




MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Jessica King, Director 
Communications and Public Information Office

DATE: November 18, 2022

SUBJECT: **Contracts for Public Engagement Services, Agenda Item #15**

The purpose of this memo is to provide information regarding Item #15 on the December 1, 2022 Council Agenda regarding contracts to support community engagement services.

Background. City departments work diligently to ensure Austinites are provided with avenues to offer valuable feedback on City projects and topics that are important to them. Many City reports recommend engagement activities that are community centered with values founded on equity and inclusion practices. Reports such as Imagine Austin, the Austin Strategic Direction 2023, the Task Force on Community Engagement Final Report, the Mayor's Task Force on Institutional Racism and Systemic Inequities, and various Quality of Life reports all call for a variety of strategies that empower community participation and engagement. Additionally, as the organization continues returning to full operations, department community engagement services are challenged with providing both virtual and in-person engagement opportunities, also known as hybrid strategies, which often require additional staff, planning time, and resources. To increase the organization's capacity to offer community centered engagement opportunities to Austinites, the Communications & Public Information Office (CPIO) worked with staff from across the organization to solicit contracts for community engagement services that could be utilized by multiple City departments.

Request for Council Action. Item #15 requests Council authorization to negotiate and execute contracts for five (5) year terms with the following five (5) community engagement vendors:

- Adisa Public Relations (DBA) Adisa Communications (MWDB)
- Austin Community Design and Development Center (DBA) Community Powered Workshop
- Concept Development & Planning, LLC (WDB)
- Raftelis Financial Consultants, Inc. (DBA) Raftelis, and
- Sensis, Inc. (DBA) Sensis Agency, Quijote Corporation (MB)

Contracted services will support City departments with a variety of avenues to engage diverse communities, applying proven community-centered engagement strategies, and effectively facilitating feedback from Austinites or focused stakeholder groups. Services would include meeting facilitation, ambassador coordination, and community engagement support during emergencies and trainings for

community organizing. These contracts will provide an avenue for community members to become vendors and share a collective responsibility to engage. Feedback and gathered information from diverse groups will be used to inform Council, City staff, and the community regarding City policies, programs, and services that matter to Austinites.

Staff Recommendation. Staff recommends approval of Item 15 which will provide City departments with the ability to select from the available vendors for their community engagement needs. Council approval provides staff authority to utilize the contracted services across five vendors for up to \$11.8 million over five years.

If these contracts are not secured, the City's ability to connect and engage with stakeholders that historically have been hard to reach will be significantly limited. Stakeholders impacted would include people of color, immigrants, LGBTQIA+ people, people with a range of disabilities, seniors, and others. Additionally, contracting directly with community engagement service providers rather than as sub-contractors tied to a larger project provides opportunities to reduce costs, streamline engagement planning, and increase productivity.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 512-974-2406 or at jessica.king@austintexas.gov.

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager
Veronica Briseño, Assistant City Manager