County of San Mateo

Request For Statement of Qualification (RFSQ) for F5SMC Communications Consultation Services (Aug 2026 - June 2028)

First 5 San Mateo County

RFSQ No. TBD

RFSQ Contact: Myra Cruz

ecruz@smcgov.org

1. Introduction and Schedule

The County of San Mateo (the "County" or "SMC") covers most of the San Francisco Peninsula. The region covers 744 mi and is home to nearly 800,000 residents and 20 incorporated cities. The County provides for the health and welfare of all people within its borders and serves as the local government for the unincorporated areas. Innovation thrives here in industries including bioscience, computer software, green technology, hospitality, financial management, health care, education and transportation. The County prides itself on how that prosperity fosters its commitment to protecting and enhancing the health, safety, welfare and natural resources of the community.

In November 1998, California voters passed the California Children and Families First Act (Prop 10). This groundbreaking legislation added a 50-cent tax on all tobacco products. The purpose of this funding is to create "an integrated, comprehensive, and collaborative system of information and services to enhance optimal early childhood development and to ensure that children are ready to enter school."

The First 5 San Mateo County Commission (F5SMC or The Commission) was established in March 1999. It consists of nine Commissioners appointed by the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors. Since its inception, First 5 San Mateo County has invested more than $182 million in local programs and has served nearly 117,000 children from birth through age five. Each year, more than 3,000 parents and primary caregivers receive First 5 San Mateo County-funded services.

1.1. Summary

First 5 San Mateo County (F5SMC) invites responses to this Request for Statement of Qualifications ("RFSQ") from qualified consultants, agencies and/or individuals. The successful Respondent may eventually enter into contract with F5SMC to provide **Communication Consultation Services for the implementation of a Strategic Communications Plan and Implementation Plan ("The Plan")**. See Attachment C, Sample F5SMC Independent Contractor Agreement.

Respondents may request **up to a total of $330,000 for work beginning August 1, 2026 and ending June 30, 2028**.

The objective is to:

- Support the Commission's Vision, Mission and successful implementation of Desired Outcomes as identified in the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan.
- Increase knowledge of F5SMC's role, initiatives, programs, funded partners services and impact to the community (parents, businesses, legislators, educators, health providers, etc.) county-wide, with targeted efforts to hard to reach population segments.
- Promote universal understanding of the importance of early brain development through an Early Brain Development Public Education Campaign for San Mateo County expectant parents, parents/caregivers of children birth to age 5, service providers and community members.
- Increase communications collaboration with First 5 California, First 5 Association of California, Children Now, Early Childhood Funders, etc., on initiatives benefiting local needs.
- Increase communication collaboration activities with funded and non-funded partners.

- Update communication policies and standardized internal processes, fundamental communication tools, outreach methods, outline and schedule of communication activities.

Funding Amount and Available Term

First 5 SMC has allocated a maximum of $330,000 from August 1, 2026 to June 30, 2028 to meet the goals and objectives detailed in this RFSQ.

1.2. Background

First 5 San Mateo County Strategic Plan

The Commission was authorized to develop a Strategic Plan and allocate funds accordingly. On December 16, 2024, the Commission approved the most recent Strategic Plan for the years 2025-2030. The Commission identified the following **desired outcomes** to guide its efforts during the Strategic Plan period:

1. San Mateo County leaders and partners fully invest in young children and their families.

2. Communities provide a safe and healthy environment for young children.

3. Children have timely and affordable access to high-quality early care and education settings.

4. Families feel connected to and supported by their community and able to nurture their children's health and development.

5. Children have healthy relationships and stable attachments to their primary caregivers.

6. Children have access to and are utilizing appropriate health care services to meet their health and developmental needs.

7. Families have agency and voice to direct policies and systems that impact their children.

The 2025-2030 Strategic Plan is consistent with the focus and intent of the Children and Families Act, building on what has been learned and accomplished locally and providing a framework for the Commission and the community for how Proposition 10 funds will be strategically invested over the next five years. Central to the success of these investments is a strong foundation that adequately prioritizes early childhood systems and services in San Mateo County. These foundational improvements will be furthered with investments in four core domains: **Quality Care and Education, Healthy Children, Resilient Families, and Systems Change.**

One of the strategies to achieve the Desired Outcomes is through policy, advocacy and community education. To cultivate a child-centered culture where children lead the way in San Mateo County, F5SMC will lead strategic policy, advocacy, communications, and research and knowledge development to build public and political will to invest in the well-being and success of our young children, and give stakeholders the information they need to change the systemic conditions for children and families. First 5 San Mateo County staff, grantees, or other partners will work to increase awareness about early childhood and educate the public on ways they can enhance the health, development, and learning of children

prenatal to age 5. Strategic Planning efforts identified Communication activities as embedded components within each of the Four Core Domains listed above.

