

BOARD MEETING DATE: December 6, 2024

AGENDA NO. 7

PROPOSAL: Execute Contract(s) for Legislative Representation in Washington, D.C.

SYNOPSIS: On June 7, 2024, the Board approved the release of an RFP to solicit proposals for legislative representation and consulting services for South Coast AQMD in Washington, D.C. for 2025. Seven proposals were received and qualified candidates were interviewed by the Legislative Committee on October 11, 2024. Based on the interviews, the Legislative Committee selected Cassidy & Associates, Kadesh & Associates, and Carmen Group. This action is to authorize the Chair to execute contract(s) with Cassidy & Associates for \$240,000, Kadesh & Associates for \$233,152, and Carmen Group for \$222,090 for legislative representation in Washington, D.C. for one year, beginning on January 15, 2025 with an option to renew up to two one-year renewals, upon satisfactory performance, subsequent budgets and upon approval of the Board.

COMMITTEE: Legislative, November 8, 2024; Recommended for Approval

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

Authorize the Chair to execute contracts in an amount not to exceed \$695,242 for legislative representation and consulting services in Washington, D.C. for one year beginning on January 15, 2025, with an option for up to two one-year renewals, contingent on satisfactory performance and approval of subsequent budgets, upon approval of the Board:

- a. Cassidy & Associates in an amount of \$240,000;
- b. Kadesh & Associates in an amount of \$233,152; and
- c. Carmen Group in an amount of \$222,090.

Wayne Natri
Executive Officer

Background

The current contracts for legislative representation in Washington, D.C. expire on January 14, 2025. Following Board approval on June 7, 2024, staff released RFP #P2024-10 to solicit proposals for legislative representation and consulting services for South Coast AQMD in Washington, D.C.

As one of the largest air quality regulatory agencies in the United States and a leader in air quality innovations, South Coast AQMD is an important contributor to national policymaking discussions relevant to air quality-related issues.

It is critical for South Coast AQMD to have a consistent and actively engaged presence in Washington, D.C. to advocate for policies and funding to support attainment of federal standards under the Clean Air Act. South Coast AQMD is also a leader in air quality issues and contributor to national policymaking discussions. This effort includes policy development for air quality-related legislation, Clean Air Act implementation, subvention funding and special grants, and other issues. Therefore, it is appropriate to continue direct federal representation to advocate for South Coast AQMD in support of Governing Board priorities in Washington, D.C.

The 2025 South Coast AQMD Federal Legislative Guiding Principles and Policy Priorities will be focused on policy and funding, especially for mobile sources impacting the South Coast region. The federal representatives will be required to engage with the Administration, Congress, industry, environment and health organizations and other stakeholders.

Outreach

In accordance with South Coast AQMD's Procurement Policy and Procedure, a public notice advertising the RFP and inviting bids was published in the Los Angeles Times, the Orange County Register, the San Bernardino Sun, the Riverside County Press Enterprise, and Washington Post newspapers to leverage the most cost-effective method of outreach.

Additionally, to notify as many potential bidders as possible, notification letters were emailed to state and federal legislative caucuses, release of the RFP was posted on social media (LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook), and placed on South Coast AQMD's website (<http://www.aqmd.gov>) where it can be viewed by making the selection "Grants & Bids."

Bid Evaluation

Seven proposals were received in response to the RFP. The proposals were evaluated and scored by a three-member evaluation panel, including one South Coast AQMD Executive, who was female and Asian-American; one South Coast AQMD Manager, who was male and Latino; and one Director for science and technology from an

educational institution, who was female and Caucasian. Five proposals were considered technically qualified and forwarded to the Legislative Committee for consideration. The attached matrix presents the scores and total proposal costs for the firms interviewed by the Legislative Committee.

On October 11, 2024, the Legislative Committee interviewed the five qualifying firms and reviewed the written materials submitted as part of the proposals. Based on the interviews, the Legislative Committee recommends to the Board the selection of the following firms: Cassidy & Associates for \$240,000, Kadesh & Associates for \$233,152, and Carmen Group for \$222,090.

Resource Impacts

Funding for these contracts is available in the Legislative, Public Affairs & Media FY 2024-25 Budget. Funding for the two optional one-year extensions is contingent upon Board approval for the respective fiscal years.

RFP # P2024-10 Scores and Costs Matrix for Qualifying Firms

Firm Name	Technical Score	Cost Scores	Additional Points	Total Scores	Cost
Balance Public Relations & Strategic Solutions	57.0	28.6	10	95.6	\$232,575/year
Carmen Group	66.0	30	12	108.0	\$222,090/year
Cassidy & Associates	68.7	27.6	0	96.3	\$240,000/year
Ferox Strategies	57.0	26.6	12	95.6	\$247,200/year
Kadesh & Associates	69.0	27.6	10	106.6	\$233,152 - 1 st year \$239,834 - 2 nd year \$247,029 - 3 rd year Avg. \$240,005