



**August 19, 2020**

**ACTION ITEM**

**SUBJECT: MASS MEDIA COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS CONTRACT**

**Strategic Plan Priority Area I: Child Health**

**Goal:** All children thrive by achieving optimal health prenatal through age 5.

**SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE**

Staff is seeking approval to release a Request for Proposal (RFP) for up to \$67 million from the Mass Media Communication account for a new mass media and public relations contract designed to reach California's diverse populations and educate all California parents and caregivers about the healthy development of children ages 0 to 5. The RFP will require applicants to create a statewide public relations (PR) campaign to influence public and policy maker awareness around children's issues with extra focus on California's persistently poor and hard-to-reach families.

The new contract will expand on the Talk. Read. Sing.® message and go beyond by incorporating other vital messaging points such as early literacy, home visiting, child health and nutrition, dual language learners, etc. The contract will develop messaging methods that dive deeper into communities where general marketing messaging may not be fully penetrating.

Using the contractor's expertise and experience in reaching culturally diverse populations, through market analysis reports, and community partner engagement and partnerships, the campaigns will find new ways of connecting with populations that have been hard to reach throughout each region in California.

These may include the following communities:

- Black
- Native American
- Latinx
- Asian American Pacific Islander

- Additional Needs (high promise children)
- Persistently Poor
- Homeless
- Rural
- Farm Worker
- Immigrant
- Foster Family
- And others who may not have daily or reliable access to mail, internet, or television

At the April Commission meeting and various Public Education and Outreach Advisory Committee meetings, First 5 California staff updated the Commission on the efforts of the current media campaign and community outreach programs. Additionally, staff discussed the process for the development of a new RFP for a new 3-year media/PR contract. Commissioners provided suggestions around goals and focus areas for the new RFP. These include:

- Public awareness on equity – focus on messaging and reaching populations who are underserved and hard to reach
- Providing and reinforcing messaging through a variety of formats and multiple channels, and in multiple languages catering to the diversity of California families
- Align goals of the campaign to the goals of the Strategic Plan
- Make use of in-depth research to ensure we are reaching low-income, hard-to-reach, and other underserved populations in California
- Bidders to share First 5 California’s values and mission – living the ethics of equity and inclusivity
- Bidders will exhibit extensive experience creating campaigns to reach underserved populations
- Media campaigns (2) over term of contract (3 years) – maintain steady drumbeat over time, given changing population and stages, steady output over time with spikes on specific topics (paid family leave, family benefits, home visiting, early literacy, child health and wellness, smoking cessation, parent engagement, etc.)
- Uplifting other partners who serve as experts and resources – using experts as a conduit for reliable information
- Market research – identify current, reputable, existing sources of information
- Experience and outcome-based outreach – providing a method of evaluating outcomes of campaigns

- Elevate awareness – trusted messengers, elevating the importance of child well-being and investment in children ages 0 to 5
- Overall tone, brand consistency, elevating reputation, and expertise of First 5 California
- Build in flexibility/room for adjustment in RFP for circumstances like COVID-19 and other health disparities
- Incorporate findings from research reports, evaluations, and focus groups to inform on the message awareness, behavior changes, and to help guide the direction of the outreach plan
- Develop a statewide PR strategy
- Increase public and policy maker awareness of messaging
- Build on the First 5 California brand
- Serve as the resource for coordinated communications, advocacy, and other capacity-building efforts
- Develop communications tools for internal and external use and support First 5 California staff

The winning bid will direct its advertising methodology, research, creative design strategy, and implementation efforts toward supporting and aligning with the advertising campaign and education program goals.

Additionally, the winning bidder will be responsible for the PR component. This effort will continue to develop a statewide PR strategy that builds upon the media campaign as well as the existing strengths and infrastructure of the state, First 5 Association, and First 5 county commissions. Additionally, the PR effort will increase public and policy maker awareness of the First 5 brand, influence policy makers and the public through media coverage of children's issues, develop communications tools for internal and external use, and support and assist First 5 California staff, the Association, the county commissions, and the Early Care and Education Coalition.

Although the contract would contain many other requirements, the core obligation of the contractor would be to conduct research to identify target populations, and then design, produce, and implement advertising campaigns and PR activities that reach First 5 California's target audiences throughout the state. Once each campaign is concluded, the contractor would be required to cooperate with an outside evaluation firm that would determine the effectiveness and impact of the campaign messages.

Additionally, First 5 California staff have consulted with county partners and others who understand the populations in California, and will be utilizing their guidance and input on strategies for effective outreach.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

First 5 California staff recommends the Commission authorize the release of an RFP for a new media/PR contract for up to \$67 million over three years.

With Commission approval, staff will develop a final scope of work and RFP for release. Staff intends to release the RFP before December 2020 and award the contract in March 2021.

## **BACKGROUND OF KEY ISSUES**

Health and Safety Code Section 130105 establishes the California Children and Families Trust Fund and describes how the revenue is to be distributed. Of the 20 percent allocated to the state, Section 130105 (d)(1)(A) stipulates, "Six percent shall be deposited in a Mass Media Communications Account for expenditures for communications to the general public utilizing television, radio, newspapers, and other mass media on subjects relating to and furthering the goals and purposes of this act, including, but not limited to, methods of nurturing and parenting that encourage proper childhood development, the informed selection of child care, information regarding health and social services, the prevention and cessation of tobacco, alcohol, and drug use by pregnant women, the detrimental effects of secondhand smoke on early childhood development, and to ensure that children are ready to enter school."

In 2014, the Commission approved \$68 million for a parent education and outreach media contract for 3 years. In 2018, the Commission approved a contract extension for another three years using contract language allowing for a single contract extension in the amount of \$60,235,763.40. This contract will end June 8, 2021. The new contract will also contain non-binding language that allows First 5 California to extend the contract for an additional three years.

The current PR contract expires in April 2021. This contract currently focuses on advocacy, policy, and engaging with local leaders and elected officials to promote all First 5-supported legislation and policy priorities.

A new RFP must be advertised to initiate a new parent education and outreach and public relations contract to begin in June 2021.

## **SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS COMMISSION DISCUSSION AND ACTION**

In April 2020, First 5 California staff presented to the Commission an update on recent accomplishments of the media campaign as well as the process for the development of a new RFP for release this year for a new 3-year media contract to begin in June 2021.

## **FISCAL ANALYSIS**

The cost of the proposed contract (up to \$67 million from the Mass Media Communication account) is significant; however, the above described use of television and technologies will be used in the most cost-effective way possible to achieve the

greatest impact for California families. If the full amount of the recommendation is approved, approximately \$13–16 million will remain in the account each fiscal year for use by other media/communications programs.

Using the current media contract as an example, of the total contract amount for the last three-year extension, which totaled \$60,235,763.40, over 91% went to media buys and direct costs such as market research, production, and evaluations. It is reasonable to expect a similar outcome in the future contract; however, the exact percentage will not be known until all bids are received and evaluated.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

None.