



HUMBOLDT COUNTY ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS
Regional Transportation Planning Agency
Humboldt County Local Transportation Authority
Service Authority for Freeway Emergencies
611 I Street, Suite B
Eureka, CA 95501
(707) 444-8208
www.hcaog.net

Request for Proposals

**MULTI-MODAL MOBILITY MARKETING PLAN
AND MARKETING SERVICES**

RFP released: October 26, 2023
Proposals due: November 27, 2023

Invitation: The Humboldt County Association of Governments (HCAOG) and Humboldt Transit Authority (HTA) are inviting interested parties to submit proposals to complete a Transit Marketing Plan and deliver marketing services that help grow and expand regional multi-modal mobility ridership with a focus on public transit.

Safe and Sustainable Targets adopted in the Regional Transportation Plan call for a significant mode shift away from single occupancy vehicles, with goals to:

- Double transit trips by 2025, and again by 2030, and again by 2040.
- Increase the percentage of all trips, combined, made by walking, biking, micro-mobility/matched rides, and transit to at least 30% by 2030 and 40% by 2050.
- Reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per capita by at least 25% by 2030, and 40% by 2050.

We are looking for a full-service marketing firm that can provide comprehensive, multi-channel marketing and communications to help move our region toward achieving these bold targets. HCAOG and HTA are seeking a marketing firm to develop creative marketing strategies and promotions that will help all mobility agencies and businesses within our region maximize efforts to foster transformational increases in transit ridership and reductions in VMT in our region.

Questions regarding this RFP should be addressed to Beth Burks, Executive Director beth.burks@hcaog.net or (707) 444-8208.

View this document and attachments at www.hcaog.net/Announcements.

Attachments:

Attachment A: Sample HCAOG Consultant Services Contract

Attachment B: HCAOG Protest Procedures & Dispute Process

I. BACKGROUND

The Humboldt County Association of Governments (HCAOG) is the designated Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA). The HCAOG Board of Directors consists of a member of the Board of Supervisors and a councilmember from each of Humboldt County's seven cities (Arcata, Blue Lake, Eureka, Ferndale, Fortuna, Rio Dell, and Trinidad). HCAOG is responsible for adopting the Regional Transportation Plan, a 20-year planning document that charts a course to provide *Variety in Rural Options of Mobility (VROOM)*. The vision in *VROOM's* 2022 update was crafted in partnership with the community, resulting in the Safe and Sustainable Targets that aim to increase transit ridership and reduce vehicle miles traveled.

Humboldt Transit Authority (HTA) is a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) that operates four transit systems: Eureka Transit System, Redwood Transit System (RTS), Southern Humboldt Intercity (SHI), and Willow Creek Intercity Transit (WC). HTA also administers and coordinates the Dial-A-Ride service to provide paratransit transportation services, though contracts out to a service provider. The Arcata & Mad River Transit System (A&MRTS) also contracts maintenance and operator services to HTA. In addition, the City of Fortuna, and Yurok Tribe operate transit systems.

HTA is actively trying new strategies and implementing new services to improve riders' experience. In January 2024, HTA will launch a new interregional route called the Redwood Coast Express, which will connect rural North Coast California communities. Also, HTA is currently leading a brand update to co-brand all the various transit services under the brand RideHumboldt. Also, using fare capping and new credit card readers, HTA now allows passengers to tap-on and easily transfer between different services. In addition, HTA will be piloting on-demand microtransit services, and is exploring methods of easing transfers onto first mile/last mile bikeshare services. HTA is also in the planning stages of constructing a central intermodal transit center located in Eureka that will be a multi-modal mobility hub for the County. Numerous other jurisdictions within the County are also launching bike trail projects and transit-oriented development planning and zoning projects. HTA is in the process of purchasing eleven new fuel-cell electric vehicles to join the fleet, fueled by a state-of-the-art hydrogen fueling station. It is an exciting time to be involved in Humboldt County transit.

Humboldt County is one of the largest rural counties in the state. There are eight federally recognized Tribes in Humboldt County. The largest city population is 26,500; the largest unincorporated town has a population of 16,300. The County has a high rate of poverty, people with disabilities, and older adults. The 2020 median household income was \$49,235 and the poverty rate was 19.7%. The percentage of people over 65 years old is 30% higher in Humboldt than in California; adults aged 75 and older are the fastest growing age group in the coming decade. Additionally, Cal Poly Humboldt plans to double its enrollment to 12,000 students by 2030. There is significant economic growth opportunity for the County from large industrial development, and the development of an offshore wind industry.