In light of the Commission's declining revenues, F5SMC is expanding opportunities for partnership. During the Strategic Planning Process, the First 5 San Mateo County Commission examined how its role in the community could best maximize positive impacts for children, families and the community. For the duration of the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan, F5SMC will focus on **three primary community roles:** Strategic Financial **Investor,** Community **Partner** in aligned efforts and as a Community **Leader t**o advocate for the prioritization of young children and their families in decision making processes. Respondents should be familiar with the content of the new Strategic Plan, Attachment A which is also available on the First 5 San Mateo County F5SMC website at www.first5sanmateo.org.

As a result of the Strategic Planning Process, the Strategic Plan Implementation Plan (SPIP) – Phase 1, was developed for the implementation of fiscal investments for fiscal years 2025-2026, 2026-2027, 2027-2028 and lists current and upcoming program funding and activities; see Attachment B.

1.3. Contact Information

Project Contact:
Michelle Blakely
Deputy Director
1700 S. El Camino Real Suite 405
San Mateo County _CA, CA 94063
Email: mblakely@smcgov.org
Phone: (650) 372-9500

Procurement Contact:
Myra Cruz
Operations Coordinator
1700 S. El Camino Real, Ste. 405
San Mateo, CA 94402
Email: ecruz@smcgov.org
Phone: (650) 294-4080

Department:
First 5 San Mateo County

Department Head:
Kitty Lopez
Executive Director

1.4. Timeline

RFSQ Released	May 27, 2026
Deadline to Submit Questions	June 3, 2026, 4:00pm

Responses to Questions Posted by F5SMC	June 5, 2026, 4:00pm
Proposal Due Date and Time	June 17, 2026, 4:00pm Proposals must be electronically submitted via OpenGov. Mailed or hand-delivered will NOT be accepted.
Interviews (tentative)	June 29, 2026 Online or Telephone Interview
Anticipated Notification of Intent to Award Contract	July 1, 2026
Commission Meeting to Approve Funding Recommendation (Non-Mandatory)	July 27, 2026, 4:00 pm 101 Twin Dolphin Drive, Corte Madera Conference Room Redwood City, CA 94065
Deadline to Appeal	July 9, 2026, 12:00 pm

2. Provisions and Desired Activities

2.1. General Provisions

RESERVATION OF RIGHTS TO FIRST 5 SAN MATEO COUNTY

This Request for Statement of Qualifications (RFSQ) is not a commitment or contract of any kind. First 5 San Mateo County (F5SMC/the Commission) reserves the right to pursue any and/or all ideas generated by this request. F5SMC reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and/or terminate the RFSQ process if deemed in the best interest of the Commission. Further, while every effort has been made to ensure the information presented in this RFSQ is accurate and thorough, F5SMC assumes no liability for any unintentional errors or omissions in this document. F5SMC reserves the right to waive or modify any requirements of this RFSQ when it determines that doing so is in the best interest of the Commission. Costs for developing the proposals are entirely the responsibility of the Proposers and shall not be reimbursed.

AUTHORITY

Proposition 10 (Prop 10), the "California Children and Families Act of 1998", imposed an excise tax on tobacco products and authorized counties to establish commissions to allocate these funds at the local level. Ordinance #03889 was adopted by the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors on March 9, 1999,

creating the nine-member Children and Families First Five Commission (now referred to as First 5 San Mateo County Commission). The Commission was authorized to develop a Strategic Plan and allocate funds accordingly. The most recent Strategic Plan was updated and approved in December 2024.

PUBLIC NATURE OF PROPOSALS

Government Code Section 6550 et. seq., the California Public Records Act, defines a public record as any writing containing information relating to the conduct of the public business. The California Public Records Act provides that public records shall be disclosed upon written request, and that any citizen has a right to inspect any public record, unless the document is exempted from disclosure.

F5SMC cannot represent or guarantee that any information submitted in response to this RFSQ will be confidential. Please be advised that any contract that eventually arises from this Request for Statement of Qualifications is a public record in its entirety. Also, all information submitted in response to this Request for Statement of Qualifications is itself a public record without exception. Submission of any materials in response to this Request for Qualifications constitutes a waiver by the submitting party of any claim that the information is protected from disclosure. By submitting materials, (1) you are consenting to release of such materials by F5SMC if requested under the California Public Records Act without further notice to you and (2) you agree to indemnify and hold harmless F5SMC for release of such information.

All proposals submitted in response to this RFQ shall become the exclusive property of F5SMC. At such time as F5SMC approves an Agreement, all proposals submitted in response to this RFSQ shall become a matter of public record and shall be regarded as public records.

COMMUNICATION WITH F5SMC

Please note that as of the issue date of this RFSQ and continuing through the Commission vote(s) to award grant(s), all F5SMC personnel, Commissioners, and Review Panel members have been specifically directed not to hold meetings, conferences, or technical discussions regarding this RFQ with prospective Proposers/service providers unless otherwise indicated in the RFQ timeline, Proposal Solicitation Process and Proposal Selection Process and Review Criteria.

