contact if more information is needed.
6. Record results:

Solicitation title	Cust. Ref #	Notes
Solicitation Coordinator is unable to access solicitations through this portal but have reviewed potential vendors (see below).		

Searching for Vendors

1. Navigate to the [Washington Electronic Business Solution \(WEBS\)](#) for Government Customers webpage.
2. Navigate to the "Search for Vendors" tab:
3. Select relevant commodity codes:
[Search terms: "mapping", "aerial", "imagery", "kelp", "vegetation"](#)
[Brought up applicable commodity/NAICS code: 905-10.](#)

Search for Commodity or NAICS codes

Enter in a keyword or keywords for your search criteria. Click "Search Commodity Codes" to execute the search. Click the boxes next to the codes and click "Save" to add them to the vendor search.

Search by Keyword or Code: ➔ Search Codes

or Search by Category:

You must click "search codes", then select and save specific codes prior to moving forward. Otherwise, your search results will not include the above criteria.

4. Record search results:

Contractor Name	Method of Contact (phone, email, etc.)	Notes (can/cannot meet the business need, explanation)
Alpha Eagle Technology	www.alphaeagletechnology.com ; website reviewed 11/5/2024	Cannot meet business need, imagery is collected by unmanned aerial vehicles (drones), which cannot collect the large area required for the business need.
Bridger Aerospace Group, LLC	https://www.bridgeraerospace.com/ ; website reviewed 11/5/2024	Cannot meet business need, company has expertise in wildfire monitoring and fighting, but no evidence of experience with or focus on kelp mapping.
DPdrones LLC	www.DPdrones.com ; website reviewed 11/5/2024	Cannot meet business need, company has expertise in aerial cinematography, but not evidence of experience with or focus on kelp mapping.

ESM Consulting Engineers, LLC	www.esmcivil.com; website reviewed 11/5/2024	Cannot meet business need, company has experience in civil engineering-related projects, but no evidence of experience with or focus on kelp mapping.
Hawkeye Drone Worx, LLC	hawkeyedroneworx.com; website reviewed 11/5/2024	Cannot meet business need, imagery is collected by unmanned aerial vehicles (drones), which cannot collect the large area required for the business need.
Kiker-Ranken Inc.	https://kukerranken.com/; website reviewed 11/5/2024	Cannot meet business need, provide aerial imagery equipment (and other specialized equipment) but does not collect and analyze imagery for projects.
LIDAR America Inc.	www.lidar-america.com; website reviewed 11/5/2024	Cannot meet business need, provide LIDAR surveys (not what is needed for this project) but no evidence of specialized expertise needed for kelp mapping.
Owyhee Air Research LLC	owyheeair.com; website reviewed 11/5/2024	Cannot meet business need, no evidence of specialized expertise with kelp mapping.
Pace Engineers, Inc.	www.paceengrs.com; website reviewed 11/5/2024	Cannot meet business need, imagery is collected by unmanned aerial vehicles (drones), which cannot collect the large area required for the business need.

Rogue Reconnaissance	https://www.roguerecon.net/ ; website reviewed 11/5/2024	Cannot meet business need, imagery is collected by unmanned aerial vehicles (drones), which cannot collect the large area required for the business need.
Skillings, Inc.	www.skillings.com ; website reviewed 11/5/2024	Cannot meet business need, imagery is collected by unmanned aerial vehicles (drones), which cannot collect the large area required for the business need.
The Old Grumpy Project	https://oldgrumpy.net ; website reviewed 11/5/2024	Cannot meet business need, business is focused on film making to raise awareness of PTSD, not aerial mapping.
Ward C. Muller and Associates	wcmassoc.com ; website reviewed 11/5/2024	Cannot meet business need, business is focused on licensed land surveying, not aerial mapping and kelp analysis.
West Fork Environmental	https://www.westforkenv.com/ ; website reviewed 11/5/2024	Cannot meet business need, imagery is collected by unmanned aerial vehicles (drones), which cannot collect the large area required for the business need.
Xeo Air, Inc.	www.xeoair.com ; website reviewed 11/5/2024	Cannot meet business need, imagery is collected by unmanned aerial vehicles (drones), which cannot collect the large area required for the business need.