Regional Public Transportation

Public transit in Humboldt County currently consists of four transit operators that collectively operate seven different transit services. (Additional operator(s) provide paratransit.)

Transit Service/System

Arcata & Mad River Transit System
Eureka Transit Service
Fortuna Senior Bus Transit
Redwood Transit System
Southern Humboldt Intercity
Willow Creek Intercity Transit
Yurok Tribal Transit Service

Transit Service Provider

City of Arcata
Humboldt Transit Authority (HTA)
City of Fortuna
HTA
HTA
HTA
Yurok Tribe

II. PROJECT SUMMARY

The selected consultant will develop a marketing plan and materials to promote existing and new transit services. The marketing activities will support HTA and HCAOG’s long-range transportation planning goals. The marketing plan and materials will support Agency and project goals and objectives outlined below. The initial effort described in the Scope of Services is Phase 1. Upon successful completion of Phase 1, contract amendments for ongoing marketing services will be considered.

Long-Term Agency Goals:

- Achieve Safe and Sustainable Targets adopted in the Regional Transportation Plan
- By 2028, Redwood Coast Express (RCX) route achieves ridership levels at or above the projected 4,500 passenger trips per year.
- Existing and potential transit users perceive and experience the RideHumboldt branded services as achieving the following demands of passengers:
 - Takes them where they want to go.
 - Is a good use of their time.
 - Is a good use of their money.
 - Respects them.
 - Can be trusted and feels safe.
 - Gives them freedom and flexibility to change travel plans.
 - Can be fun.
- Humboldt County residents are aware of and can comfortably navigate first mile/last mile mobility options.

Project Goals:

- Shift people’s perceptions of transit as a last resort for those without other options.
- Brand transit as an all-inclusive service available to all community members rather than targeted to specific audiences or groups.
- Brand all multi-modal mobility options as attractive and enjoyable.
- Foster a positive public perception of HTA and HCAOG in our local community.

Project Objectives:

- Coordinate marketing strategy with regional transit planning and projects.
- Full roll-out of RideHumboldt brand identity to increase visibility of transit mobility options.
- Market first mile/last mile mobility options such as biking, walking, bikeshare, rideshare, etc.

- Increase awareness of the full range of Humboldt County regional mobility services through marketing and promotion.
- Develop targeted campaigns such as taking transit to popular local events.
- Support the launch of new services such as on-demand microtransit and the RCX intercity service by providing outreach and promotion services.
- Build excitement for the Eureka Intermodal Transit Center
- Develop marketing campaigns leading up to potentially politically challenging projects, such as a new tax measure, congestion pricing, or dedicated bus rapid transit lanes.

Phase 1 Project Outcomes:

Phase 1 of this Project focuses on regional branding and marketing of transit systems in the region.

1. Comprehensive RideHumboldt Brand Audit - Identifies areas of strength and potential improvement for regional transit branding.
2. Marketing Plan - We encourage proposals that take an innovative “out-of-the-box” approach to marketing transit and regional mobility services. The Plan should:
 - a) Provide strategic recommendations to market existing and new transit services to entice current and potential users to choose transit.
 - b) Incorporate equity into all aspects of the outreach for and benefits of the marketing plan.
 - c) Identify target audiences in a phased approach with the goal of developing strategies to reach the entire community by 2030.
 - d) Focus on building a long-term positive relationship with our community.
 - e) Leverage high profile local and regional people and unique features of the local and regional community and culture.
 - f) Include creative strategies. Examples include Berlin Transit’s collaboration with Adidas shoes, or integrating local artists and musicians into infrastructure or themed rides or routes.
 - g) Be a concise, living, and flexible document that can be regularly updated every four years to stay relevant, timely and fresh.
 - h) Integrate with and complement regional transit, transportation, and land use planning documents.
 - i) Identify measurable metrics of success and describe how to monitor and measure them.
3. Implement the Marketing Plan over a one-year period, (option to extend/amend contract will be considered based on available funding)
4. Provide quarterly and annual reports to the HCAOG/HTA Boards on marketing services and success metrics.

