



City of Austin

Recommendation for Action

File #: 24-3913, Agenda Item #: 38.

2/29/2024

Posting Language

Authorize negotiation and execution of an amendment to a contract for continued forensic analysis of biological evidence with Southwest Research Institute d/b/a Signature Science LLC, to increase the amount by \$4,000,000 and to extend the term by up to five years for a revised total contract amount not to exceed \$10,469,955.

[Note: This contract is exempt from the City Code Chapter 2-9B (Minority-Owned and Women-Owned Business Enterprise Procurement Program); therefore, no subcontracting goals were established].

Lead Department

Financial Services Department.

Client Department(s)

Forensic Science Department.

Fiscal Note

Funding in the amount of \$559,340 is available from the State of Texas, Office of the Governor, Criminal Justice Division, Evidence Testing Grant Program, Sexual Assault Evidence Testing Project, for the project period September 1, 2023 - August 31, 2024.

Funding in the amount of \$750,000 is available in the Fiscal Year 2023 - 2024 Operating Budget of the Forensic Science Department.

Funding for the remaining contract term is contingent upon funding in future budgets.

Purchasing Language:

Contract Amendment.

Prior Council Action:

February 16, 2017 - Council approved a contract for forensic analysis of biological evidence with Southwest Research Institute d/b/a Signature Science, LLC.

April 25, 2019 - Council approved an amendment for continued forensic analysis of biological evidence with Southwest Research Institute d/b/a Signature Science, LLC.

March 23, 2023 - Council approved an amendment for continued forensic analysis of biological evidence with Southwest Research Institute d/b/a Signature Science, LLC.

For More Information:

Direct questions regarding this Recommendation for Council Action to the Financial Services Department - Central Procurement at: FSDCentralProcurementRCAs@austintexas.gov or 512-974-2500.

Additional Backup Information:

This amendment will provide continued forensic analysis of biological evidence, including deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) sample testing and comparison to suspect DNA identified by the Combined DNA Index System and additional evidence to aid in casework investigations for the Forensic Science Department.

The outsourcing of DNA testing services is needed in order to meet current casework demands. This outsourcing also allows the City to:

- Provide timely response of DNA analysis requests;
- Prevent the accumulation of DNA evidence creating a backlog;
- Reduce risks to the chain of custody and integrity of evidence during transfers;
- Maintain compliance with applicable laws to ensure that sexual assault kits (SAKs) are submitted within 30 days to accredited laboratories with the capacity to analyze them within 90 days;
- Provide expert support for investigators and the Case Management Unit, and
- Provide local, affordable, Texas-licensed DNA analysts for efficient trial preparation and expert testimony.

The current contract expires on August 31, 2024. A delay in approving this amendment could affect the City's ability to meet current DNA caseload demands and the State mandated timeframe for SAKs. Additionally, a delay will impact receipt of a significant portion of the grant funding for Sexual Assault Evidence Testing, and delay investigations and trial preparations that are dependent on DNA evidence.