RIGHTS

Proposers' Rights Regarding Confidentiality of Proposals:

If F5SMC receives a request for any portion of a document submitted in response to this RFSQ, it will not assert any privileges that may exist on behalf of the person or entity, and F5SMC reserves the right to disclose the requested materials without notice to the party who originally submitted the requested material. If a Proposer believes that a portion of its proposal is confidential and notifies F5SMC of such in writing, F5SMC may, as a courtesy, attempt to notify the Proposer of any request for the proposal. However, it would be the sole responsibility of that Proposer to assert any applicable privileges or reasons why the document should not be produced, and to obtain a court order prohibiting disclosure. The Proposer understands that F5SMC is not responsible, under any circumstances, for any harm caused by production of a confidential proposal.

F5SMC's Rights Regarding Confidentiality of Proposals:

To the extent consistent with applicable provisions of the California Public Records Act and applicable case law interpreting those provisions, F5SMC and/or its officers, agents, and employees retain the discretion to release or to withhold disclosure of any information submitted in response to this RFSQ. Submission of a proposal constitutes a complete waiver of any claims whatsoever against F5SMC and/or its officers, agents, or employees that F5SMC has violated a Proposer's right to privacy, disclosed trade secrets, or caused any damage by allowing the proposal to be inspected.

F5SMC's Rights Regarding Funding Investments:

F5SMC may, in its sole discretion, enter into one or multiple contracts with qualified agencies/entities. F5SMC also reserves the right not to fund any proposals received through this solicitation.

F5SMC's Right to Modify the RFSQ:

F5SMC may modify the RFSQ prior to the fixed date for submission of proposals by issuance of an addendum to all parties who have received the RFP.

F5SMC's Rights Regarding Lowest-Cost Proposals:

F5SMC reserves the right to accept other than the lowest price when the best interests of F5SMC are served by doing so.

F5SMC's Right Regarding Local Preference:

F5SMC reserves the right to give preference to a San Mateo County-based service provider vendor if deemed in the best interest of F5SMC.

AGREEMENTS

Proposers' Agreement to Contracting Terms:

The Proposer must be able to agree to all of the terms of the F5SMC sample Agreement included in the Attachments section. If the Proposer cannot agree to each term but still wishes to respond to the RFSQ, the Proposer must specifically identify in its proposal the terms with which it cannot comply.

Proposers' Agreement to Funding Term and Renewal Language:

The Funding Term will be from August 1, 2026 through June 30, 2028. Entering into an Agreement related to this RFSQ does not guarantee funding beyond June 30, 2028. Furthermore, all F5SMC agreements are subject to Agreement Terms and Termination provisions as stated in Paragraph 3 of the F5SMC Sample Agreement (Attachment C).

INVITATION TO SUBMIT

F5SMC welcomes proposals from all qualified entities. Qualified applicants may include community-based (501)(c)(3) organizations, coalitions or collaboratives, government agencies/departments, and/or consultancies. The Commission is interested in applicants who exhibit expertise in providing services to children prenatally through age five and their families, as well as applicants that serve culturally diverse communities.

2.2. Scope of Work and Deliverables

In close collaboration with F5SMC staff, the selected contractor will review the existing Strategic Communications Plan and Implementation Plan and use it as a roadmap for how communication activities supporting the needs of children prenatal to age 5 and their families in San Mateo County, will be developed, implemented and measured. See Attachment G: First 5 San Mateo County Strategic Communications Plan and Implementation Plan

The Scope of Work and Deliverables should incorporate the steps necessary to implement The Plan as well as other communications activities that may be relevant to F5SMC's goals.

Please submit a Scope of Work and Deliverables attachment that may include, but is not limited to, the strategies and elements below, with estimated timeframe, staff hours, and key activities. The Communications Consultation Scope of Work will be finalized with the successful candidate during contract negotiations.

Strategy 1: Make it easier for families to access and understand resources through First 5 San Mateo County's website and digital channels.

ACTIVITIES

1A. Website Content Architecture and Resource Organization: Update website structure and content to prioritize family pathways, making it easier for parents and caregivers to find age-specific guidance, services, and developmental supports.

1B. Social Media as a Resource Gateway: Use social media platforms to share bite-sized guidance, visuals, and videos that direct families to trusted information and resources on the First 5 San Mateo County website.

1C. Family Resource Updates and Timely Information: Regularly refresh digital content to reflect new programs, services, and community resources relevant to families with young children, such as local family-friendly events and policies to advocate for.

Strategy 2: Build shared understanding of why early childhood matters and why investing in young children, families, and the ECE workforce benefits the San Mateo County community.

ACTIVITIES

2A. Public Awareness Campaigns: Implement targeted communications campaigns, such as the Early Childhood Brain Development campaign, aligned with strategic priorities, key moments, and policy opportunities.