III. PROJECT PHASE 1 SCOPE OF SERVICES

While the scope of work below is what HCAOG and HTA believe is needed, we are also open to entirely different approaches. Accordingly, entities that are putting together proposals are allowed

to modify and/or entirely reimagine components of the scope of work. If there are better ideas than what is presented below, we want to know about it. Our agency staff members are not experts on marketing or branding and recognize that the Long-Term Agency Goals and Project Goals are extremely challenging. For these reasons we are seeking a Consultant with the experience and creativity necessary to tackle these Goals.

The proposed scope for this RFP focuses on transit as a Phase 1 of the Project. However, HCAOG and HTA are seeking proposals that demonstrate the firm's ability and experience to address the larger goals and objectives identified with the anticipation of expanding scope of work when funding becomes available.

(A) TRANSIT MARKETING PLAN AND MARKETING SERVICES

Task 0 Redwood Coast Express Route Launch

Redwood Coast Express RCX with direct service from Eureka to Ukiah will launch January 2024. This will be just as the selected consultant is coming on board. Because of this timing, the selected consultant will be tasked with a rapid marketing effort to raise awareness of the service. A broader marketing effort would be incorporated into Tasks 1-3 below.

Task 1 Develop Comprehensive Transit Brand Audit Report

The selected consultant will review and evaluate existing marketing/branding for regional multi-modal mobility services, starting with the new RideHumboldt brand. The Comprehensive Brand Audit Report shall address the strengths/weaknesses of HTA's current marketing efforts and the threats/barriers to further ridership and multi-modal mobility growth. The report will highlight opportunities to level up marketing efforts to address underserved or overlooked audiences as well as reinforce and expand those tactics that are performing well. HTA is taking the lead in implementing a regional brand update, with a new logo and brand template created by a local firm. The selected Consultant will not be creating a brand/logo design, but rather providing professional direction and support to roll out and market the regional transit brand.

Task 1.1 Assess Existing Transit Service Branding and Recruitment

Evaluate existing marketing and branding of the regional transit system and component services (for system wide, fixed route, Dial-A-Ride/Lift, and deviated route performance, as applicable). Evaluation will include, but is not limited to, consultation (meetings, interviews, and correspondence) with each of the transit providers, and review of existing passenger information tools both printed and on-line. This component will also identify criteria/performance measures that are relevant and measurable to define, optimize and evaluate progress toward objectives. In addition, the Consultant will evaluate the process and materials used for driver recruitment and hiring, and provide recommendations to improve the recruitment of drivers.

Task 1.2 Conduct Market Research and Analysis

The purpose of this task is for the Consultant to develop a deep understanding of the mobility needs and motivations/values of existing and potential transit users in Humboldt County in order to inform marketing recommendations. The Consultant would be informed by a review of existing plans, survey results, public comments, and knowledge from HCAOG and or HTA. We are open to research methods the Consultant may propose in order to better understand opportunities for marketing public transit in our region that have not been covered in existing planning and

marketing efforts. If additional outreach is proposed, any outreach materials should be bilingual and ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990) accessible.

Task 1.3 Prepare Comprehensive Brand Audit Report

Summarize findings from Task 1.1 and 1.2 into a report and include brand improvement recommendations.

Deliverables: Present draft recommendations to HTA and HCAOG committees, engage committee members for direction/general consensus on recommendations. Prepare a draft and final Comprehensive Brand Audit Report to present to HTA Board.

Task 2. Prepare Marketing Plan

The selected Consultant will prepare a Marketing Plan detailing strategies, media channels, messaging, and overall marketing and promotion campaigns for RideHumboldt. The Plan will address marketing for fixed-route trunk lines, express routes including RCX, on-demand microtransit, dial-a-ride service, and other transit services. The Plan will utilize the metrics identified in Task 1.1 as a starting point for evaluating the efficacy of suggested campaigns. Based on review of existing materials, consultant may recommend designs for informational materials including but not limited to: bus stop signs, updated print materials, commuter guide, and other information displays. HTA anticipates recommended marketing content to include video, on-bus advertising, social media, print, schedules, and maps (content to be created and broadcast in Task 3).

The Marketing Plan should synthesize strategies, tactics, and implementation schedule into a comprehensive yet concise action plan. The Marketing Plan shall clearly identify how and why these strategies will be the most effective. The Marketing Plan will include: marketing strategies (positioning, targeting, benefit), approach to social marketing and behavioral change, creative strategies, promotion, media buys, other tactics (public relations, direct response, social media and community engagement), key performance metrics and objectives, implementation schedule and media budget. The Plan should include branded templates (social media, fliers, etc.) for use by agencies. We are **not** looking for the Consultant to prepare a lengthy planning document, but rather wish to see a concise living document with actionable steps and strategies that will expeditiously lead to Task 3.

