



AGENDA REPORT

TO: Steven Falk
Interim City Administrator

FROM: Nicole Neditch
Interim Communications
Director

SUBJECT: Website Design and Development
Services

DATE: May 5, 2023

City Administrator Approval 

Date: May 11, 2023

RECOMMENDATION

Staff Recommends That The City Council Adopt A Resolution Waiving The Competitive Multiple-Step Solicitation Process Required For The Acquisition Of Information Technology Systems, And Authorizing The City Administrator To Amend The Professional Services Agreement With Exygy, Inc For Website Design And Development Services For The City's Website To Extend The Term By An Additional Year And Increase The Compensation By An Amount Not To Exceed \$120,000.00 For A Total Contract Amount Of \$867,000.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Adopting the proposed resolution authorizes the City Administrator or designee to amend the existing Professional Services Agreement (Agreement) with Exygy, Inc, which has been providing critically needed services to support the City's Oaklandca.gov website since February 2021.

Exygy will complete their current scope of work by June 30, 2023. The proposed resolution will extend the agreement term for an additional year, until June 30, 2024, at a cost of one hundred and twenty thousand dollars (\$120,000.00). Their current agreement has a total cost not to exceed seven-hundred and forty-seven thousand dollars (\$747,000), and with this increase, their total contract amount will be eight-hundred and sixty-seven thousand dollars (\$867,000).

Under the extended agreement, the City Administrator's Office will continue to receive ongoing website maintenance support and improvements, including much-needed security upgrades. The contract is limited in size and scope as we migrate the City's website to a new Content Management System. This move will support the City in making swifter progress on priorities related to enhanced security, multilingual content, and staff authoring.

REASON FOR URGENCY

Exygy will complete their current scope of work by June 30, 2023. An extension of the contract will ensure ongoing maintenance of our website.

Finance and Management Committee
May 23, 2023

BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

The City of Oakland has been engaged in a multi-year process to redesign and re-architect the City's website and our approach to digital service delivery. The approach is to:

- Retool our service processes to make them simpler and easier to access.
- Design interfaces for real-world users—both staff and residents—and test those designs to be sure they work.
- Use data and analytics to define high demand needs and prioritize those services as we build the site.
- Inspire City staff to try new approaches and foster new relationships with the community based on trust and mutually beneficial outcomes.

Most importantly, this process is iterative and ongoing. The City website will never be “done” only continually improved based on user needs and measured outcomes.

Staff in the City Administrator's office have worked to keep the website up and respond to the needs of our staff and our community but haven't had the internal capacity to iterate quickly enough to meet City staff and the community's evolving needs. To make progress more swiftly and ensure the stability of our website, staff identified the need to bring in a partner with expertise in user research, user experience design, information architecture, accessible website development and deployment, and content strategy. Without a budget to hire a team with the qualifications to perform all these roles, the option providing the most stability was finding a qualified firm that could bring in the right support as needed.

ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES

Exygy, Inc. was selected to be this partner through a formal RFP process. Exygy is a full-stack digital agency with over a decade of experience and expertise in everything from engineering and design to product and content strategy. Their team has a wealth of experience building inclusive, highly functional websites for government agencies, including the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, San Francisco Unified School District, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), The Judicial Council of California, The City and County of San Francisco, and Alameda County. Most of Exygy's projects involve partnering with a mix of community members, local stakeholders, community-based organizations, and government teams to lead successful projects that ensure lasting value to the communities they serve.

Criteria used to select the firm included

- the team's experience in working with local government partners,
- the professional background and qualification of the team members,
- the capacity of the organization to take on a project of this size, as well as the understanding of the nature and extent of the services required.

Website Development Roadmap

Since embarking on this partnership in February 2021, Exygy, in collaboration with City staff, conducted a thorough discovery process to identify the top priorities, defined a product

roadmap, and began work to improve the online service experience and help people find information related to public meetings. Staff from across the City of Oakland, service providers, and community members have helped define the priorities.