2B. Media & Thought Leadership: Pitch stories, op-eds, and expert perspectives that position First 5 San Mateo County as a trusted early childhood voice in the community.

Strategy 3: Equip community partners with shared messages and communications tools to amplify collective impact and advance coordinated advocacy across systems.

ACTIVITIES

3A. Partner Communications Toolkit: Develop and update shared messaging, templates, and assets for partners and stakeholders.

3B. Partner Amplification: Coordinate cross-promotion and message alignment with funded partners and collaborators (e.g., Baby Bonus).

Strategy 4: Elevate lived experiences in communications to inform decisions, shape policies, and build early childhood systems that reflect community needs.

ACTIVITIES

4A. Policy Messaging & Materials: Develop clear, accessible communications that support early childhood policy and systems change priorities.

4B. Stakeholder and Decision-Maker Outreach: Create targeted communications for policymakers, funders, and systems leaders.

4C. Story Bank & Story Collection: Create a centralized system for collecting, organizing, and sharing stories from partners and families.

4D. Rapid Response Communications: Deploy timely messaging in response to policy developments, legislation, or emerging community needs.

3. Submission Requirements

3.1. Submission Deadline

Proposals must be electronically received by 4:00 pm**,** on Wednesday, June 17, 2026 via OpenGov**.**

Allow sufficient time for the upload to complete by the Due Date and Time. Partial uploads will automatically terminate, and proposals will be rejected. The eProcurement system submission time will be the official submission time. The County will not be responsible for and may not accept proposals that are late due to slow internet connections or for any other failure of the eProcurement system.

NOTE: The County does not maintain the eProcurement system and is not liable for site failures or technical problems. To resolve technical issues, contact OpenGov Technical Support by using the real time chat located in the lower right hand corner of the screen, or via email at procurement-support@opengov.com

https://procurement.opengov.com/portal/smcgov

3.2. Pre-submission Registration

Organizations or individuals interested in responding to this solicitation must register online with the County of San Mateo at:

- https://procurement.opengov.com/portal/smcgov

It is recommended that organizations complete this registration as soon as possible. The County will not be responsible for and may not accept proposals that are late due to a failure to register in the eProcurement system.

3.3. Submission via eProcurement Portal

Required Documents

Please refer to the Statement of Qualifications section for submittal documents and requirements.

Electronic Submissions

Include the proposer name and the RFSQ title and number in each filename. Submit proposals via the eProcurement website, allowing sufficient time for the upload to complete by the Due Date and Time. As noted above, the eProcurement portal submission time will be the official submission time, and partial uploads will automatically terminate, and proposals will be rejected. Contact eProcurement Portal with technical questions regarding this site.

Conflicts between Certain Requirements

Prior to the submission deadlines and solely relating to a determination of the timeliness of questions, comments, and proposal submissions, information displayed on the eProcurement portal site will take precedence in the event of a discrepancy between that information and the information within the solicitation documents. For all other discrepancies, the information in the solicitation documents will take precedence.

Format

Documents should be created in the following format:

- Text should be Times New Roman (12-point minimum font size) and unjustified (i.e., with a ragged-right margin)
- Pages should have margins of at least one inch on all sides (excluding headers and footers)
- PDF format is preferred.

Errors in Proposals

The County will not be liable for any errors in proposals. Proposals may be rejected as unresponsive if they are late, incomplete, missing pages or information, or cannot be opened for any reason. The County may waive minor irregularities, but such waiver will not modify any remaining RFSQ requirements.

4. Statement of Qualifications

4.1. Minimum Qualifications

Any proposal that does not demonstrate that the proposer meets these minimum requirements by the submission deadline shall be determined to be non-responsive and not eligible for further consideration in the evaluation process.

Proposer is defined as the prime firm, organization, or joint venture that is submitting a proposal for this RFSQ.

Proposers must meet the following Minimum Qualifications:

4.1.1. I certify that I am authorized to execute this Certification on my firm's behalf.*

Insert the **Name** and **Title** of the Authorized Representative completing this submission.

*Response required

4.1.2. Firm Experience*

Proposer shall have at least three (3) years of experience within the last five (5) years immediately preceding the issuance of this RFSQ in providing services of similar size and scope.

☐ Please confirm

*Response required

4.1.3. Project Experience*

Proposer shall have completed at least two (2) projects of similar size and scope within the last four (4) years, for at least one (1) public entities that serve populations of at least 750,000 people, one (1) of which must have been in the State of California.

☐ Please confirm

*Response required

4.1.4. System for Award Management*

Proposer is registered and in good standing with SAM.gov® (https://sam.gov/content/home).