Deliverables: Administrative draft; public review draft; and final draft of Marketing Plan. Review draft and final draft should be delivered as an ADA compliant accessible pdf file.

Task 3. Implement Marketing and Promotional Campaigns

Upon HTA Board review and approval of the marketing plan, the Consultant shall develop the approved creative, promotional, advertising, and other marketing materials envisioned and articulated in the Marketing Plan. The Consultant shall implement the new marketing campaign as agreed upon in Task 2. The Consultant, in cooperation with HCAOG and HTA, will manage, monitor, and measure all campaign activities. The Consultant will provide continuous monitoring of the campaign to ensure campaign effectiveness.

HTA and HCAOG intend to take significant responsibility for implementation, and plan to develop a partnership with the Consultant rather than fully outsource all marketing activity. The Consultant should provide ongoing resources, training and templates as needed in order to build HTA and

HCAOG capacity so that these agencies can support implementation of the Marketing Plan.

Based on ongoing assessments and campaign metrics developed in Task 2, the Consultant shall determine if strategic changes/corrections need to be made to the campaign to improve efficacy. If such changes are required, the Consultant will recommend the necessary changes to HTA and upon HTA approval, make changes.

Deliverables: Records of Progress Reports and Final Assessment to the HTA Board. The Consultant will present regular progress reports to stakeholders (quarterly basis or as determined by project manager). These progress reports will present the overall campaign efficacy in a concise manner. During the progress report, the Consultant shall recommend how to adjust the marketing strategies, if necessary. The Consultant will provide a Final Report on the implementation of the Marketing Campaign that includes objectives, strategy, tactics, creative, channels, metrics, results, return on investment and campaign insights, and recommendations for future campaigns.

IV. ANTICIPATED PROJECT TIMETABLE

(Dates subject to change)

Hiring Consultant

Friday, October 27, 2023

Request for Proposals (RFP) released.

Monday, November 27, 2023

Submission deadline for project proposals.

Thursday, December 21, 2023

Board Meeting- consultant selection.

Project Schedule

1st week of January 2024

Start-up meeting

January 2024

Initial marketing for Redwood Coast Express

January 2024-Dec 2025

Remainder of project tasks

Closing Date

Complete proposals must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. on Monday, November 27, 2023, via email.

All proposals received *prior to* the closing date and time specified above may be withdrawn or modified by respondent's written request. Any modification, to be considered, must be received in writing, prior to the closing date for receipt of proposals.

Late Responses

Proposals received after the closing time **will not be accepted.** Any modifications received late shall not be considered, and any withdrawn proposals shall not be considered.

V. PROPOSAL CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION

Proposals should be limited to specifically discussing the elements outlined in this RFP and should follow the general outline below. To be considered to perform the services requested by this RFP, a respondent must meet the following criteria and submit all the following information. Submittals failing to meet any of these criteria shall be considered non-responsive and will not be evaluated

further.

A) Cover Letter

The proposal shall be transmitted with a cover letter that describes the respondent's interest and commitment to the proposed project. The cover letter should include the name, title, address, email, and telephone number of the individual to whom correspondence and other contacts should be directed during the consultant selection process. The person authorized to negotiate a contract with HCAOG shall sign the cover letter.

Submit the cover letter and complete proposal via email to

Beth Burks, Executive Director
beth.burks@hcaog.net

B) Proposal

Each responsive proposal shall have a technical proposal (items 1-5).

1) Understanding of Project

This section shall clearly convey how the respondent understands the nature of the work, and issues related to the project.

2) Consultant Qualifications and Experience

Discuss overall qualifications of the firm and/or project team (key staff and subcontractors, as applicable) in the context of the goal and objectives of this Project.

(a) Firm

Briefly describe the respondent's firm (the lead firm if you are proposing a multi-firm project team), including the year the firm was established, type of organization (partnership, corporation, etc.).

State the firm's qualifications for performing the consulting services requested in this RFP. Briefly describe the firm's experience with similar organizations.

