



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: HUMAN RESOURCES

File #: 21-691

Board Meeting Date: 9/14/2021

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

From: Michael Callagy, County Manager
Louise Rogers, Chief, San Mateo County Health

Subject: Agreement with True North, Inc. for COVID-19 Media Services

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a resolution authorizing an agreement with True North, Inc. to provide media campaign services to communicate COVID-19-related public health information through creative content and media placement in an amount not to exceed \$625,000 through March 31, 2022.

BACKGROUND:

Since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, the County has taken extensive steps to prevent and respond to its spread, including funding, supporting and coordinating testing, contact tracing, isolation, quarantine and treatment for infected individuals, public health and safety communications and interventions, issuance and enforcement of health orders, health system response and vaccination programs.

As part of its response, the County has dedicated resources to ensuring countywide dissemination of essential public health information to save lives and protect health and safety. Toward this end, on May 11, 2020, the County Manager, after completing an RFP process and pursuant to authority granted by this Board under Resolution No. 077305 to enter into contracts for goods and services related to the pandemic in amounts up to \$500,000, entered into an agreement with True North, Inc. to establish a San Mateo County Resiliency Media Campaign (the "Comeback Campaign").

The Comeback Campaign is designed to communicate essential public health information relating to the pandemic to the public through television, print, digital and out of home advertising in multiple languages. The Comeback Campaign, which reinforced the important public health measures of handwashing, masking and social distancing, has also been used to facilitate more targeted outreach to impacted populations.

The County amended its original agreement with True North in June and October 2020 to increase

the scope of services, term and corresponding payment obligation in connection with the County's continuing public health outreach efforts. Under those amendments, the County's total aggregate financial commitment to True North was \$375,000. The County briefly executed and then terminated a third amendment to that agreement in favor of bringing a comprehensive new agreement before this Board that would cover all anticipated services going forward and provide funding for the Comeback Campaign through March 31, 2022.

DISCUSSION:

To effectively communicate essential public health information relating to the pandemic, including to promote vaccine access, the County Manager's Office and County Health in partnership with the Health Plan of San Mateo wish to expand their multi-lingual outreach efforts countywide with paid advertising and direct mail to augment targeted outreach to specific communities with lower vaccination rates than the County average. The proposed new agreement with True North that is presented to this Board will implement this expanded public health communication effort.

As of the end of July 2021, there were approximately 55,000 eligible unvaccinated residents in the County who remain at risk of contracting and spreading COVID-19, especially as the Delta variant spreads and future variants could be on the horizon.

The strategy for the last several months has been to make access to vaccination as easy as possible, by offering vaccine clinics at standard times in neighborhoods throughout the county where vaccination rates have been lower than the county average. It has also enabled community groups such as churches, soccer leagues, and others to request a vaccination clinic for their group. In addition to giving out shots, these clinics are increasingly important community outreach tools.

To reinforce and amplify targeted outreach about vaccine access and hesitancy, it is recommended to expand outreach efforts countywide via paid advertising in mainstream and community media (including TV and radio) and direct mail to Health Plan of San Mateo and San Mateo Medical Center clients identified as unvaccinated. Each strategy will promote vaccine access, and address both the risks of staying unvaccinated and the rewards of getting the shots.

These multi-lingual efforts will complement the ongoing targeted, community-based outreach and build on the momentum of the first two phases of the Comeback Campaign, which encouraged residents to take proactive safety steps and "come together."

Staff have coordinated to prepare a new agreement under which True North would provide media campaign services to the County in connection with its public health communication efforts through March 31, 2022. The County's total fiscal obligation under the new agreement is not to exceed \$625,000.

County Counsel has reviewed and approved the resolution and the agreement as to form.

FISCAL IMPACT

The total fiscal obligation under this agreement is not to exceed \$625,000. The County anticipates that the funds for this agreement will primarily be provided by County Health and funds provided through the federal American Rescue Plan or through state and/or federal funds that may be made available in connection with the County's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Remaining amounts not covered by these sources, if any, will be provided through the General Fund.