Please use the above link to verify your firms registration in good standing, and enter the following information in this field:

A. **Registered as** [Business Name]

B. **UEI No.** [Business Number]

*Response required

4.1.5. I certify that the foregoing information is true and correct as of the date of this Certificate.*

☐ Please confirm

*Response required

4.2. Desired Qualifications

F5SMC is seeking a consultant, agency and/or individual that has expertise and demonstrated ability in the fields detailed below:

4.2.1. Cover Letter*

Submit a cover letter for your proposal. The letter must contain:

- Name, title and contact information (email, phone, and address) for a representative of the proposing organization who is responsible for communication related to this RFSQ.
- Name, title, contact information, and signature of the person authorized to commit the proposing organization to perform the activities contained in the proposal.
- Brief description (one or two paragraphs) of your proposal, including the following:
- Brief description of your organization
- Proposed annual and total budget amounts
- Names, roles and budgets of any proposed subcontractors or collaborating organizations

Submission of the letter will constitute a representation by proposer that it is willing and able to perform the commitments contained in the proposal and has not violated the terms of this RFSQ.

*Response required

4.2.2. Project Planning and Development*

Please describe your experience in the following areas (Work samples supporting your responses may be submitted in another area of this RFSQ):

- Demonstrated success in implementing Strategic Communications Plans and Implementation Plans of comparable size and scope.
- Proven track record in establishing both short- and long-term communication goals and strategies that are measurable and results-driven.
- Proven ability to evaluate and measure the impact of communication strategies and tactics, including revising underperforming approaches to achieve successful project or campaign outcomes.
- Experience in evaluating and assembling teams to support communications efforts, including identifying staffing needs and providing recommendations to address gaps.

Maximum response length: 2000 characters

*Response required

4.2.3. Expertise*

Please describe your experience and capabilities in the following areas (Work samples supporting your responses may be submitted in another area of this RFSQ):

- Familiarity with First 5 initiatives or similar early childhood programs, including understanding of the agencies and services commonly engaged by First 5 Commissions.
- Demonstrated success in creating innovative, effective communication strategies across multiple focus areas in previous projects.
- Skilled in identifying communication barriers and public misperceptions, and effectively reframing narratives to shift negative perceptions into positive support for programs, services, or organizations.
- Extensive experience in producing high-quality written content tailored to various audiences, featuring clear, targeted messaging appropriate to each group's reading and comprehension level.
- Experience in developing communication policies, procedures, and templates to support internal staff in implementing organizational communications plans.
- Background in creating and defining brand identity, including the development of style guides.
- Strong graphic design skills, with effective use of infographics to enhance communication.
- Experience in enhancing and/or designing WordPress websites in ways that have demonstrably increased user engagement and site traffic.
- Proficient in creating video content that enhances public education and outreach efforts.
- Knowledgeable in leveraging various social media platforms to achieve communication goals, including an understanding of their unique benefits and outcomes.

Maximum response length: 5000 characters

*Response required

4.2.4. Project Management and Budgeting*

Please detail your experience in the following areas:

- Strong project management skills, including expertise in developing and managing budgets effectively.
- Demonstrated ability to consistently deliver projects on time and within budget constraints.

Maximum response length: 2000 characters

*Response required

4.2.5. Effective Communication

Please describe your experience in the following area:

- Demonstrated ability to engage and collaborate effectively with personnel at all levels within an organization, including experience working directly with Boards and/or Commissions.

- Experience in communicating effectively and respectfully with diverse stakeholders, from policy makers to parents, to develop effective communication messages and implement outreach strategies.

Maximum response length: 2000 characters

4.2.6. Primary Contact Information *

A. Name of firm

B. Address of firm

C. Telephone number

D. E-Mail address

E. Primary contact person

Maximum response length: 2000 characters

*Response required

4.2.7. Brief History of Firm *

A. Legal structure (corporation, partnership, joint venture, etc.)

B. Size of firm / staff

C. Years in business

D. Organizational chart of firm, and tenure of executive management

E. If firm is a partnership or association, a listing of all the partners, general partners, or association members known at the time of submission, who will participate in the project if awarded must be included.

Maximum response length: 2000 characters

*Response required

4.2.8. Project Organizational Chart*

Provide Project organizational chart of this team, including role and time commitment of each team member for this project. If proposing a joint venture, provide a clear description of each teams' roles.

Also, provide resumes of each team member including the following information:

A. Name, office location

B. Years of service with firm

C. Educational background

D. Professional experience

E. Anticipated services to be provided

F. *Response required

*Response required

4.2.9. Meeting Attendance, Roles & Responsibilities

A. Specifically state who from your firm will attend major meetings

B. Within each firm, clearly state the responsibilities of everyone proposed for each phase of the project

C. Present written assurances that if awarded the project, the proposed team will be assigned for the duration of all appropriate phases of the project

Maximum response length: 2000 characters

4.2.10. Sub Consultants

A. Identify all consultants proposed for this project

B. Identify consultants who have submitted correspondence stating their intention to participate in the Qualifications Submittal

C. Provide correspondence submitted response. Proposed sub consultants may include, but are not limited to the following types of services:

- Graphic Designer
- Translation Services
- Technical / Copy Writing
- Web-designer

Note: F5SMC reserves the right to qualify, accept, or reject any proposed sub consultant or reject the use of internal staff to provide certain types of services. F5SMC also reserves the right to make recommendations for consideration regarding sub consultants.

