



City of Orange

Legislation Text

File #: 22-0446, Version: 1

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

FROM: Rob Houston, City Manager

1. SUBJECT

Request for Proposal No. 22-23.06 for grant writing and legislative advocacy services.

2. SUMMARY

A Request for Proposal to contract with a firm or firms to provide grant writing and legislative advocacy services to the City.

3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

Approve Request for Proposal No. 22-23.06 for grant writing and legislative advocacy services.

4. FISCAL IMPACT

None.

5. STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Goal 2: Be a fiscally healthy community

b: Analyze future fiscal needs and potential revenue opportunities.

6. DISCUSSION AND BACKGROUND

Every year, the state and federal governments consider dozens of bills that directly affect the City of Orange. These bills have a range of effects including proscribing local authority, imposing unfunded mandates, providing grant funds to achieve policy goals, and changing regulations. While the City has been successful in receiving regional, state and federal grants in the past, there are numerous grants that the City may be unaware of or that require significant staff time to prepare and manage.

The City has historically tracked legislative activities and responded to grant opportunities internally. In August 2021, the City Council directed staff to join the League of California Cities (League) and the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). These two organizations provide extensive resources to track and analyze legislation, advocate on behalf of cities and the region, and alert us to grant opportunities.

In addition to membership in the League and SCAG, most Orange County cities also contract with firms for professional support with legislative advocacy and grant writing. These services augment existing staff resources to ensure that the City effectively communicates its legislative priorities and pursues grant funding. These services generally fall into three categories:

- State Advocacy
 - Create the City's Legislative Platform
 - Attend hearings and coordinate meetings
 - Provide reports on legislation status
 - Advocate for the City's position on legislation and regulatory issues
- Federal Advocacy
 - Same as State Advocacy, but at the federal level
- Grant Writing
 - Identify priority funding areas
 - Identify funding opportunities at the federal, state, foundation, and regional level
 - Provide grant writing and submission services
 - Manage grants awarded to the City as needed

There are firms that provide all three of these services and others that specialize in just one of them. Depending on the City's needs and scope of services, the cost can be a flat monthly rate, or services provided on an as-needed basis with negotiated rates for staff and other costs.

Request for Proposal

At its meeting on July 12, 2022, the City Council directed staff to develop a Request for Proposal (RFP) for these services. The RFP process allows staff to evaluate the potential service providers and present a recommendation for City Council consideration. The proposed RFP includes three components: state advocacy, federal advocacy, and grant writing services. Respondents may submit a proposal for one, two, or three components, and each component will be evaluated separately. The RFP requires that the cost proposal be a monthly retainer fee however, there is flexibility to propose additional services, and staff is in discussions with potential vendors to see if they would be open to charging for services on an hourly basis.

As part of the process of preparing the RFP, staff reached out to other Orange County cities to learn more about their experience with legislative advocacy and grant writing services. Those cities that contract for these services report that their experience is overwhelmingly positive, and that the services are a cost-effective way to provide expert support in these two areas. Cities typically pay a set monthly cost for the services provided, although the proposed RFP allows firms to list possible additional services on an as-needed basis.

Staff also inquired about how other cities manage these consultant services. All the contacted cities report that they are managed by an employee in the City Manager's Office as one of their duties. Depending on the size of the city and the scope of the legislative and grant writing program, the assigned staff member spends approximately 20%-30% of their time managing these programs.

Staff recommends approving the RFP to solicit proposals for legislative advocacy and grant writing services. If approved, the proposed timeline would allow for staff to present a recommendation at the October 11, 2022 City Council meeting.

7. ATTACHMENT

- Request for Proposal No. 22-23.06