(b) Key Personnel

Describe the qualifications and experience of each professional who will participate in the project. Include a résumé for each key staff member of the project team. Designate a project manager. Include an organizational chart showing the project manager and all staff proposed to provide services for this project.

(c) References

Provide a list of at least three references. Include references from clients of similar type agencies (governmental) and projects, as applicable. References must include client name, address, phone number, and e-mail address. For each reference, describe the nature of the work you performed, approximate dates your firm performed the work, and your firm's professional staff who performed the work.

Provide qualifications and at least two references for each subcontractor, if proposed.

3) Approach

Describe your firm's or team's proposed creative approach and management plan for providing the Scope of Work for Phase 1 of this Project. The proposed approach does not need to mirror exactly what is detailed in the Scope of Work in this RFP but should capture the intent and target results. Discuss your views on the challenges that may arise and your intended approach and your capacity to solve such problems. Describe the practices you use to complete tasks and deliverables on time, and how you would ensure the quality of the contracted products.

4) Work Plan & Schedule

Transit Marketing Plan and Services

Provide a detailed schedule giving the timeframe for each major task and milestone to be undertaken. Identify a schedule for all internal meetings, public meetings, progress reports, and deliverables.

Give estimated staff and hours to accomplish each task and deliverable. Indicate the anticipated total effort, expressed in percentages of person-hours by each member of the supporting staff, including subcontracted staff.

6) Cost Proposal

The cost proposal for the proposed scope of work shall be detailed by cost per activity and shall describe:

- a) both the hourly rate for principal(s) and other personnel to be assigned to this contract;
- b) a summary of any related costs that are to be billed directly, including costs for attending additional meetings; and
- c) work to be completed by subcontractors should be clearly identified in both the proposal and cost proposal.

C) Conflict of Interest

Firms submitting proposals in response to this RFP must disclose to HCAOG any actual, apparent, or potential conflicts of interest that may exist relative to the services to be provided related to this RFP. If the firm has no conflict of interest, a statement to that effect shall be included in the proposal.

VI. OTHER PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

A) Insurance

The selected firm(s) or project team must be prepared to comply with HCAOG's standard contract terms and insurance requirements and must be prepared to show proof of insurance and indemnification required.

HCAOG's standard requirements for insurance coverage include:

- One million dollars (\$1,000,000) General Liability Insurance
- One million dollars (\$1,000,000) Automobile Insurance
- Twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000) for Document
- Five-hundred thousand dollars (\$500,000) for Errors and Omissions

Exceptions to these insurance requirements may be considered. If an exception is requested, please explain in the proposal.

B) Public Record

Until award of the contract, the proposals shall be held in confidence and shall not be available for public review. Upon award of a contract to the successful respondent, all proposals shall be public records. No proposal shall be returned after the date and time set for opening thereof. All proposals, whether selected or rejected, shall become the property of the Humboldt County Association of Governments.

VII. PROPOSAL EVALUATION AND SELECTION

Each proposal will be reviewed to determine if it meets the minimum proposal requirements stipulated in the Request for Proposals (Sections V and VI). Failure to meet the requirements of the RFP will be cause for HCAOG to reject the proposal. HCAOG may reject any proposal if it is conditional, incomplete, or contains irregularities. HCAOG may waive an immaterial deviation in a proposal. Waiver of an immaterial deviation shall in no way modify the RFP documents or excuse the respondent from full compliance with the contract requirements if the respondent is awarded the contract.

Respondents may be telephoned and asked for further information, if necessary, and may be expected to appear for oral interviews. A selection committee will review all proposals and will make recommendations to the HCAOG Board on the basis of the proposal, oral interview (if applicable), and references check. HCAOG reserves the right to select a consultant based solely on written proposals and not convene oral interviews.

Proposals that meet the minimum qualifications will be evaluated and scored according to the criteria designed to help judge the quality of the proposal. Evaluation criteria will include such considerations as described below.