OMWBE Directory of Certified Businesses

1. Navigate to the Office of Minority and Women’s Business Enterprises (OMWBE)’s [Certified Business Directory](#).
2. Use search criteria/search terms relevant to your agency’s business need.
3. Contact OMWBE staff for assistance if your search results is zero vendors, contact technicalassistance@omwbe.wa.gov.
4. Record search results:

Contractor Name	Method of Contact (phone, email, etc.)	Notes (can/cannot meet the business need, explanation)
OverSite LLC	Website Review, 11/1/2024	Cannot meet business need – imagery equipment does not include fixed-wing aircraft; it is not possible to survey the full area extent needed for the business need.
RW West Consultants Inc.	Website Review, 11/1/2024	From Certified Business Description on OMWBE website: “The firm provides inspection and consulting services to those involved in purchasing, leasing, selling, or maintaining commercial buildings, including retail, office, industrial, and multi-family. The firm’s building inspection services include customizable commercial inspections, property condition assessments (PCA), facility condition assessments (FCA), exterior building envelope inspections detecting water penetration and exterior cladding defects, roof inspections, infrared thermal inspections, indoor air quality testing, and environmental testing for mold. Drone and aerial services include construction progress monitoring and asset and inventory management utilizing aerial 3D mapping, and interior 3D mapping.” Cannot meet business need, as they do not focus on nor have specialized experience with floating kelp canopy mapping.

Standridge Design Inc	Website Review, 11/1/2024	From Certified Business Description on OMWBE website: "Planning and Civil Engineering Design and Project Management for Land Development, Park Development and Public Projects. Projects include various types of Land Use Projects; Roads, Utilities, Grading, Parks, foundation staking, and other improvements. Topographical surveys. Unmanned aerial surveying systems using a drone for aerial surveying, videography, photography, construction monitoring, utility inspection, 3d surveys, ortho-image production, mining inspection, marketing demonstrations." Cannot meet business need, as they do not focus on nor have specialized experience with floating kelp canopy mapping. Cannot meet business need also because their imagery equipment does not include fixed-wing aircraft which without this, it is not possible to survey the full area extent needed for the business need.
Zephyr UAS, Inc	Website Review, 11/1/2024	Cannot meet business need – imagery equipment does not include fixed-wing aircraft and it is not possible to survey the full area extent needed for the business need. Additionally, business focus is construction management, and there is no evidence of expertise in floating kelp imagery interpretation and analysis.

4. Conducting an RFI

An RFI is an informal solicitation of ideas, solutions and/or recommendations (usually to assist in the development of a scope of work for an RFP; an RFI does NOT result in a contract being awarded). An RFI can strengthen sole source determination as it can be used to gather additional information about the marketplace (such as vendor availability and interest).

DES provides a [Request for information \(RFI\) template](#) with examples of questions that may be helpful to gather information.

After conducting an RFI, the results can be saved to the contract file. Record results that support sole source determination here:

An RFI was not conducted for this project.

5. Additional Market Research Techniques

Depending on the commodity and/or service being procured, there may be additional or alternative market research techniques that are applicable.

No additional research conducted as extensive research was performed using techniques above.

Contacting Peer Agencies

Speaking with peer agencies, associations, cities, counties, states etc., can be an easy way to understand what best practices exist in contracting for a specific service or product. It is likely that others have experienced some of the same challenges you have. Know who your sister agencies and counterparts are and reach out.

Contact Name	Date/Method of Contact (phone, email, etc.) for follow-up, if applicable	Notes
		[add more rows as needed]

Interviewing Vendors

Pending the results of a database search or RFI, the agency may be able to conduct interviews with vendors for collecting information on the market. Interviews can be conducted in-person, virtual, by phone, or written via email. Interview questions include:

1. Briefly describe your idea/technology to meet the agency's business need.
2. Who is your direct competition?
3. Are there any other potential markets and/or possible emerging markets?

If your search turns up a large number of vendors, it may be faster to conduct a **survey** via email instead of reaching out to vendors individually.

Record results of interviews here:

Contact Name	Date/Method of Contact (phone, email, etc.) for follow-up, if applicable	Notes
		[add more rows as needed]

Trade Publications

Trade Publications (i.e., trade journals, industrial publications/catalogues/magazines) are a great source for industry information, as they are published by and for people in a particular industry. Historically these publications were print only, but many are now available online and easily accessible. Trade publications are periodicals that keep professionals up to speed on a given industry's trends and best practices.

You can search for trade publications using an internet search engine or through specific databases for trade journals. The way the search is conducted will be very specific to the commodity/service area, so we suggest working closely with your SMEs/program staff to assess which sources are appropriate.

Other Methods

This worksheet is not an exhaustive list of market research methods. Some commodities or services will require a different approach. For example, if the purchase is for social or human services, it may be necessary to take additional steps to understand the needs of the population receiving your services and how the target population will be matched and referred to the services. Understanding the business need of your agency is key to successful market research.

If you have any questions or require assistance, please reach out to the Policy Team via email, DES.Contracting@des.wa.gov.