



Suspension of Competition Acquisition Request

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1. Fully describe the product(s) and/or service(s) being requested.
The Internal Services Department, Information Technology division (ISD-IT) is requesting a Board agreement with Tone Consulting Group LLC (TCG) for broadband consulting and grant management services.
2. Identify the selected vendor and contact person; include the address, phone number and e-mail address for each.
Tone Consulting Group LLC
3575 Prescott Ave
Clovis, CA 93619
Julie Tone, CEO
559-708-2794
juliet@toneconsultinggroup.org
3. What is the total cost of the acquisition? If an agreement, state the total cost of the initial term and the amounts for potential renewal terms.
The total cost for the initial two-year base term will be \$722,000. If the agreement is extended for its optional one-year extension, unspent funding from the Initial Term will roll over to the subsequent term.
4. Identify the unique qualities and/or capabilities of the service(s) and/or product(s) that qualify this as a Suspension of Competition acquisition.
TCG is comprised of a team of dedicated experts who specialize in providing tailored, strategic consulting services for broadband technology grants. As a local vendor, TCG is knowledgeable about local communities and internet service providers (ISPs) throughout the County. TCG is also knowledgeable about grant funding and can support the County in identifying, applying for, securing, and managing various broadband grants. One such existing grant that was awarded to the County is the Local Agency Technical Assistance (LATA), in which TCG was specifically referenced as the consulting agency to support the County with achieving broadband-related deliverables. If the County were to engage another contractor for broadband consultation services, the County would be ineligible to receive grant reimbursement for that contractor.
5. Identify from Administrative Policy #34 what circumstances constitute a Suspension of Competition.
☐ In an emergency when goods or services are immediately necessary for the preservation of the public health, welfare, or safety, or for the protection of County property.
☐ When the contract is with a federal, state, or local governmental agency.
☐ When the department head, with the concurrence of the Purchasing Agent, finds that the cost of preparing and administering a competitive bidding process in a particular case will equal or exceed the estimated contract amount or \$5,000 whichever is more.
☐ When a contract provides only for payment of per diem and travel expenses and there is to be no payment for services rendered.
☐ When obtaining the services of expert witnesses for litigation or special counsel to assist the County.
☒ When in unusual or extraordinary circumstances, the Board of Supervisors or the Purchasing Agent/Purchasing Manager determines that the best interests of the County would be served by not securing competitive bids or issuing a request for proposal.
6. Explain why the unique qualities and/or capabilities described above are essential to your department.
Many federal and state broadband grant opportunities are currently accepting applications, and more will begin accepting applications in the near future. The currently and soon-to-be available grant funding opportunities will help the County expand fast and reliable internet access to priority underserved and unserved regions and will have long-lasting positive impacts to the County and its residents. TCG's extensive knowledge of broadband technologies, experience with local ISP operations, and grant application experience will be crucial to supporting the County in submitting grant applications timely, securing broadband grant funding, complying with grant reporting requirements, and developing and implementing the County's strategic broadband plan.
TCG has provided broadband guidance and grant management support to the County since May 2023. TCG was also identified as a partner in the County's LATA grant, with funds specifically allocated to TCG for their work with the County for LATA-related activities and deliverables.
7. Provide a comprehensive explanation of the research done to verify that the recommended vendor is the only vendor with the unique qualities and/or capabilities stated above. Include a list of all other vendors contacted, what they were asked, and their responses.
The County previously secured an agreement with TCG for broadband and grant consulting services in May 2023 through a suspension of competition (procurement agreement #P-23-201). As part of that suspension request, the County researched other grant consultants but found that TCG was the only vendor who possessed the unique knowledge and technical expertise to meet the grant application deadlines at that time. Other vendors identified included Rural Innovation Strategies (RIS), who provides grant writing services and broadband

consulting services with a principal place of business in Hartland, Vermont. Another vendor identified was Learn Design Apply (LDA), who specializes in general grant writing with a principal place of business in Florida. Grant Management Associates, another vendor identified during the County's research, provides grant writing and management services with a principal place of business in Durham, California.

Because TCG is named as a sub-recipient within the County's LATA application, funds assigned to TCG cannot be absorbed or allocated elsewhere. Therefore, the Department is requesting to suspend the competitive bidding process in order to not lose out on awarded funding.

ahlayang 10/4/2024 9:38:15 AM

Requested By:

Senior Administrative
Analyst

Title

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I approve this request to suspend competition for the service(s) and/or product(s) identified herein.

ehill 10/4/2024 12:49:37 PM

Department Head Signature

[ Sign] Double click!

rblackburn 10/4/2024 3:37:23 PM

Purchasing Manager Signature

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