RFP RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS
WATERSHED CONSERVATION AUTHORITY (WCA)

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT, MARKETING, AND COMMUNICATION SERVICES
RFP No: WCA26514RFP

I. Proposal requirements, forms & tax documentation (4 questions)

Q1. Which tax form is required from each type of proposer—IRS Form W-9, W-4, or an alternative form for foreign entities—and which tax, registration, and supporting documents are required at proposal submission versus only after selection or award?

A1. The proposer must submit an IRS Form W-9 Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification with the proposal. A W-9 is not required to be submitted for subconsultants. Any other tax or related documents required after award may be requested.

Q2. Please identify every required certification, acknowledgment, addendum form, and other proposal attachment, including whether small-business or disadvantaged-business certifications receive evaluation preference, participation credit, or affect subcontracting requirements.

A2. Small business certification or other documents not listed on the Proposal Submission Checklist on page 20 are not required. Preference points are not being offered with this bidding opportunity.

Q3. How is the proposal page limit calculated, including whether the cover letter, table of contents, cost proposal, resumes, and appendices count; and what formatting, file-size, submission, or proposal-validity standards apply?

A3. Entities (individuals or firms) interested in providing professional services for this contracting opportunity shall submit the following information in 8.5” x 11” format (12-point Arial font), one-inch (1”) margins with each of the numbered sections below addressed and collated in a separate tab. The Proposal should include a table of contents with use of tabs or some type of divider system to clearly separate out the different parts of the Proposal. Please limit the proposal to twenty-five (25) pages (Section 6.2.I). Proposal must be in one, unprotected file as a PDF.

Proposal shall provide straightforward and concise descriptions of consultant/firm's ability to satisfy the requirements of this RFP. Consultants shall ensure that their written responses completely and accurately indicate how they meet each criterion listed in Section 8.2. Evaluation Criteria. All documents contained in the Proposal shall have original or electronically certified signatures (i.e., DocuSign AdobeSign) and shall be signed by a person authorized to bind the proposing consultant. Proposals not including the proper required attachments or original signatures shall be deemed non-responsive. A non-responsive Proposal is one that does not meet one or more of the minimum requirements.

Q4. What secure submission method should proposers use to provide the required tax form?

A4. Please submit the tax form with the Proposal.

II. Budget, pricing & third-party costs (5 questions)

Q5. For the as-needed contract, what pricing basis should proposers use: a sample task assignment, assumed annual hours, an illustrative allocation across Tasks 1–8, or the full $250,000 maximum? What level of annual utilization or spending does WCA anticipate?

A5. Vendors must submit a detailed cost proposal identifying hourly rates by labor category, proposed project manager and key personnel, estimated hours and fees by task, subcontractor fees (if applicable), anticipated reimbursable expenses, third-party costs, and assumptions or exclusions. The maximum compensation for the initial one-year term is $250,000. The contract is as-needed, and WCA does not guarantee a minimum amount of work or expenditure. The RFP does not establish a guaranteed annual spending amount.

Proposers are encouraged to submit cost-effective solutions and are not required to exhaust the entire budget.

Q6. Does the $250,000 ceiling include all third-party and pass-through costs—paid media, printing, translation/interpretation, photography/video, venues, events, travel, taxes, vendor fees, and production—or will any of these be separately funded? Should proposers separately identify professional fees, markups, administrative/coordination costs, and reimbursables?

A6. Yes. The $250,000 maximum compensation for the initial one-year term includes authorized professional fees and approved reimbursable expenses. The cost proposal must identify anticipated expenses, including printing, translation, interpretation, media production, advertising, and other third-party costs. Such expenses require prior written authorization, and the consultant may not exceed the approved contract amount or task budget without written authorization and any required contract amendment.

Q7. How will the cost component be evaluated to ensure comparable scoring when proposers make different assumptions about hours, utilization, task mix, and third-party expenses? Is there a required pricing template or allocation format?

A7. Information requested is required to support the reasonableness of your quotation. Cost must have a detailed breakdown showing how the costs were determined. The breakdown must include the following:

a) Proposer shall provide their Cost Proposal for performing the required services and shall include all applicable taxes and other expenses, such as all travel expenses, copying, postage, and other appropriate expenses. Cost proposal must include hourly rates, outside business hours rate, onsite response time, remote support, emergency calls, and any travel charges. Include a total cost for your contracted services on an annual basis.
b) A proposed cost/budget must be included for each Service.
c) For calculation purposes, Proposer shall use the below listed guidelines for costing travel, expenses, and deliverables. No separate or additional billings will be considered for reimbursement without written permission from the RMC.