Maximum response length: 2000 characters

4.2.11. General Project Approach

A. Describe your firm's philosophy about the importance of effective communication and outreach, and how it relates to F5SMC.

B. Describe your approach to transforming program data and outcomes into key messages that resonate with target audiences.

C. Describe your approach to developing communication processes to streamline tasks and reduce redundancies, while meeting the communications needs for multiple programs with differing project scopes and outcomes.

D. Describe your approach to developing and tailoring messaging for diverse target audiences e.g. legislators, parents/caregivers, business leaders, people who speak languages other than English.

E. Describe your capability to absorb additional workload, availability of personnel, and commitment to provide services on a timely basis.

F. Include a description of how, if selected, you will closely interface and coordinate with F5SMC Staff, Commissioners funded partners and other consultants throughout the phases of the Project.

G. Describe any challenges you anticipate in implementing the Strategic Communications Plan and Implementation Plan, and how you propose to address the challenges.

Maximum response length: 5000 characters

4.2.12. Unique Qualifications

This section is an opportunity to provide specific information that differentiates the Respondent from other firms or individuals or any additional supporting documentation or information that would be helpful in evaluating Respondent's qualifications and commitment.

Maximum response length: 2000 characters

4.2.13. Client References

A. For projects selected to demonstrate your firm's experience, complete Attachment D - Client Reference Form.

B. Include a description of the projects, project budget, and describe your participation in the project

C. Submit at minimum 2 references and at most 3.

4.2.14. Audit or Financial Statements

Please upload your most recent audit or financial statements. Private businesses that are not subject to Federal or State audit requirements or to audit requirements put in place by a governing Board or Commission may submit their most recent financial statements and/or other documentation demonstrating the fiscal health of the organization in lieu of an external audit.

4.2.15. Project Budget

Please provide a budget detailing proposed expenses for yearly allocations for FY 2026-2027 (starting August 1, 2026), and FY 2027-2028, not to exceed $330,000, to meet the goals and objectives detailed in this RFSQ using the Communications Consultation Services Budget Form, Attachment F.

Qualifications Submittals that exceed this amount will not be considered.

The project budget will be finalized during contract negotiations with the successful candidate.

4.2.16. Scope of Work

Please upload your scope of work

4.2.17. Can this firm provide the services outlined in the Scope of Work?*

☐ Yes

☐ No

*Response required

4.2.18. Technologies*

What technologies will be used for any of the services outlined in the Scope of Work (or type "N/A")?

*Response required

4.2.19. Project/Work Samples

Please provide samples of previous projects that you feel reflect expertise and demonstrated ability in the any of the areas listed in Scope of Work and Deliverables, Desired Qualifications, Submittal Instructions, and Selection Criteria & Selection Process.

Maximum: 6 pages representing work from at least 2 different projects

5. Evaluation and Selection Criteria

The proposals will be evaluated by a selection committee with relevant expertise. F5SMC intends to evaluate the proposals generally in accordance with the criteria itemized below. Proposers with the highest scoring proposals may be interviewed by the committee to make the final selection.

5.1. Phase 1: Review Panel

No.	Evaluation Criteria	Scoring Method	Weight (Points)
1.	**Firm and Team Member Qualifications** • Firm meets minimum requirements and is in good standing. • Team member expertise and staffing structure suitable for cope of project.	0-10 Points	20 *(20% of Total)*
2.	**Project Approach and Proposed Activities** • Understanding of project objectives. • Creativity, clarity, and comprehensiveness of proposed strategies in scope of work and project approach. • Suitability of approach meet agency goals and needs.	0-10 Points	30 *(30% of Total)*

3.	**Relevant Experience, Work Samples and References** • Experience with similar projects or clients. • Relevant experience in communications strategy, public relations, and/or media outreach. • Quality and relevance of past work. • Evidence of measurable outcomes or impact. • Feedback from prior clients or partners. • Strength of professional reputation.	0-10 Points	20 *(20% of Total)*
4.	**Project Management, Capacity and Availability** • Ability to develop and communicate detailed plans and timelines, meet deadlines and manage resources. • Availability of team to start and complete work within desired timeline.	0-10 Points	20 *(20% of Total)*
5.	**Cost Proposal** - Reasonableness of estimated costs in relation to services offered. - Clarity and transparency of pricing structure.	Points Based	10 *(10% of Total)*

5.2. Phase 2

No.	Evaluation Criteria	Scoring Method	Weight (Points)
1.	**Interview (as needed)** If recommended by the Review Panel, proposing organizations may be interviewed by F5SMC to clarify proposal contents, address concerns, or discuss Review Panel feedback on and suggestions for the proposed project.	Points Based	100 *(100% of Total)*

6. Instructions to Proposers

6.1. Instructions

There will be no pre-proposal conference for this RFSQ.

