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Barry Buchanan

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
FROM THE DESK OF COUNCILMEMBER BARRY BUCHANAN

MEMO

TO: Whatcom County Council
FROM: Barry Buchanan, Councilmember, SAC Chair
DATE: September 6, 2022
RE: Justice Project Consultant Contracts

There are two contracts on the Sept. 13th Council agenda (AB2022-475 and AB2022-495) for consultant services for the Justice Project, and the following provides additional information.

BACKGROUND

The Whatcom County Council adopted a statement of Public Health, Safety and Justice Facility Planning Principles ([Resolution 2019-036](#)) to guide the Justice Project. At the project's core, a 38-member Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) was tasked with creating a public health, safety, and justice facility needs assessment. Prior to the pandemic, the county had a contract with HOK ([#202001020](#); \$629,694) to lead the project. The project was put on hold and the contract cancelled.

When the project restarted in January, 2020, the planning and leadership teams envisioned a more grassroots process, drawing from county staff expertise, guidance from the Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force, and using consultants for assistance at key points in the project. In an update to Council in the Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee on April 26, 2022 ([AB2022-159](#)), information was presented about the project team and key roles, the anticipated use of consultant teams for meeting facilitation and strategy, report writing, data analysis, communications, and financing models. We are now at the point at which bringing on consultants for assistance is needed to move forward.

CONTRACT (AB2022-475): PROJECT COORDINATION & MEETING FACILITATION

Crossroads Consulting was initially hired to facilitate SAC meetings and assist the Planning Team with overseeing the process ([Contract #202111008](#); \$10,000). Project activities were expanded to include work with data teams and Incarceration Prevention and Reduction Task Force (IPRTF) teams as well writing the needs assessment report ([Contract 202202018](#); \$39,950).

Proposed Contract #202202018-1 (\$111,000) is an amendment to continue to provide facilitation and consultation services to assist the Whatcom County Public Health, Safety, and Justice Initiative and the Stakeholder Advisory Committee. Services include continued project coordination, support for the Planning team and SAC, and work on the needs assessment report. Additional services include surveys of jail inmates and SAC members, meeting facilitation of community forums, and

coordination with communications consultant. Continuing these services throughout the remainder of the Justice Project is critical to the success of the project.

CONTRACT (AB2022-495): COMMUNICATIONS

The Leadership and Planning Team identified project needs for communications to the public to assist the SAC develop a needs assessment that is reflective of community values. Staff issued an RFP to the MRSC Roster for communications services for the Justice Project in May, 2022. The county contracted with The Vida Agency (Contract #202206005; \$38,923) for Phase 1 of the project, to conduct discovery activities to inform an engagement approach and create a public engagement plan. The next step is a Phase 2 contract amendment (Contract #202206005-1; \$146,984) to implement the public engagement plan, which includes targeted outreach events with tribal nations, immigrant populations, and formerly incarcerated people and their family members. Additionally, the consultant will develop a survey and promote it broadly to the general public through a variety of methods including social media and radio.

SUMMARY

The Planning Team has so far relied on SAC members, IPRTF members, and staff resources to engage the SAC in critical conversations to develop a needs assessment. Reaching out for consultant support on specific elements such as meeting facilitation, project coordination and communications is a cost-effective approach and essential for moving on the project to create a final needs assessment report by the end of the year.