



Monterey County

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Board Report

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- a. Approve the Department of Labor Workforce Innovation Fund grant Third-Party Evaluation Services subcontract with Social Policy Research Associates by entering into a new Standard Agreement for a total contract allocation of \$449,996 for the period of March 15, 2015 through September 30, 2019; and;
- b. Authorize the Economic Development Department Director, or designee, to execute the contract, including amendments thereto, contingent upon approval by County Counsel, which do not affect the maximum dollar amount or term of the Agreement, and which make minor modifications to the contract as necessary to comply with Workforce Innovation Fund requirements

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Board of Supervisors:

- a. Approve the Department of Labor Workforce Innovation Fund grant Third-Party Evaluation Services subcontract with Social Policy Research Associates by entering into a new Standard Agreement for a total contract allocation of \$449,996 for the period of March 15, 2015 through September 30, 2019; and;
- b. Authorize the Economic Development Department Director, or designee, to execute the contract, including amendments thereto, contingent upon approval by County Counsel, which do not affect the maximum dollar amount or term of the Agreement, and which make minor modifications to the contract as necessary to comply with Workforce Innovation Fund requirements

SUMMARY:

The Monterey County Economic Development Department / Workforce Investment Board (EDD/WIB) serves as the grant recipient and administrative entity for federal, State, and local workforce development grant programs; it obtains concurrence to all successful program contracts from the Monterey County Board of Supervisors prior to implementation. The availability of Department of Labor (DOL) Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF) grant funds is authorized by the federal Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act, 2013 (P.L. 113-6). These funds are intended to support innovative approaches to the design and delivery of employment and training services that generate long term improvements in the performance of the public workforce system, outcomes for job seekers and employers, and cost effectiveness.

On September 24, 2014, the Monterey County EDD/WIB was awarded a WIF grant by the Employment and Training Administration (ETA), DOL, to support the Monterey County EDD/WIB's "Youth Ambassadors for Peace" project.

The grant was awarded through a competitive grants process to provide intensive, relationship-oriented, hands-on leadership and career preparation experience to youth ages 16-21, with multiple barriers. These youth include those with academic truancy issues, out-of-school youth, or those involved in misconduct or criminal delinquency. Monterey County EDD/WIB will be evaluating the impact of this program through a multi-year, third-party evaluator design.

One of the overarching goals of the WIF is to better assess the effectiveness of each workforce strategy. Specifically, as part of the grant, all applicants are required to contract with a third-party evaluator to conduct an evaluation of the funded initiative that will build on and expand the relevant base of evaluation literature. The importance of evidence-based practices is reflected in WIF's grant structure, where the amount of funding for WIF grantees is linked to the availability and quality of existing evaluation evidence supporting the proposed program.

Therefore, WIB staff developed a Request for Proposals (RFP) #10520, soliciting proposals from qualified organizations to provide independent, third-party evaluation services in support of the Monterey County EDD/WIB's "Youth Ambassadors for Peace" project for an amount not to exceed \$450,000. The purpose of RFP #10520 was to solicit an agency to oversee and implement a comprehensive, rigorous, multi-year evaluation of the "Youth Ambassadors for Peace" project during the period of March 15, 2015 through September 30, 2019, as a contracted evaluator.

DISCUSSION:

RFP #10520 was released to the public on January 8, 2015 with a closing date of February 6, 2015. The County's Contracts and Purchasing and WIB staff conducted a mandatory bidder's conference for RFP #10520 on January 26, 2015 to include a question and answer process with prospective bidders. Bidders were allowed to join the mandatory bidder's conference via teleconference. Answers to the questions were posted on the Contracts and Purchasing solicitation website throughout the open bidding process.

Four (4) proposals were received by the submission deadline. The Contracts and Purchasing office reviewed all proposals for compliance and concluded that all passed the proposal format and specification requirements. The proposals were distributed to the Selection Committee on February 9, 2015 for their reading and evaluation. On February 13, 2015 the Selection Committee convened to conduct a thorough review of the proposals, budget, and demonstrated performance, and finalize the scores. Bidder interviews were scheduled to give the Selection Committee an opportunity to ask follow up questions to the proposals, as needed.

