



Memorandum

AGENDA ITEM 4

DATE: June 20, 2025

TO: Transportation Authority Board

FROM: Cynthia Fong – Deputy Director for Finance and Administration

SUBJECT: 07/08/2025 Board Meeting: Award Contracts to Five Shortlisted Consultant Teams for a Three-Year Period, with an Option to Extend for Two Additional One-Year Periods, for a Combined Amount Not to Exceed \$600,000 for On-Call Strategic Communications, Media and Community Relations Services and Authorize the Executive Director to Negotiate Contract Payment Terms and Non-Material Contracts Terms and Conditions

RECOMMENDATION ☐ Information ☒ Action

- Award a three-year professional services contract, with an option to extend for two additional one-year periods, to Civic Edge Consulting, Contigo Communications, DKS Associates, InterEthnica, Inc., and Kearns & West, Inc. in a combined amount not to exceed \$600,000 for on-call strategic communications, media and community relations services
- Authorize the Executive Director to Negotiate Contract Payment Terms and Non-Material Terms and Conditions

SUMMARY

The Transportation Authority has regular needs to communicate with policymakers, the media, key stakeholders, the general public, partner agencies, and the private and non-profit sectors on a wide range of agency and profit-specific matters. The establishment of contracts with one or more consultant teams will enable us to enlist the services of a broad range of strategic communication, media and community relations specialists, on an as-needed basis. We issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) in April 2025. By the

- ☐ Fund Allocation
- ☐ Fund Programming
- ☐ Policy/Legislation
- ☐ Plan/Study
- ☐ Capital Project Oversight/Delivery
- ☐ Budget/Finance
- ☒ Contract/Agreement
- ☐ Other:



due date, we received 10 Statements of Qualifications (SOQ) and 1 SOQ that was deemed disqualified due to delivery after the response deadline. Based on this competitive selection process, the review panel recommends the award of consultant contracts to the 5 highest-ranking firms: Civic Edge Consulting, Contigo Communications, DKS Associates, InterEthnica, Inc., and Kearns & West, Inc.	
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BACKGROUND

The Transportation Authority - in its role as the city's Congestion Management Agency and as TIMMA - has regular needs to communicate with policymakers, the media, key stakeholders, the general public, partner agencies and the private and non-profit sectors, on a wide range of agency and project-specific matters. We initiated a procurement process seeking on-call strategic communications, media and community relations services to support the Transportation Authority's work program. Our current on-call strategic communications contracts, with one team led by Civic Edge Consulting and the other by Convey Inc. are approaching the end of their contract term.

The scope of services, included as Attachment 1, covers two major areas of work: agency-wide outreach and communications and project-specific outreach and communications.

Given the wide range of desired proficiencies and experience; the amount and complexity of the Transportation Authority's work program; and occasional conflicts of interest or availability that arise for specific efforts, there is a need for broad and deep access to communications, media, and community relations skills. Therefore, we propose to contract with five consultant teams with whom the Transportation Authority may call upon on a task order basis. This also is intended to increase competition and allow for improved responsiveness (e.g., during times of peak demand). We have used this type of arrangement for our previous on-call communications contracts and found it to be beneficial to the Transportation Authority's work program.

DISCUSSION

We are seeking on-call strategic communications, media, and community relations services with expertise in strategic communications; message framing; public relations; media relations; public outreach; marketing; public opinion surveys/market research/focus groups; crisis communications; graphic design; meeting facilitations



and/or design thinking; event planning; photography/videography; online and/or technology engagement/outreach tools; and translations.

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Procurement Process. The Transportation Authority and TIMMA issued a joint RFQ for on-call strategic communications, media and community relations services on April 18, 2025. We hosted a pre-proposal conference on April 25, which provided opportunities for small businesses and larger firms to meet and form partnerships. 53 firms registered for the conference. We took steps to encourage participation from small and disadvantaged business enterprises, including advertising in five local newspapers: the San Francisco Chronicle, San Francisco Examiner, the Small Business Exchange, Nichi Bei, and El Reportero. We also distributed the RFQ and questions and answers to certified small, disadvantaged, and local businesses; Bay Area and cultural chambers of commerce; and small business councils.

