

Association of Bay Area Governments

Executive Board

November 16, 2023

Agenda Item 6.e.

Bay Area Regional Energy Network (BayREN)

Subject:

Authorization to negotiate and enter into Bay Area Regional Energy Network (BayREN) contract amendment with Grounded Research and Consulting, LLC, in an amount not to exceed \$228,513 for services for BayREN evaluation, measurement, and verification through December 31, 2024

Background:

Since 2013, the Bay Area Regional Energy Network (BayREN) has implemented a portfolio of energy efficiency programs across the region. The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) serves as the program administrator and lead agency for a 10-member unincorporated association of local government entities. BayREN's programs:

- Build the green workforce.
- Advance the state's goals of:
 - doubling energy efficiency in existing buildings by 2030.
 - reducing emissions from existing buildings by at least 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030.
 - Achieving 100 percent renewable and zero-carbon retail electricity and becoming entirely carbon neutral by 2045.
- Aid in building local capacity and serving the unique needs of each jurisdiction's residents and businesses.

BayREN is authorized by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to conduct evaluation, measurement, and verification (EM&V) studies of its programs, processes, and other aspects related to administration of energy efficiency programs. Further, EM&V consultants are authorized to conduct market research, focus groups, and other activities to understand if BayREN programs are serving those they intend to serve. BayREN also needs professional services to help develop compliance metrics as well as assisting with ensuring proper reporting of said metrics.

On August 30, 2022, ABAG released a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) seeking Statements of Qualification (SOQ) to provide EM&V studies and support. The scope of services sought included conducting process evaluations, evaluability studies to ensure proper collection of program data, market studies to understand gaps in the market and how to better serve target audiences, and assistance with metrics tracking and development. Given the scope of services couple with many new and important regulatory activities, the annual budget for the required services has increased from about \$200,000 in 2017 to an expected \$300,000 to \$400,000 each year from 2024 to 2027.

Grounded Research and Consulting, LLC, (Grounded) is a small, women-owned business in Oakland, CA that was formed in 2016 in response to the need for senior-level research that

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nimbly supports program and policy decisions. The two partners have a combined 50 years of experience in providing energy efficiency services. They have assisted BayREN with the development of program and portfolio metrics that have been approved by the CPUC; have helped ensure proper tracking and reporting of metrics; and, have constructed market research and process evaluations of BayREN. The work done by Grounded to-date has been instrumental in ensuring compliance with CPUC reporting requirements. Grounded has also partnered with three other organizations that will round out the expertise of the team.

Grounded's SOQ was ranked first out of three overall among proposers qualified in the service categories included in the RFQ. Given Grounded's exemplary performance executing their scope of work resulting from the RFQ, a proposed amendment is recommended to include a scope of work for their continuance to assist BayREN with the proper tracking, reporting, and evaluation of program and portfolio metrics that have been approved by the CPUC. In addition, Grounded will conduct at least three market research and process evaluations of BayREN programs.

Issues:

None

Recommended Action:

The Executive Board is requested to authorize the Executive Director of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, or his designee, on behalf of the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Bay Area Regional Energy Network, to negotiate and enter into a contract amendment with Grounded Research and Consulting, LLC, in an amount not to exceed \$228,513 for evaluation, measurement, and verification studies for BayREN programs through December 31, 2024.

Attachments:

- A. Summary Approval – Grounded Research and Consulting, LLC

Reviewed:



Alix Bockelman