- Transportation: Travel expenses and per diem directly related to the contract services shall be included in direct costs. Such costs shall not exceed the rates paid to the State's non-represented/excluded employees (CCR Title 2, Section 599.619). For reference, see "Travel Reimbursements at https://www.calhr.ca.gov/employees/pages/travel-reimbursements.aspx.
- Hourly Rates: Provide hourly billing rates for staff and subcontractors as follows
- Category of personnel, rate per hour, and total cost for each category of personnel.
- Identification of Subcontractor(s) Costs: Provide a listing of proposed subcontractors and associated fees (i.e., admin mark-up).

Q8. What rate schedule should cover the initial term and option years, and may hourly rates increase during the two one-year extensions? If so, what adjustment method or cap applies?

A8. Proposals must include a comprehensive rate schedule that covers both the initial term and all option years. If applicable, hourly rates may increase during the two one-year extensions, provided that the proposal explicitly outlines the specific adjustment method (such as the Consumer Price Index, or CPI) or details a pre-defined percentage cap that will apply to those increases.

Q9. What are the standard invoice, payment, and reimbursement procedures, including payment timing, treatment of substantial preapproved third-party expenses, advance funding, direct vendor payment, procurement/coordination costs, and supporting documentation/reconciliation?

A9. All services performed under the agreement shall be identified by the Contractor on the invoiced accordingly. All invoices must include any and all necessary receipts or confirmation for every service performed including summary of deliverable, whenever applicable. Each invoice shall list each service as a separate line item and shall include the minimum requirements listed within this Section. Any invoices received that do not include the minimum requirements below shall not be reimbursed.

Properly submitted, undisputed invoices are typically paid within Thirty (30) to Forty-Five (45) days of receipt.

As the WCA is primarily supported with State and local assistance, advance funding is not allowed. Services will be reimbursed in arrears.

III. Scope, workload & priorities (4 questions)

Q10. What are WCA's highest-priority communications projects, campaigns, and deliverables for the first 30–90 days and the first contract year, and is an anticipated project calendar or implementation schedule available?

A10. WCA's objectives include increasing public awareness of its mission, projects, programs, and accomplishments; developing a coordinated communications and marketing strategy; expanding public engagement; strengthening stakeholder relationships; and improving public-facing communications. Within 30 calendar days after contract commencement, the consultant must submit the initial deliverables listed in Section 3.1, including a communications assessment, draft one-year communications and marketing plan, proposed annual work plan and initial content calendar, public engagement framework, and project management and reporting protocol.

Q11. Can WCA provide estimated annual quantities or historical volumes for each service area, including meetings, events, campaigns, newsletters, publications, social content, press materials, graphic design, website updates, photography, and video?

A11. The RFP does not establish fixed annual quantities for events, meetings, newsletters, social media posts, videos, or other communications materials. Services will be requested on an as-needed basis according to WCA's program needs, available funding, and project schedules.

Q12. Who currently or most recently provides these services, what was the prior scope and approximate contract/expenditure level, and what changes or improvements does WCA seek? Are incumbent providers eligible to compete?

A12. The RFP does not identify the current communications service provider, previous contract amount, or previous contract scope. The selected consultant will review existing communications materials, branding, website content, social media channels, publications, and outreach practices as part of the initial communications assessment.

Q13. Does WCA envision a steady week-to-week communications assignment or work organized around individual projects and campaigns? Would WCA welcome an initial audience-research or brand-position analysis phase that could change the proposed emphasis and spending across the eight tasks?

A13. The contract will operate on an as-needed basis. WCA may request individual services or integrated communications campaigns depending on program needs, available funding, and project schedules. The consultant will conduct an initial assessment of WCA's existing communications practices and develop a one-year communications and marketing plan.

IV. Eligibility, qualifications & team structure (5 questions)

Q14. Must a proposer cover all Tasks 1–8, or may a firm or specialist propose for selected tasks only, including a specialist-led team that uses subcontractors for complementary services?

A14. The contract will operate on an as-needed basis. WCA may request individual services or integrated communications campaigns depending on program needs, available funding, and project schedules. The consultant will conduct an initial assessment of WCA's existing communications practices and develop a one-year communications and marketing plan.

Subcontractor(s) and their associated fees must be clearly identified in the Proposal.

Q15. May out-of-state or foreign firms serve as the prime contractor, and what California registrations, business filings, tax documentation, or other qualifications are required—and by what milestone (proposal, selection, or contract execution)?

A15. The prime contractor do not have to be located in California; however, they must be eligible to provide services in the State of California at the time of Proposal submission and if selected for award, for the life of the contract.

Q16. What are WCA's requirements for subcontractors, independent consultants, specialist-led teams, and individual consultants? Must the prime demonstrate every task in-house, and may proposed work samples and references come from key personnel, founding companies, or subcontractors?