The Selection Committee panel evaluated all proposals in strict accordance with the evaluation criteria set forth in the RFP #10520. The proposal that received the panel's highest score was Social Policy Research Associates (SPR) based upon its technical approach, administrative and fiscal capacity, qualifications and past experience, planning and project management, and overall budget.

On February 18, 2015, the EDD/WIB's Executive Committee considered and approved the Selection Committee's funding recommendation to subcontract with SPR to provide independent, third-party evaluation services in support of the Monterey County EDD/WIB's "Youth Ambassadors for Peace" project for an amount not to exceed \$449,996, for the period of March 15, 2015 through September 30, 2019.

The RFP funding recommendation was based on SPR's extensive multi-year evaluation experience working with youth related programs under a variety of DOL funding streams, including WIF grant funded projects, YouthBuild, and other youth offender related grants. Of the four proposals received, only two expressed experience working with youth-SPR and Resource Development Associates (RDA). This narrowed the selection of proposals to two due to the nature and design of the "Youth Ambassadors for Peace" program's focus on youth. While RDA's proposal highlighted their expertise in evaluating programs and policies for at-risk and justice-involved youth, SPR's proposal was ranked higher because it highlighted their substantial qualifications and vast experience with evaluating interventions focused on youth who are similar to those served through the "Youth Ambassadors for Peace" project, including disadvantaged youth involved in gangs and crime, youth offenders, and other at-risk youth. Furthermore, the Selection Committee unanimously agreed that SPR's proposal was well laid out, easy to understand, and aligned with the scope of work and evaluation criteria, compared to the other proposals. Additionally, SPR's proposal articulated multiple-year project experience in evaluating school districts to reduce youth involvement in gangs and violent crimes and how SPR was able to overcome obstacles working with school districts by working closely with the school and program staff. SPR's proposal also clearly articulated how they plan to engage with youth participants to record interviews and discussions as part of the implementation study, and how youth will be paid with stipends to collect data for the evaluation.

In terms of overall experience in analysis and reporting, SPR has conducted over 100 evaluations for the Department of Labor, Department of Justice, Department of Education, Housing and Urban Development, state and local workforce investment boards, and local and national foundations. This includes 120 written reports, papers and publications.

In terms of administrative and fiscal capacity, SPR's accounting system, internal controls, and cost accumulation system was the only one reviewed by an independent auditing firm, compared to the other proposals. The audits concluded SPR has never been involved in any legal concerns regarding its business practices, has never had any material findings from any of its annual audits and reviews, and has never had any concerns with credit or credit default.

At the request of the EDD/WIB's Executive Committee, WIB staff called three professional references to solicit input about their overall satisfaction of SPR's performance with providing evaluation services. All references were very satisfied with SPR's work and highly recommended SPR as an unbiased and thorough evaluator of publicly funded programs. A reference from DOL stated that SPR is one of the firms that DOL considers top notch because SPR takes pride in completing their projects on time, of very high quality, and within budget.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

SPR concurs with the WIB recommended approval of the proposed contract. County Counsel has reviewed the proposed contract with SPR and attachments as to form.

FINANCING:

The WIF grant funds utilized will be for \$449,996 and are budgeted in Fund 21, Appropriations Unit DEO 016, Unit 8396. There is no impact on the General Fund. Economic Development Department/WIB will reimburse funding to the subcontractor for all allowable WIF activities. The agreement with SPR will be structured to provide that it prepares and submits reports and claims that meet the WIF requirements. Although recapture is a risk with grant awards, given the experience of the partners involved in the program opportunity, risk is minimal and local WIA funds would be used if expenditures were denied due to non-performance.

Prepared by:

Approved by:

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ATTACHMENTS:

WIF Third Party Evaluation Services Subcontract with Social Policy Research Associates
Original on file with the Clerk to the Board's Office