By the due date of May 23, 2025, we received 10 SOQs in response to the RFQ and 1 SOQ deemed disqualified due to delivery after the response deadline. A selection panel comprised of Transportation Authority staff evaluated the proposals based on qualifications and other criteria identified in the RFQ, including the proposer's understanding of project objectives, technical and management approach, and capabilities and experience. Two other qualified teams advanced without interviews due to the quality of the SOQs, prior working experience with us, and the familiarity of staff with previous work performed by these firms. Based on the competitive process defined in the RFQ, the panel recommends that the Board award contracts to the five highest-ranked firms: Civic Edge Consulting, Contigo Communications, DKS Associates, InterEthnica, Inc., and Kearns & West, Inc. The five highest-ranked teams provide a strong set of skills, specialists, and relevant project experience.

Given the wide range of desired proficiencies and experience, the amount and complexity of our work program, the management of conflicts of interest that periodically arise for specific efforts, and the need to ensure availability of qualified support, we require broad and deep access to relevant skills in the on-call strategic communications contract. We propose to contract with multiple consultant teams with whom we may call upon on a task order basis. Such an arrangement is currently in place through our existing on-call strategic communications contracts, which have proved beneficial to the agency's strategic communications, media and community relations services. The recommended firms together provide us with multiple options for each task in the Scope of Services. The selection panel recommends that the Transportation Authority and TIMMA both award contracts to the same five firms, as



both agencies share communications resources. Awarding contracts to the same on-call communications consultant teams will enhance staff efficiency in issuing task orders and supporting project needs. The contract award for TIMMA's portion of the contract will be considered by the TIMMA Committee at its next scheduled meeting.

We plan to use federal funds to cover a portion of this contract and have adhered to federal procurement regulations. We established a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) goal of 17% for this contract, accepting certifications by the California Unified Certification Program. All teams have made commitments to exceed the DBE goal. Civic Edge Consulting is a Women-owned DBE and subconsultant InkeDesign Consulting is also a Women-owned firm. Contigo Communications is a Hispanic-owned and Women-owned firm, and subconsultant Intergraphics, LLC. is a Women-owned firm. DKS Associates' team includes Redwood Resources, a African-American-owned and Women-owned firm, and VSCE, Inc. a Hispanic-American-owned firm. InterEthnica, Inc. is a Hispanic-American-owned and Women-owned firm. Kearns & West, Inc.'s subconsultant Centric is a Women-owned firm. In addition, we will establish DBE, Small Business Enterprise, and/or Local Business Enterprise goals for each subsequent task order request, based on project's funding sources and specific scope of work.

The selected consultant teams will remain eligible for consideration for task order negotiation on an as-needed basis for the initial three-year term, plus two optional one-year extensions. To maintain an open and competitive process, task orders will be awarded through an additional qualifications-based selection procedure within the shortlisted consultants. All shortlisted consultants will be invited to submit proposals and/or participate in oral interviews as part of the task order negotiation process. While we intend to engage pre-qualified firms based on capabilities, experience, and availability, no selected team is guaranteed a task order.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The scope of work described in the RFQ is anticipated in our proposed Fiscal Year 2025/26 work program and budget through relevant projects and studies. Budget for these activities will be funded by a combination of federal Surface Transportation Planning grants, other federal and/or state grants from Caltrans and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, local agency contributions, and Prop L sales tax funds. The first year's activities are included in the Transportation Authority's proposed Fiscal Year 2025/26 budget and sufficient funds will be included in future fiscal year budgets to cover the cost of these contracts.