A16. Vendors may identify subcontractors and specialized service providers in their proposals. Subcontractors must be identified and are subject to applicable WCA approval requirements. The prime consultant remains responsible for subcontractor performance and compliance. The RFP requests a proposed approach to all requested services, Tasks 1–8; it does not expressly state that proposals may be limited to selected tasks only. Proposals must include at least three professional references for comparable assignments.

Q17. Does WCA anticipate making one comprehensive award or multiple awards for different specialties?

A17. WCA reserves the right to award to one or more individuals or organizations.

Q18. Does WCA maintain a list of interested prime proposers or a process for specialist subcontractors to connect with firms seeking teaming partners? If so, how may interested specialists participate?

A18. The RFP does not establish a vendor matchmaking program or provide a list of companies seeking subcontractors. Vendors are responsible for identifying potential subcontractors and establishing their proposed project teams.

V. Public engagement, language access & onsite delivery (3 questions)

Q19. Which audiences, underserved communities, languages, and geographic areas are priorities? What translation, interpretation, cultural adaptation, captioning, and accessibility standards or certifications will be required?

A19. Interpretation service providers may be identified as subcontractors when included as part of a proposed project team. Subcontractors must be identified in the proposal and are subject to applicable WCA approval requirements. The prime consultant remains responsible for subcontractor performance and compliance.

Q20. Will WCA provide existing stakeholder, community-based organization, and partner contact lists, along with relevant plans, data, photos, videos, templates, and other background materials? Or should the consultant conduct new research and build these relationships?

A20. The consultant will work with WCA to identify relevant community stakeholders, organizations, residents, and partner agencies. Outreach activities should account for underserved communities and populations that may face barriers to participation. The RFP does not identify specific priority languages or a predetermined list of target communities.

Q21. How many public meetings, workshops, community events, and onsite assignments are expected, what geographic coverage is required, and what proportion of work is expected to be in person versus virtual? Are evening/weekend support, urgent response, local staffing, or travel reimbursements anticipated?

A21. The consultant may be required to support public meetings, workshops, listening sessions, community presentations, and WCA-sponsored or supported events. Onsite coordination and logistical support will be provided when requested by WCA. The RFP does not establish a fixed number of annual events or a specific in-person attendance schedule.

VI. Paid media & advertising operations (3 questions)

Q22. What paid media channels, geographic targeting, audiences, campaign types, and approximate spending levels are anticipated? Can WCA share prior campaign activity, media expenditures, and performance results?

A22. The maximum contract amount for the initial one-year term is $250,000, inclusive of authorized professional fees and approved reimbursable expenses. WCA has not specified particular paid advertising channels, campaign types, geographic targeting, audiences, or anticipated advertising expenditures. Any paid advertising or media-related expenses must be identified in the cost proposal and are subject to prior written authorization by WCA.

Q23. How will paid media be planned and authorized—through an annual media plan, individual campaign approvals, or both—and what approval lead times, vendor restrictions, existing media agreements, or preferred public-service rates apply?

A23. Paid advertising, promotional purchases, printing, and other third-party expenses require prior written authorization from WCA. The consultant will coordinate campaign concepts, implementation plans, and related activities with WCA staff. The RFP does not specify whether advertising plans will be approved annually or individually for each campaign. Any applicable approval requirements will be coordinated with WCA.

Q24. What advertising accounts, analytics, tracking tools, and historical performance data will be available to the consultant, and who will manage campaign setup, placement, reporting, and optimization?

A24. The RFP does not specify which advertising accounts, analytics platforms, tracking tools, or historical performance data will be made available to the consultant. Access to these resources and responsibilities for campaign setup, placement, reporting, and optimization will be coordinated with WCA as needed.

VII. Digital platforms, brand & technology (3 questions)

Q25. What website, CMS, social media, newsletter, and analytics platforms are currently used; what work is expected (content updates, development, maintenance, hosting, security, accessibility); and who will control posting and account access?

A25. The consultant will support website content development, website updates, monthly social media content calendars, social media posts, graphics, captions, and other digital materials. The consultant shall not publish content, modify website functionality, or officially respond to public inquiries without WCA authorization. The RFP does not identify the specific website management system or social media platforms currently used by WCA.

Q26. Will WCA provide brand guidelines, templates, style guides, approved assets, and access to existing digital accounts and systems after award?

A26. The consultant will review existing WCA branding and communications materials and develop or maintain approved graphic templates and design standards. WCA branding and logos must be used in accordance with Authority direction. Any proposed changes to established branding require prior written approval.

Q27. May the consultant use AI-assisted tools for drafting, editing, design, planning, and production? What prior approvals, platform restrictions, data-handling, disclosure, intellectual-property, and records-retention requirements apply, especially to AI-generated text, images, audio, or video?

A27. The State of California seeks to realize the potential benefits of GenAI through the development and deployment of GenAI, while balancing the risks of these technologies.