Criteria	Total Possible Score
<p>CONSULTANT’S UNDERSTANDING OF THE REQUESTED PHASE 1 SCOPE OF WORK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated knowledge of the required work and rural context, including demonstrated commitment to equity and inclusion (10) • Approach to accomplishing the intended scope of services (10) • Response to the specific requirements of the RFP (5) • Clarity and presentation of the proposal (5) 	30
<p>CONSULTANT’S QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE RELATED TO THE PROJECT AS A WHOLE, NOT JUST THE PHASE 1 SCOPE OF WORK</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of resumes of all members of project team assigned to work on the project including subcontractors (5) • Qualifications of project team, including subcontractors (10) • Firm’s overall experience with similar projects (10) • Consultant’s and subcontractor’s references (5) 	30

<p>QUALITY AND CREATIVITY OF PROPOSED APPROACH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal demonstrates warmth and creativity needed to craft marketing that is innovative, fun and inviting (10) • Proposal shows creative use and leveraging of unique aspects and culture of Humboldt County (10) • Proposal demonstrates and justifies how the Phase 1 Scope of Work will support and advance the Overall Agency Goals (10) 	<p>30</p>
<p>AVAILABILITY AND CAPABILITY TO PERFORM MARKETING SERVICES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work plan and schedule by task; demonstrates capability to provide required tasks on time and within proposed budget. Proposed budget represents a good value for the services proposed. (5) • Procedures to ensure effective and consistent communications between the consultant, HCAOG and the transit operators (5) 	<p>10</p>
<p>TOTAL POINTS</p>	<p>100</p>

HCAOG will negotiate a contract with the firm that is evaluated to be the best suited to accomplish the project tasks. If a contract cannot be negotiated with the firm submitting the highest ranked proposal, then staff shall commence the negotiation process with the firm submitting the second-highest ranked proposal.

Respondents not selected for interview or contract award will be informed by mail and/or email. Upon request, HCAOG will offer a debriefing in person or by phone to respondents who were not selected, at a mutually agreeable time after award of the contract.

A proposer may object to a provision of the RFP on the grounds that it is arbitrary, biased, or unduly restrictive, or may object the selection of a particular consultant on the grounds that HCAOG procedures, the provisions of the RFP or applicable provisions of federal, state or local law have been violated or inaccurately or inappropriately applied. Any objection must be submitted in writing to the HCAOG Executive Director and must include an explanation of the basis for the objection:

1. No later than five (5) working days prior to the date responses are due, for objections to RFP provisions; or
2. No later than three (3) working days after the date the proposer is notified that its submittal was found to be non-responsive or failed to demonstrate the necessary experience; or
3. No later than three (3) working days after the date on which a contract is authorized by the HCAOG Executive Director for objections to consultant selection.

Except with regard to initial determinations of non-responsiveness, the evaluation record shall remain confidential until HCAOG authorizes the award. HCAOG will respond to the objection in writing within thirty days. No contract to a consultant shall be executed until the expiration of the objection period or, if an objection is filed, the issuance of a written response to the protest by HCAOG. The proposer may appeal the decision by filing a written appeal with the HCAOG Executive Director, no less than three (3) working days after receipt of the written response from the HCAOG Executive Director. The Executive Director’s decision will be final.

The RFP selection process is considered concluded when a consultant is selected, and the final contract is approved by all parties.

VIII. GENERAL CONDITIONS

Limitations

This Request for Proposal (RFP) does not commit HCAOG to award a contract, to pay any costs incurred in the preparation of the contract in response to this request, or to procure or contract for services or supplies. HCAOG expressly reserves the right to reject any and all proposals or to waive any irregularity or information in any proposal or in the RFP procedure and to be the sole judge of the responsibility of any respondent and of the suitability of the materials and/or services to be rendered. HCAOG reserves the right to withdraw this RFP at any time without prior notice. Further, HCAOG reserves the right to modify the RFP schedule.

Award

HCAOG may require RFP finalists to present oral presentations regarding their firms and any special expertise in the necessary areas. All finalists may be required to participate in negotiations and submit such price, technical, or other revisions of their proposals as may result from negotiations. HCAOG also reserves the right to award the contract without discussion, based upon the initial proposals. Accordingly, each initial proposal should be submitted on the most favorable terms from a cost and a technical viewpoint.

RFP Addendum

Any changes to the RFP requirements will be made by written addendum by HCAOG and shall be considered part of the RFP. Upon issuance, an addendum shall be incorporated in the agreement documents, and shall prevail over inconsistent provisions of earlier issued documentation.

Verbal Agreement or Conversation

No prior, current, or post award verbal conversations or agreement(s) with any officer, agent, or employee of HCAOG shall affect or modify any terms or obligations of the RFP, or any contract resulting from this RFP.

