



Agenda Report

19-386

Agenda Date: 6/25/2019

REPORT TO COUNCIL

SUBJECT

Action on Call No. 19-1 Agreement for Professional Services with Essense Partners, Inc. to Provide Electric Utility Advertising, Marketing, Printing and Communication Services for Silicon Valley Power

BACKGROUND

Independent survey results indicate that customers rank the City's Electric Utility, doing business as Silicon Valley Power (SVP), at or near the top of all California utilities. Satisfaction surveys also show that customers are looking for SVP to increase and enhance communication and information via methods accessible on mobile devices. In addition, survey results show customers prefer to look to their electric utility as a trusted energy advisor to help them navigate the vast amount of information on energy efficiency, renewable energy, electric vehicle, and battery storage technologies.

Maintaining high customer satisfaction, trust and value requires constant effort to provide information and to create regular opportunities for customer engagement. The challenge of meeting our increasingly difficult energy efficiency goals requires competing for customers' attention to raise awareness. To address our communication needs in a changing marketplace, SVP requires specific marketing support that will emphasize new communication approaches in social media and digital messaging, produce crisp and tailored messaging, and deliver a focused sustained effort that proactively leverages available media outlets.

In October 2016, SVP issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for Marketing and Communications Services focused on the electric industry including the assignment of full responsibility for 3rd party printing costs. Essense Partners Inc. (Essense) was selected in this RFP process for its creative design and its extensive work researching utility trends and expertise in developing outreach materials and news articles. On May 9, 2017, the City Council approved a three-year Call Agreement and Call No. 17-1. Under Call No. 17-1, Essense Partners, Inc. undertook a utility centric brand audit and developed a new style guide and updated brand strategy for SVP, as well as began development of new program materials. On June 26, 2018, City Council approved Call 18-1 with Essense Partners, Inc. to continue development of new program materials and expand community outreach materials, aligning them with the City's brand.

DISCUSSION

Under this Call 19-1 (Attachment 1) Essense Partners, Inc. will update program brochures, bill inserts, customer newsletters, and other customer outreach materials to engage customers and increase customer program participation. They will also provide assistance in the research and writing of articles for the utility's blog and newsletters in order to educate customers about utility projects, increase transparency, and continue to reinforce our position with our customers as their "trusted energy advisor". In coordination with City staff, including the City's Director of Communications, Essense Partners will also prepare press releases related to the electric utility

and distribute them to the appropriate media outlets. These services will be completed within the time period beginning on July 1, 2019 and ending on June 30, 2020.

The scope of work of the proposed Call 19-1 includes the following key elements.

- Development of utility bill inserts, quarterly Outlet newsletter, residential & commercial program brochures
- Writing utility press releases, news articles, blog posts, and other copy
- Printing costs
- Case Studies
- SVP Fiber Program materials
- Website Content
- Project Management and Campaign Implementation
- Media Tracking

It should be noted that this effort was being pursued on a separate track from the communication consultant request that was referred to staff, on June 3, 2019, from the Economic Development, Communications and Marketing Committee. After review, staff determined that this consultant specializes in electric and utility marketing and communications and would not be able to provide broader communication services to the City.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This action being considered does not constitute a “project” within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378(a) as it has no potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment.

FISCAL IMPACT

The total cost of the Call 19-1 with Essense Partners will not exceed \$240,000 over a one-year period. Sufficient funds are available in Public Benefits (Resource Planning and Engagement division), Key Accounts, and Fiber (both within Customer Development and Project Management division) programs’ FY 2019/20 operating budget.

COORDINATION

The report has been coordinated with the Finance Department and the City Attorney’s Office.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Public contact was made by posting the Council agenda on the City’s official-notice bulletin board outside City Hall Council Chambers. A complete agenda packet is available on the City’s website and in the City Clerk’s Office at least 72 hours prior to a Regular Meeting and 24 hours prior to a Special Meeting. A hard copy of any agenda report may be requested by contacting the City Clerk’s Office at (408) 615-2220, email clerk@santaclaraca.gov <<mailto:clerk@santaclaraca.gov>> or at the public information desk at any City of Santa Clara public library.

RECOMMENDATION

Approve and authorize the City Manager to execute Call No. 19-1 Agreement for Professional Services with Essense Partners Inc. for Professional Services to Support Marketing, Outreach, Printing and Public Relation Services for Silicon Valley Power.

Reviewed by: Manuel Pineda, Interim Chief Electric Utility Officer

Approved by: Deanna J. Santana, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. Call 19-1 with Essense Partners