6.2. Communications

A. As of the issuance date of this RFSQ and continuing until it is canceled or an award is made, no proposer or person acting on behalf of a prospective proposer may discuss any matter relating to the RFSQ with any officer, agent, or employee of F5SMC, other than through eProcurement portal, to the Authorized Contact Person, or as outlined in the evaluation or protest procedures.

B. Proposers (including any agent, owner, employee, board members, or other such affiliates) shall not offer any gift, favor, or other personal benefit to any F5SMC officer or employee during the procurement process for this agreement, including during the solicitation period and contract negotiations.

Violation of the foregoing prohibitions may result in a proposer being found non-responsible and barred from participating in this or future procurements.

6.3. Contract Award

A. **Award Procedure**
Contract negotiations are neither an offer nor guarantee that a contract will be executed. A contract award, if any is made, will be to the responsive, responsible proposer offering the overall best value to F5SMC for the services and goods described in this solicitation, or as applicable, for a specific portion of the services and goods described. Any agreement reached will be memorialized in a formal agreement using the attached template, executed by the appropriate authority.

B. **Notice of Intent to Award**
If a decision is made to take steps to enter into an agreement with one or more proposers, F5SMC will post a Notice of Intent to Award or otherwise notify proposers the remaining proposers of their non-selection. Notice may instead be provided by including approval of the agreement as an item on an agenda for a meeting of the Board of Supervisors.

C. **Commencement of Performance**
After all parties have signed the agreement, F5SMC will notify the contractor and performance may proceed. Prior to execution of the agreement by F5SMC, no F5SMC employee may authorize work under the agreement. Any work performed prior to the full execution of the Agreement may not be compensated.

6.4. Term

First 5 San Mateo County is issuing Request for Statement of Qualification (RFSQ) No. TBD for F5SMC Communications Consultation Services (Aug 2026 - June 2028).

The agreement shall have a term from August 1, 2026 to June 30, 2028. The awarded contractor will be expected to sign an agreement prepared by F5SMC using this template. Please ensure that your firm has

completed legal review of these contract terms. If your firm wishes to request exceptions to these standard terms, submit a Contract Exceptions Request by the Deadline for Questions, Comments and Contract Exceptions listed in the Solicitation Schedule below. F5SMC will consider Contract Exceptions Requests but reserves the right to reject requested modifications to its standard terms.

7. Terms and Conditions for Receipt of Proposals

7.1. Errors, Omissions and Inquiries regarding the RFSQ

Proposers are responsible for reviewing all portions of this RFSQ. Proposers are to notify the department, in eProcurement portal, if the proposer discovers any ambiguity, discrepancy, omission, or apparent error in the RFSQ. Such notification should be made promptly after discovery, but in no event later than five business days prior to the deadline for receipt of proposals. Modifications and clarifications will be made by addenda as provided below.

Inquiries regarding the RFSQ should be lodged in eProcurement portal.

7.2. Objections to RFSQ Terms

Should a proposer object on any ground to any provision or legal requirement set forth in this RFSQ, the proposer must, not more than ten calendar days after the RFSQ is issued, provide written notice to the department, via eProcurement portal, setting forth with specific grounds for the objection.

7.3. Addenda

F5SMC may cancel, revise, or reissue this RFSQ, in whole or in part, for any reason. Revisions will be posted as Addenda on eProcurement portal. No other revision of this RFSQ is valid. Proposers shall be responsible for ensuring that their proposals reflects any and all Addenda issued by the County prior to the proposal due date regardless of when a proposal is submitted. Therefore, the F5SMC recommends that proposers consult eProcurement portal frequently, including shortly before the proposal due date, to confirm that all Addenda have been downloaded.

7.4. Term of Proposal

Submission of a proposal signifies that the proposed services and prices are valid for the duration of the proposed agreement term and that the quoted prices are genuine and not the result of collusion or any other anti-competitive activity.

7.5. Revision or Withdrawal of Proposal

A proposer may revise a proposal on the proposer's own initiative at any time before the deadline for submission of proposals. The proposer must submit the revised proposal in the same manner as the original on or before the proposal due date.

A proposer may withdraw a proposal at any time before the deadline for submission of proposals. After that time, whether or not a new RFSQ is issued for the same subject matter, withdrawal of a proposal may preclude the proposer from participating in the procurement as a proposer or subcontractor, except that an original equipment manufacturer may participate indirectly through a reseller.

7.6. Errors and Omissions in Proposal

F5SMC will not be liable for any errors in proposals. Proposals may be rejected as unresponsive if they are incomplete, are missing pages or information, or cannot be opened for any reason. The County may waive minor irregularities, but such waiver will not modify any of the remaining RFSQ requirements.