Key priorities identified include:

1. **Information Architecture (IA) & Navigation**
2. **Improved Search**
 - a. Search is the primary form of navigation for users; however, search components and landing pages are visually flat and inconsistent. Search terms bring up old and outdated content.
3. **Welcoming and Easy to Use Navigation**
 - a. Less than 10% enter the website through the homepage, and over 80% of our website visitors are “new users.” A welcoming and easy-to-use global navigation is critical to orient people.
4. **Improved in-page navigation**
 - a. Improving in-page navigation with wayfinding components. Much interrelated content needs to be easier to navigate between pages.
5. **Surface key content**
 - a. People use service providers (311, Library, Mayor’s Office Front Desk, Finance chat widget) to help locate city services on the website, creating an extra burden on City staff to find the right resource quickly. If we make the website easier for staff to use, in turn, it will be easier for our users to use.
6. **User Experience Design**
7. **Consistency Across Site**
 - a. There is a lack of consistency across oaklandca.gov, including voice & tone, visual interface, and content.
8. **Unified Content Strategy**
 - a. There is overwhelming old or archived content on the website (sometimes for compliance reasons). Lack of a unified content strategy and content management and inconsistent resources across teams leads to eccentricity in voice and tone or misinformation.
9. **Improvements to the Visual Design**
 - a. The current visual design lacks imagery and iconography to capture the spirit and diversity of the Oakland community authentically. Aside from the “tree,” there is little to no cohesive visual branding.
10. **Accessibility**
11. **Accessibility Tools and Training for Staff**
 - a. Staff have limited access to accessibility tools and training, meaning they are not always centering the needs of people with disabilities or language barriers.
12. **Multilingual Content Strategy**
 - a. Multilingual content is often kept in images or PDFs that are not easily accessible. Because there is no easy way to post manual translations, many people put translated materials in PDF’s which are not accessible via search.
13. **Improved Readability**
 - a. Many of the top most-visited pages are not easily readable. Content for many services and process pages are complex and verbose, written at advanced reading levels.
14. **Improved Style Guide**

- a. Multiple contrasting styles for section headers, links, and other components may make pages harder to read and understand.
- 15. **Expanding Online Services**
- 16. **Redesigned Service Landing Pages**
 - a. Service pages are inconsistent, with the quality and quantity of content varying greatly. There's an opportunity to improve readability and wayfinding to help visitors find services more efficiently.
- 17. **Online Service Delivery**
 - a. Many services still involve downloading PDFs that are returned to the City. There is an opportunity to digitize services and improve back-end workflows.
- 18. **Technology Governance for 3rd Party Platforms**
 - a. Many departments rely on outside websites for transactions, making for an inconsistent user experience. There's a need to determine process and governance for 3rd-party integrations for the website.
- 19. **Staff Training & Support**
- 20. **Enhanced Staff Training**
 - a. There is a capacity challenge with ongoing website support and training. With over 300+ website contributors across the site, people constantly need to be trained and retrained.
- 21. **Content Templates**
 - a. Departments are grateful for a templated, prescribed approach, though it can have limitations, especially when there is no capacity to evolve templates to meet changing needs.
- 22. **Improved Authoring Experience**
 - a. The authoring experience in Craft CMS is challenging. There are inconsistent training experiences, and inconsistencies in fields, entry types, and naming conventions further this challenge. Support is needed to create a standard structure, organization, and tagging for content.

The extension of this contract will allow staff to work with Exygy to build on the momentum generated so far and continue progressing toward achieving these priorities and the larger Citywide goal of providing **responsive, trustworthy government** services and information

This year, Exygy and City staff will focus on migrating the Content Management System that supports the website to a new system to help the City make swifter progress on the priorities outlined above, specifically on security, multilingual content, and the staff authoring experience.

Waiver of Competitive Process

[Oakland Municipal Code \(OMC\) Section 2.04.042.B](#) requires that the City Administrator conduct a competitive multi-step solicitation process for the acquisition of any computerized or information technology systems. [OMC Section 2.04.042.C](#) permits the City Council to waive the competitive process upon a recommendation of the City Administrator and finding determination by the City Council that it is in the City's best interests to waive the solicitation processes.

