

DETERMINATION AND FINDINGS FOR SOLE SOURCE

AGENCY: District of Columbia Public Schools, OFS
CAPTION: Plant Based Research Study
PROPOSED CONTRACTOR: American University
REQUISITION NO.: RK142229

FINDINGS

1. **Authorization:**

D.C. Code 2-354 and 27 DCMR, Section 1304 and 1702

2. **Minimum Need:**

The District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) Division of Food and Nutrition Services has a need for seeking to enlist a research organization to conduct a study to assess plant-based meals acceptance and consumption by students in a subset of DCPS elementary school cafeterias.

3. **Estimated Fair and Reasonable Cost:**

The estimated reasonable price is \$80,609.00 from Date of Award to September 30, 2020.

4. **Facts That Justify a Sole Source Requirement:**

I. **Background and History of The Vendor with DCPS**

Since 2016, The DCPS Food and Nutrition Team has partnered with American University (AU) Department of Health Studies to conduct research to assess variables that may have an impact on consumption, particularly of fruits and vegetables.

Baseline research conducted during SY 2016- 2017 helped FNS identify challenges and trends in consumption throughout DCPS cafeterias. As a result of these baseline findings, research conducted during SY 2017- 2018 focused on conducting targeted interventions to address key challenges. These interventions were designed to increase rates of consumption of target items (fruit, vegetable, entrée), decrease the amount of time it takes students to pass through the point of sale, and create a more positive atmosphere in the cafeteria.

While no additional research was conducted during SY 2018-2019, American University and FNS representatives presented study results to several stakeholders during the Spring of 2019. The data has helped inform meal period scheduling, menu development, and foodservice employee training.

American University's research results and data informs FNS strategy and targeted initiatives; as a large school district with diverse stakeholders, continued research and partnership with American University will support our goal of being a leader in providing healthy school food that all students are excited to eat.

II. Vendors Unique Qualification

Demand for vegetarian and plant-based (vegan) meals in schools is on the rise. According to the School Nutrition Association, in 2017 14% of school districts across the country provided vegan lunches for kids in at least one school, up from 11.5% in 2016. Further, the research by Lazor, Chapman, & Levine (2010) suggests that the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) can incorporate soy-based foods (nuggets, burgers and pasta) for additional variety and improved nutrient profiles without a negative impact on sales or consumption.

FNS has identified American University as the ideal research organization to conduct this research. American University (AU) is a premiere research university in the Washington, DC area with over 30 years of experience conducting childhood nutrition, physical activity, and obesity prevention interventions, as well as direct work in curriculum and instruction. The breadth and depth of their experience in childhood research and programming directly supports the development and implementation of a plant-based meals research project. AU provides experienced staff and well-trained onsite data collectors and they have conducted research in DCPS, in partnership with FNS, since 2016. AU has a unique understanding of our schools and community and is prepared to conduct this research.

III. Adverse Impact of Not Choosing This Vendor or Completing this Project

DCPS needs to procure these services and cannot afford the time necessary to attempt a competitive procurement. In addition, FNS' lengthy investigation noted that a competitive procurement would not yield a sizable pool of potential research organizations providing the necessary services from which to draw. Due to these considerations, a sole source to American University is in the best interest of DCPS.

5. **Certification by DCPS Program:**

I hereby certify that the above findings are correct and anticipated cost to DCPS is fair and reasonable.

Date

Division of Food and Nutrition Services

CERTIFICATION AND DETERMINATION

Based on the above certified findings in accordance cited authority, I hereby determine that it is not feasible or practical to invoke the competitive bidding process under Section 402 or 403 of the District of Columbia Procurement Practices Reform Act of 2010 (D.C. Law 18-371; DC Code 2- 354 and 27 DCMR 1304 and 1702.

Date

Candace Butler, Contracting Officer