

COMPLIANCE UPDATES AND USEFUL TIPS

CULTIVATING A CULTURE OF COMPLIANCE

Monthly updates from the MDE Office of Compliance

MARCH 2019

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This month's *Compliance Updates* features tips to prepare for year-end processing, upcoming deadline dates in the Office of Procurement, the role of the MDE related to website accessibility, and a friendly reminder to report any suspected fraud, waste, and abuse.

Preparations for Year-End Processing

- Review all open purchase orders, requisitions, Pro-2 forms, and/or other transactions with vendors.
- Check for any outstanding invoices that have not been paid and submit them for payment.
- **ALL** invoices **MUST BE PAID** within thirty (30) days of receipt.
- Determine all final goods and/or services needed for the current fiscal year. Submit requests for goods and/or services forms early with the appropriate documentation.
- Avoid waiting until the month of June to request purchase orders for goods and/or services.
- Request a purchase order (PO) prior to receiving goods or services from a vendor. Purchases orders requested after vendor invoices are received is a purchasing violation.
- Request PO modifications as soon as the need arises. Invoices which exceed the total amount of an approved PO is a purchasing violation.
- **ALL POs MUST BE DE-OBLIGATED AT THE END OF THE FISCAL YEAR TO RELEASE UNUSED FUNDS FROM THE PO.** If a PO is needed for those same services in the next fiscal year and funds were not de-obligated from the previous fiscal year, the program office Chief will have to submit a justification letter.

Upcoming Procurement Deadlines:

- **FY19 contract packets less than \$5,000 with an end date of June 30, 2019:**
 - Due to Procurement no later than: May 1, 2019
 - Contracts must be reviewed and approved by Procurement by May 15, 2019
 - Final signatures must be obtained by June 1, 2019
- **FY20 contract packets less than \$5,000:**
 - Due to Procurement no later than: May 1, 2019
 - Normal Procurement Processing
 - Contract Begins – July 1, 2019
- **FY20 contract renewals \$5,000 - \$50,000:**
 - Correction from last month:** Due to Procurement no later than: **April 15, 2019**
 - Normal Procurement Processing
 - Contract Begins – July 1, 2019

*Please see [Bid Checklist and Forms](#) on Procurement's website for documents required for submission of contracts and solicitations.

NOTE: ALL contract approvals are contingent upon program office timely submissions. **PLEASE DO NOT WAIT.**
Submit as soon as you can!

Tips on MDE Website Accessibility

What is accessibility and why is it important? Accessibility is an all-encompassing word to express “making the ability to gain access to services equal to all people.” Simply put, making sure that the services offered by the Mississippi Department of Education are equally accessible to all people. Accessibility is important because the MDE seeks to lead the way in this effort in making all our services accessible to all and it’s the law. *The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as Amended (Rehab Act) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs conducted by federal agencies, in programs receiving federal financial assistance, in federal employment and in the employment practices of federal contractors (AskEARN.org).*

This article will focus on Section 508 of the Rehab Act, what the Office of Technology and Strategic Services (OTSS) is doing to comply with the law, and how every MDE employee can assist. *In 1998, Congress amended the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 to require Federal agencies to make their electronic and information technology (EIT) accessible to people with disabilities. The law (29 U.S.C § 794 (d)) applies to all Federal agencies when they develop, procure, maintain, or use electronic and information technology. Under Section 508, agencies must give disabled employees and members of the public access to information comparable to the access available to others (section508.gov).*

That means, everything we provide from the MDE in a digital format should be checked to ensure it meets accessibility compliance before it is posted to any of our websites or shared by other means.

➤ Efforts of the MDE Web Team to comply with the law

- Leading the effort to make our websites more accessible by monitoring and adjusting code and content as needed.
- Striving to check documents, such as, PDF, Word and PowerPoint before they are posted to a site while rechecking previously posted items, as discovered.
- Scanning the MDE websites for issues concerning accessibility violations using a third-party tool called Monsido.
- Providing training for all MDE staff on how to properly prepare documents and content for posting to any of our website or distribution.

➤ Actions of every MDE employee to comply with the law

- Verify all Microsoft Office documents for accessibility before posting or sharing.
- Inspect graphics to ensure that they contain alternative (Alt) text for screen reader.
- Confirm that all videos have closed caption (CC) encoding.
- Test all PDFs to ensure they readable (i.e., avoid posting documents that have been scanned from a copier).

Stay tuned for more in-person and video training from the MDE Web Team on Accessibility compliance. Remember, making our content more accessible for everyone is the responsibility of every MDE employee and it’s the law.

For more information and resources, visit our [website accessibility statement page \(https://mdek12.org/WAS\)](https://mdek12.org/WAS).

If you have any questions or concerns, contact Richard L. Scott by email rscott@mdek12.org or by phone 601-359-2756.

Report Fraud, Waste, and Abuse

To report suspected fraudulent activity, go to the MDE Home webpage and select the “Report Fraud, Waste, and Abuse link (<https://compliance.mdek12.org/Fraud/>). Fill out and submit the electronic form. Your form will be directed to the Director of Compliance for review. All reports of suspected fraud, waste and abuse will be handled in the strictest confidence. Informants may remain anonymous but are encouraged to cooperate fully with investigators and provide as much detail and evidence of the suspected fraud, waste or abuse, as possible. **NOTE:** State law grants certain protections to whistleblowers, and any retaliation against employees who report suspected fraud, waste and abuse is strictly prohibited (Miss. Code Ann. § 25-9-173). For more information, please visit the [MDE Fraud, Waste, and Abuse Policy](#) on the Office of Compliance webpage under Resources.

REMINDERS:

- **Do not exit the east side (West Street) wooden doors and the center wooden doors on Griffith Street as they are not closing properly.**
- **The Office of Budget & Planning will no longer be required to approve equipment purchases; however, please check your budget to ensure you have funds available.**