Pre-contractual Expense

Pre-contractual expenses are those expenses that respondents and selected consultant(s) incurred in relation to:

1. Preparing proposals in response to this RFP;
2. Submitting proposals to HCAOG;
3. Negotiating with HCAOG on any matter related to proposals; and
4. Other expenses incurred by a contractor or respondent prior to the date of award of any agreement.

HCAOG shall not be liable for any pre-contractual expenses incurred by any respondent or selected contractor. Respondents shall not include any such expenses as part of the price proposed in response to this RFP. HCAOG shall be held harmless and free from any and all liability, claims, or expenses whatsoever incurred by, or on behalf of, any person or organization responding to this RFP.

Signature

The proposal must include: name, title, address, email, and telephone number of individual with

authority to bind the company and also who may be contacted during the period of proposal evaluation. The proposal must be signed by an official authorized to bind the consultant and shall contain a statement to the effect that the proposal is a firm offer for at least a sixty (60) day period. This signature should be included in the cover letter of the proposal.

Contract

The successful consultant will be required to enter into a standard contract (Attachment A) with HCAOG that specifies the scope of service, completion schedule, and a mutually agreed upon schedule of payment. The consultant will be required to prepare a scope of work (See Section III) to be inserted into the contract as an attachment.

Contract Term

The period of the contract for the project will be from November 2023 to December 2026, with the option to renew. Please refer to Section IV, Project Timetable, for specific deadline dates.

Conflict of Interest

By submitting a proposal in response to this RFP, the prospective consultant warrants:

(1) That he/she/they presently have no interest and shall not acquire any interest, direct or indirect, which would conflict in any manner or degree with the performance of services required under this agreement;

(2) That no appointed or elected official, member or other officer or employee of HCAOG is interested directly or indirectly, in any manner whatsoever, in the performance of the agreement or in the supplies, work, or business to which it relates or in any portion of the profits thereof; or

(3) That no appointed or elected official, member or other officer or employee of HCAOG has been or will be offered or given any tangible consideration in connection with this proposal and/or agreement.

Prospective consultant covenants that neither prospective consultant nor, to the best of the prospective consultant's knowledge after diligent inquiry, any director, officer, owner or employee of the prospective consultant has any interest nor shall they acquire any interest, directly or indirectly, which would conflict in any manner or degree with the faithful performance of the agreement hereunder.

In the event that the prospective contractor has no prior knowledge of a conflict of interest as set forth above and hereafter acquires information that indicates there may be an actual or apparent violation of any of the above, the prospective consultant shall promptly bring such information to the attention of the HCAOG Executive Director. The prospective consultant shall thereafter cooperate with HCAOG review and investigation of such information, and comply with any instruction it receives from HCAOG in regards to remedying the situation.

Lobbying

With the exception of contacting HCAOG to ask questions regarding this RFP, any party submitting a proposal shall not contact or lobby any appointed or elected official, member, or other officer or employee of HCAOG. Any party attempting to influence any part of the proposal, submittal, or review process through ex parte contact of any HCAOG officials may have their proposal rejected.

Payment Schedule

The contracted consultant will be paid based on work actually performed during the preceding month. The consultant should forward a copy of all invoices for payment for work performed, and associated expenses, by the 10th day of the following month. Invoices shall be emailed to the attention of the HCAOG Executive Director. Invoices shall include the following information:

1. Date work was performed.
2. Personnel performing the work (all staff billed for must be identified in proposal or must have been approved by HCAOG).
3. Number of hours worked.
4. Hourly rate (must correspond to cost proposal).
5. Brief description of work completed.
6. Related task/scope of work.

The contracted consultant may bill no more than once monthly after submittal of completed deliverable(s).

Questions

Proposers shall be responsible for meeting all of the requirements and specifications set forth in this RFP and the sample Consultant Services Agreement attached hereto. If a Proposer discovers any ambiguity, conflict, discrepancy, omission or other error in this RFP, a written request for clarification or correction should be submitted to HCAOG at the following address:

beth.burks@hcaog.net

Requests for clarification or correction and any other question pertaining to this RFP must be received by HCAOG before 5:00 p.m. PST November 17, 2023. HCAOG will post all responses to clarification or correction and written questions by November 20, 2023.

VIII. PROTEST PROCEDURES AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS

HCAOG's Protest and Procedures and Dispute Resolution Process (Attachment B) shall be utilized to resolve any protests or disputes to this procurement process.