7.7. No Commitment

Neither submission of a proposal nor the F5SMC's receipt of proposal materials confers any right to the proposer nor any obligation on the County. This RFSQ does not commit the F5SMC to award a contract.

7.8. Financial Responsibility

F5SMC shall have no financial responsibility for any costs incurred by a firm in responding to this RFSQ or participating in any presentations or negotiations.

7.9. Estimated Quantity

If the RFSQ results in an indefinite quantity or a requirements agreement, the goods and services actually requested by the County may be less than the maximum value of the agreement and there is no guarantee, either expressed or implied, as to the actual quantity of goods and services that will be authorized under the agreement.

7.10. Public Record

A. **General**

1. All proposals, protests, and information submitted in response to this solicitation will become the property of F5SMC and will be considered public records. As such, they may be subject to public review.
2. Any contract arising from this RFSQ will be a public record.
3. The County is not seeking proprietary information and will not assert any privileges that may exist on behalf of the proposer.
4. Submission of any materials in response to this RFSQ constitutes:
    - Consent to the F5SMC's release of such materials under the Public Records Act without notice to the person or entity submitting the materials; and
    - Waiver of all claims against F5SMC and/or its officers, agents, or employees that the County has violated a proposer's right to privacy, disclosed trade secrets, or caused any damage by allowing the proposal or materials to be inspected; and
    - Agreement to indemnify and hold harmless the F5SMC for release of such information under the Public Records Act; and
    - Acknowledgement that the F5SMC will not assert any privileges that may exist on behalf of the person or entity submitting the materials.

7.11. Reservations of Rights by F5SMC

The issuance of this RFSQ does not constitute an agreement by F5SMC that any contract will actually be entered into by the F5SMC. F5SMC expressly reserves the right at any time to:

- Waive or correct any defect or informality in any response, proposal, or proposal procedure;
- Reject any or all proposals;
- Reissue an RFSQ;
- Prior to submission deadline for proposals, modify all or any portion of the selection procedures, including deadlines for accepting responses, the specifications or requirements for any materials, equipment or services to be provided under this RFSQ, or the requirements for contents or format of the proposals;
- Procure any materials, equipment or services specified in this RFSQ by any other means; or
- Determine that no project will be pursued.

7.12. No Waiver

No waiver by F5SMC of any provision of this RFSQ shall be implied from any failure by the County to recognize or take action on account of any failure by a proposer to observe any provision of this RFSQ.

7.13. Cooperative Agreement (Piggyback)

This competitive solicitation is being conducted as a Cooperative Procurement. The services, terms and conditions of any agreement resulting from this solicitation may be used by other organizations as a Cooperative Agreement.

This provision in no way commits any affiliate to procure services from any awarded contractor, nor does it guarantee that any additional orders will result. At their discretion, and subject to their own procurement policies, interested organizations may make use of this competitive procurement and contract directly from the awarded contractor.

8. Appeal Process

8.1. Appeal of Contract Award

Emails informing both successful and unsuccessful Proposers whether their proposals were selected for funding will be sent to the contact persons identified in proposal Cover Letters by **July 1, 2026.**

Within five (5) working days of F5SMC's issuance of a notice of intent to award the contract, any organization that has submitted a responsive proposal and believes that F5SMC has incorrectly selected another proposer for award may submit a written notice of appeal. Such notice of appeal must be received by F5SMC on or before the fifth working day after F5SMC's issuance of the notice of intent to award.

Appeals shall be limited to the following grounds:

A. Any failure of F5SMC to follow RFSQ procedures as articulated in the RFSQ; and/or

B. The RFSQ review criteria were not appropriately applied to the proposal.

The notice of appeal must include a written statement specifying in detail each and every one of the grounds asserted for the appeal. The appeal must be signed by an individual authorized to represent the proposer, and must cite the law, rule, local ordinance, procedure or RFSQ provision on which the appeal is based. In addition, the protestor must specify facts and evidence sufficient for F5SMC to determine the validity of the appeal.

The Executive Director of F5SMC will respond in writing to the appeal within 10 calendar days of the receipt of the written appeal. F5SMC staff may establish a meeting with the Proposer in order to discuss the concerns. The decision of the Executive Director of F5SMC is final.

If the proposer fails to follow any of the instructions set forth in this RFSQ, Proposer will waive the right to file an appeal with the Commission.

8.2. Delivery of Appeals

A Proposer must submit a written appeal via email **by 5:00 pm on July 9, 2026** to the attention of the Executive Director of F5SMC and copied to the Staff as indicated below. Appeals may be written in the body of the email itself or sent as an attachment to the email.

Appeals shall be emailed to: Kitty Lopez, Executive Director, F5SMC at klopez@smcgov.org **and copied to**: Michelle Blakely,
Deputy Director, mblakely@smcgov.org

Mailed or hand-delivered appeals will not be accepted.