Bidder/Offeror must notify the State in writing if it: (1) intends to provide GenAI as a deliverable to the State; or (2) intends to utilize GenAI, including GenAI from third parties, to complete all or a portion of any deliverable that materially impacts: (i) functionality of a State system, (ii) risk to the State, or (iii) Contract performance. For avoidance of doubt, the term "materially impacts" shall have the meaning set forth in State Administrative Manual (SAM) 4986.2.

Failure to report GenAI to the State may result in disqualification. The State reserves its right to seek any and all relief it may be entitled to as a result of such non-disclosure.

Upon notification by a Bidder/Offeror of GenAI as required, the State reserves the right to incorporate GenAI Special Provisions into the final contract or reject bids/offers that present an unacceptable level of risk to the State.

Government Code 11549.64 defines “Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)” as an artificial intelligence system that can generate derived synthetic content, including text, images, video, and audio that emulates the structure and characteristics of the system’s training data.

VIII. Insurance, contract & compliance terms (3 questions)

Q28. What insurance policies and minimum coverage limits are required, including general liability, automobile, workers’ compensation/employer’s liability, and professional liability? Is an exemption declaration acceptable where work is performed by principals and subcontractors?

A28. **Link to Exhibit A.** Please see page 5 of Exhibit A Section 8.2, Agreement for Consultant Services template.

Q29. Can WCA provide the proposed professional services agreement or sample contract, including indemnification, payment, records retention, termination, and other standard terms?

A29. Please see **Exhibit A** Section 8.2, Agreement for Consultant Services template.

Q30. Will grant-funded work carry additional federal or state contract, reporting, procurement, or compliance requirements?

A30. Please see **Exhibit A** Section 8.2, Agreement for Consultant Services template, for applicable contract terms and requirements. Any additional federal or state requirements associated with grant-funded work will be addressed as applicable.

Q31. For proposed drone aerials of WCA project sites, would WCA require aviation/UAS liability coverage or site-specific permissions?

A31. The consultant must obtain applicable permissions and releases for photography and videography assignments and comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws and the insurance requirements established in the final agreement. The RFP does not separately specify drone operating permissions or insurance limits.

IX. Governance, review & work-product ownership (4 questions)

Q32. Who will serve as WCA’s project manager and decision-maker, how many reviewers will be involved, and what review stages, consolidated-feedback process, turnaround times, and revision rounds should proposers assume?

A32. The authorized authority to enter into an agreement is the Executive Officer or their designee.

Q33. Are initial planning, assessment, or 30-day deliverables automatically authorized at contract commencement, or will each assignment require a separate task authorization and funding approval?

A33. The consultant may begin work after the professional services agreement has been properly executed and all required approvals have been obtained. All assignments must be authorized in writing by WCA. The consultant must not begin unauthorized work or incur expenses without the required written approval. Initial planning and assessment activities are included in the required initial deliverables.

Q34. May multiple task assignments run concurrently, and how will WCA confirm availability, schedules, and priorities before authorizing work?

A34. The consultant may be requested to provide individual services or integrated communications campaigns depending on WCA's program needs, available funding, and project schedules. The designated project manager will coordinate assignments, manage schedules, track budgets, and provide regular updates to WCA staff.

Q35. Who owns final deliverables, raw footage, photographs, source files, and other work product? May the consultant retain rights to preexisting tools/templates, and how should third-party asset licenses be handled?

A35. Ownership and permitted use of final deliverables, editable files, photographs, video footage, design assets, and pre-existing materials will be specified in the final professional services agreement. The consultant must identify any third-party licensing restrictions before incorporating restricted materials into deliverables.

X. Procurement schedule & solicitation process (4 questions)

Q36. Please confirm the controlling procurement schedule, particularly the notice-of-intent-to-award date currently shown as November 2, 2026, which precedes the November 12 proposal deadline, and confirm the timing of question responses and interviews.

A36. An addendum was posted on October 26, 2026, which corrected the Notice of Intent to Award date from November 2, 2026, to November 24, 2026.

Q37. Please confirm that the solicitation is an RFP (rather than RFQ as labeled on the cover) and identify the applicable cost-scoring provision.

A37. An addendum was posted on October 26, 2026, to clarify that the bidding opportunity is an RFP.

Q38. Would WCA consider extending the proposal deadline because it falls immediately after a holiday?

A38. The current proposal submission deadline is Thursday, November 12, 2026. WCA reserves the right to modify the procurement schedule by written notice. Any extension will be communicated through an official written addendum or notice on the WCA website.

Q39. Will interviews be held in person or virtually, and which members of the proposed team should attend?

A39. Interviews will be conducted in person. Principals of the proposed team are encouraged to attend. The RFP specifies on page 16 that the interview date, if required, is Thursday, November 19, 2026.