CAC POSITION

The CAC will consider this item at its June 25, 2025 meeting.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

- Attachment 1 – Scope of Services
- Attachment 2 – Past Task Orders Assignments (2019 – 2025)
- Attachment 3 – Shortlisted Respondents

Attachment 1

Scope of Services

The below areas of expertise and example task types are representative of needs in the coming three years – additional undetermined task types are anticipated to be needed and not all task types listed below will necessarily be produced under this contract in the next three years. Example tasks include: 1) Transportation Authority agency-wide outreach/communications, and 2) Transportation Authority project-specific outreach/communications.

Areas of Expertise

In seeking assistance with communications, outreach and engagement efforts, the Transportation Authority seeks to advance the following goals and objectives:

- Raise awareness about the Transportation Authority's role, purpose, and operations to the general public;
- Provide consistent and easy-to-understand public communication regarding the Transportation Authority's work;
- Maintain a common voice among the Transportation Authority's communication and strengthen quality assurance/quality control, while maintaining the flexibility for rapid responses;
- Collaborate with the community to develop shared visions and action plans for improving transportation in San Francisco; and
- Engage with, and solicit input from, policymakers, the general public, and stakeholder groups in the Transportation Authority's initiatives and projects, and in particular develop methods to obtain meaningful input from hard-to-reach-population segments.

To achieve these goals, the Transportation Authority will need expertise in the following communication and outreach areas:

1. Strategic Communications
2. Message Framing
3. Public Relations
4. Media Relations
5. Public Outreach
6. Marketing
7. Public Opinion Surveys/Market Research/Focus groups
8. Crisis Communications
9. Graphic Design
10. Meeting Facilitation and/or Design Thinking
11. Event planning
12. Photography/Videography
13. Online and/or Technology Engagement/Outreach Tools (examples could include webinars, online data visualization tools, online engagement tools, telephone town halls, etc.)
14. Translation (both verbal and written). Translation services must also include interpretation in culturally relevant terms.

Details of Scopes of Work

The Transportation Authority anticipates that Task Orders will be developed to address the following areas of work during the duration of the contract(s):

A. Transportation Authority Agency-wide Outreach/Communications

1. Media/Public Relations Services

- a. Support communications with the media, including development of communications materials
- b. Demonstrate experience with all media formats, including print/radio/television from local to national level, bloggers, advertising, social media, etc.
- c. Demonstrate experience placing media stories/opinion-editorials/letters to the editor

Deliverables: press list and kit; media plan; media advisories; press kit development and distribution; press events; log of media hits

2. Opinion/Market Research

- a. Administer opinion research such as focus groups, polls, surveys conducted via a range of methodologies (intercept, mail, phone, online) or other types of opinion research as needed

Deliverables: focus group/polling results; development and administration of focus groups/polling

3. Events

- a. Support communications with the planning and execution of events, including ribbon cutting ceremonies, press events, networking events, celebratory events, etc.

Deliverables: event plan; invitation list; event logistics including catering/food/beverage service/entertainment

4. Branding, Messaging, Images

- a. Develop messaging/branding/images/graphics to support Transportation Authority initiatives

Deliverables: messaging, branding, and images that support agency initiatives

5. Relationship Building and Management Support

- a. Track partner agency and policymaker initiatives and suggest ways for the Transportation Authority to provide cross support or to collaborate on relevant initiatives
- b. Facilitate meetings with key groups/individuals related to the Transportation Authority's initiatives

Deliverables: proposals on communications initiatives/events that advance Transportation Authority goals and align with relevant initiatives

6. Administration and Reporting

- a. Project phone calls/in-person meetings, including agendas and meeting minutes
- b. Management of overall project tasks and invoice preparation

Deliverables: meeting notes; progress updates; project reporting and monthly invoices by task

B. Transportation Authority Project-Specific Outreach/Communications

1. Communications Plan Development

- a. Develop and implement robust outreach and communications strategies - which will include strategies to reach non-English speaking and/or other hard to reach communities - to support advancement of agency plans, programs, or efforts
- b. Be proficient in taking complicated technical material and translating it into readily digestible and publicly understandable concepts
- c. Identify innovative public engagement and involvement methods and processes
- d. Identify strategies for developing projects and recommendations that gain the support of/respond to the needs of all project stakeholders
- e. Develop and/or review communications collateral and/or plans