Staff recommends that it is in the best interest of the City to waive the multi-step solicitation process to build on the work done to date and ensure ongoing improvements and sustainability of the City's website while the City migrates to a new Content Management System.

The City Administrator has determined that this contract is professional, scientific or technical, and temporary in nature, and the performance of this contract shall not result in the loss of employment or salary by any person having permanent status in the competitive services.

That the Council finds and determines that pursuant to [OMC Section 2.04.042.D](#), for the reasons stated above and in the City Administrator's report accompanying this resolution, it is in the best interests of the City to waive the competitive multi-step solicitation process for the information technology services to be purchased under the proposed contract, and so waives the requirements.

FISCAL IMPACT

The proposed contract amendment will not exceed \$120,000 for fiscal years 2023-24. This funding was appropriated by the City Council in the Adopted Midcycle Budget For Fiscal Years 2022-23 ([Resolution No. 89377](#)). Funds are available in the Information Technology (4600), City Administrator: Communications & Media Org (02112), Administrative Project (1000002).

PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST

Oakland's website (oaklandca.gov) receives about 2.5 million unique visitors per year looking to access City services or information online.

Exygy, in partnership with City Staff, is analyzing user analytics and conducting user testing to ensure that our updates serve our community's needs and align with the principles of digital service delivery.

COORDINATION

The core team who helped develop the goals and evaluate the firms consisted of representatives from the City Administrator's Office, the Communications Office, ADA Programs, Information Technology, the Department of Transportation, the Department of Public Works, the Department of Race & Equity, the Planning and Building Department, and the Mayor's Office.

Exygy collaborated with representatives from every City department to develop the website roadmap. City staff generated over 680 ideas on how to improve the website. Exygy has conducted one-on-one interviews with over 50 staff members and hosted workshops that have engaged many more.

PAST PERFORMANCE, EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

The City awarded the initial agreement with Exygy through a formal RFP process. Staff have been satisfied with the services delivered to date. Exygy, Inc has completed the initial scope of work, which has included: creating a shared vision and roadmap, foundational improvements to the design and structure of the website, resulting in improved search and navigation, and prioritized redesigns of critical elements of the City of Oakland's website, including service

pages and public meetings. In addition, the team has supported the City of Oakland with ongoing website maintenance and improvements.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic: By digitizing processes and making the necessary organizational changes, the City of Oakland can improve the delivery of services, make our operations more efficient, and result in cost savings and increased revenue.

Environmental: As additional City processes are automated and digitized, fewer paper forms will be used, thereby reducing paper consumption and minimizing the use of electronic printers and ink. Also, the City's collective carbon footprint may be reduced as more citizens are able to access services through the City's website instead of City Hall.

Race & Equity: By harnessing technology, we can serve people where they are: on mobile devices using simpler, human-centered interfaces accessible at all times. Fair, inclusive, and equitable access to services must be factored into the design of digital services. We achieve this goal through ongoing user research and testing with our community members who have traditionally been hardest to reach: people who speak limited English and residents with limited literacy or disabilities or poor access to advanced technologies such as the latest smartphone or fastest Wi-Fi connection. When we make our services more accessible for people who have faced the most significant barriers to accessing government services, they, in turn, become more accessible for everyone.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff Recommends That The City Council Adopt A Resolution Waiving The Competitive Multiple-Step Solicitation Process Required For The Acquisition Of Information Technology Systems, And Authorizing The City Administrator To Amend The Professional Services Agreement With Exygy, Inc For Website Design And Development Services For The City's Website To Extend The Term By An Additional Year And Increase The Compensation By An Amount Not To Exceed \$120,000.00 For A Total Contract Amount Of \$867,000.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Nicole Neditch, Interim Communications Director, at (510) 238-6365.

Respectfully submitted,



Nicole Neditch
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