Deliverables: draft and final communications plans; draft and final versions of communications collateral

2. Communications Plan Execution

- a. Implement outreach plan, working with any combination of the project team, communications staff and potentially outside agencies reporting to the Transportation Authority
- b. Secure venues for meetings
- c. Reach out to relevant audiences online and in-person to participate in meetings and events
- d. Oversee logistics to arrange for food/beverage, child care, or other needed services at public events
- e. Staff meetings, open houses, or other events as appropriate
- f. Arrange for translation of materials or arrange for live translation services
- g. Arrange for notification to the public of open house or other public outreach events

Deliverables: venues secured for meetings with appropriate services provided; translation services; advance public notification of events

3. Administration and Reporting

- a. Project phone calls/in-person meetings, including agendas and meeting minutes
- b. Management of overall project tasks and invoice preparation

Deliverables: meeting notes; progress updates; project reporting and monthly invoices by task

Attachment 2

On-Call Strategic Communications, Media and Community Relations Services Past Task Order Assignments (2019 - 2025)

Prime Consultant	Task Order Description	Amount
Civic Edge Consulting	Overall Communications ¹	\$24,108
	Outreach Guidelines	\$44,169
	Pennsylvania Avenue Extension Study	\$25,000
	School Access Plan	\$2,812
	Prop L Translation and Interpretation Services	\$4,112
	Program Management for Communication Services	\$87,245
	Mission Bay School Access Plan	\$9,923
	District 4 Community Shuttle Study	\$6,885
	Staff Survey	\$62,534
	San Francisco Transportation Plan 2050+	\$24,493
	Program Management for Communications Services	\$30,396
Total Task Orders Awarded to Civic Edge Consulting		\$321,677
Convey, Inc.	Overall Communications ¹	\$4,535
	30 th Anniversary	\$36,265
	Contacts Database	\$9,925
	Staff Survey	\$9,902
	District 7 Ocean Avenue Mobility Action Plan	\$8,265
	District 2 Safety Study and Implementation	\$19,800

¹ Overall communications encompass activities such as overall image development and branding of the Transportation Authority and creating communication materials. In addition, consultant teams monitor community and media activity for various Transportation Authority projects and provide communication support services for Transportation Authority initiatives not covered by separate task orders.

Attachment 2

	Geary/19 th Avenue Subway Strategic Case	\$55,000
Total Task Orders Awarded to Convey, Inc.		\$143,692
Total Task Orders Awarded to Date		\$465,369
Total Amount Awarded to DBE Firms		\$448,327
Total Contract Amount		\$500,000

Attachment 3
Shortlisted Respondents
On-Call Strategic Communications, Media and Community Relations

No.	Prime Consultant	Subconsultants
1	Civic Edge Consulting, LLC (DBE/SBE/LBE)	A2Z Media Group (SBE)* En2Action, Inc. (SBE/LBE) FM3 Imprenta Communications Group (SBE) InkeDesign Consulting LLC (DBE/SBE/LBE)* lowercase productions LLC (SBE/LBE) Slow Clap Productions LLC (SBE/LBE)*
2	Contigo Communications (DBE/LBE)*	Somos Group Intergraphics (DBE)*
3	DKS Associates	Redwood Resources (DBE)* VSCE, Inc. (DBE/SBE) WSP USA Inc. FM3 Avantpage Inc. (SBE)*
4	InterEthnica, Inc. (DBE/LBE)	Bonner Communications (LBE) WSP USA EMC Research
5	Kearns & West	CENTRIC Marketing (DBE)* EMC Research Lan Do & Associates, LLC (SBE)* Slow Clap Productions (SBE/LBE)*

Abbreviations:

DBE: Disadvantaged Business Enterprise

SBE: Small Business Enterprise

LBE: Local Business Enterprise

* New DBE/SBE/LBE firms working with the Transportation Authority