



**Request for Proposal
Bidder Question/VCE Answers
RFP REF: 2026MWSMS
Updated: October 1, 2026**

Question #	Question	Answer
1	Section II calls for a "multi-functional, multi-lingual website," while section VIII.5 allows an award of "all or part." Would a separately priced website/accessibility proposal be responsive, or must each proposer cover the complete marketing and outreach scope through its team?	VCE prefers that each proposal covers the entire scope of work through its team, internal or contracted. VCE currently anticipates selecting a single firm to provide the services described in the RFP. However, as stated in the RFP, VCE reserves the right to award all or a portion of the Scope of Work as determined to be in the best interest of the agency.
2	For the Title II work, could VCE identify the existing CMS, whether a recent accessibility audit is available, and who supplies and approves Spanish content?	VCE's website is a WordPress site, and there is no accessibility audit available. The VCE team approves Spanish content, usually translated by the marketing contractor.
3	May I send a short capability note mapped to this RFP/scope?	VCE will accept eligible proposals as outlined in the RFP.
4	What is the budget allocated for the 3-year contract term?	VCE's annual marketing and outreach budget has varied over time based on agency priorities, program needs, and Board-approved budgets. For reference, VCE's approved 2025 budget included approximately \$322,000 for marketing and outreach activities. This figure reflects a budget allocation and should not be interpreted as a guaranteed contract amount, annual expenditure level, or commitment of future funding. Actual expenditures have varied from budgeted amounts and future funding levels remain subject to annual budget approval and agency priorities. Proposers should develop their proposed staffing approach and pricing based on the Scope of Work rather than any specific budget figure.
5	Is the vendor expected to maintain/update back-end development of the website, or will they be focused only on maintaining/updating content?	The vendor will be responsible for ongoing website content management and updates. The vendor may also be asked to support minor back-end website maintenance and coordinate with VCE's website hosting and technical service providers. Major website development, platform migrations, or significant back-end system changes are not anticipated under this scope.

6	Will preference be given to firms/vendors with local headquarters?	VCE encourages proposals from firms with experience serving public agencies, community choice aggregators, utilities, or organizations operating within Northern California and VCE's service area. However, proposals will be evaluated based on the criteria outlined in the RFP, and no preference will be given solely on the basis of a firm's headquarters location. Familiarity with VCE's service area, stakeholders, and communities may be beneficial in performing the Scope of Work. VCE anticipates that most coordination and project management activities can be conducted remotely. The selected firm should be prepared to participate in periodic virtual or in-person meetings, Board of Directors and Community Advisory Committee meetings, and other project-related activities within VCE's service territory as needed. The frequency of in-person participation will vary based on VCE's operational and programmatic needs. Proposers should demonstrate their ability to provide both remote support and in-person services when required.
7	Does VCE have an estimate or range for the number of social posts, collateral pieces, etc. that the vendor will provide (on a monthly or annual basis)?	The volume of social media posts, print and digital collateral, website updates, and other communications materials will vary based on program needs and VCE review and approval processes. Proposers should assume a level of effort generally consistent with VCE's current communications activities.
8	If a proposer chooses to include subcontractors, can the collective prime and subcontractor team's experience be utilized to satisfy the firm requirements outlined in the RFP?	Yes
9	Would you be able to share the anticipated budget or budget range allocated for these services?	Please see Question #4
10	Could you confirm whether a UK-registered firm is eligible to submit as prime, and whether any California registration or insurance requirements must be in place at submission or only at contract award?	Qualified firms may submit proposals regardless of their geographic location. VCE does not require a local office presence within California or VCE's service territory. However, familiarity with VCE's service area, stakeholders, and communities may be beneficial in performing the Scope of Work. VCE does not require prior experience with a Community Choice Aggregator (CCA) or public agency as a condition of eligibility. Relevant experience may be considered as part of the proposal evaluation process in accordance with the criteria identified in the RFP. VCE anticipates that most coordination and project management activities can be conducted remotely. The selected firm should be prepared to participate in periodic virtual or in-person meetings, Board of Directors and Community Advisory Committee meetings, and other project-related activities within VCE's service territory as needed. The frequency of in-person participation will vary based on VCE's operational and programmatic needs and cannot be estimated with precision at this time. Proposers should demonstrate their ability to provide both remote support and in-person services when required. Proposers are responsible for ensuring that they satisfy any applicable legal, business registration, insurance, tax, or other requirements necessary to enter into and perform a contract with VCE.
11	Is this a new procurement or does VCE already have a marketing contractor under contract for this or similar services?	VCE currently has a marketing contractor in place.

12	How will costs be evaluated?	Cost will be evaluated based on overall value to VCE, considering proposed rates, fee structure, staffing, qualifications, and the services offered. The lowest-cost proposal will not necessarily receive the highest score.
13	How will “Compliance with VCE Contractual Terms” be determined in the evaluation of proposals?	Compliance with VCE Contractual Terms will be assessed based on the proposer's review of and response to the sample agreement, including any requested exceptions or modifications. VCE will consider the extent to which proposed changes may affect contract execution and administration.
14	Can you please clarify what this means? “Resumes of staff dedicated to 50% or more of the VCE Scope of Work.” What if no one staff of a bidder’s team will have 50 percent or more of their time dedicated to this VCE? Does VCE have a minimum time commitment required of bidder staff to participate in this procurement, and if so, please provide those details.	The intent of this requirement is to provide VCE with information regarding the qualifications and relevant experience of the key personnel who will be assigned to the contract. If no individual team member is expected to dedicate 50% or more of their time to VCE, proposers should instead provide resumes for the primary staff members who will have significant responsibility for performing and overseeing the Scope of Work. VCE does not require a minimum percentage time commitment for any individual staff member as a condition of participation in this procurement.
15	Will VCE be selecting more than one consultant for this procurement? If so, how will work be assigned to multiple firms?	The intent is to select one firm.
16	Is there a budget associated with this procurement effort? Or what has VCE traditionally spent on marketing services on an annual basis?	Please see Question #4.
17	Will VCE be eliminating the Privacy and Cybersecurity Liability Insurance requirement based on the scope of the services requested in this procurement?	Privacy and cybersecurity liability requirements may be addressed during contract negotiations with the selected proposer. VCE recognizes that insurance needs may vary depending on the nature of the services provided. As indicated in Exhibit D, privacy and cybersecurity liability coverage requirements may be reduced or eliminated where warranted by the scope of work. VCE will review any proposed exceptions or modifications during the contract negotiation phase and make determinations based on the services to be performed and the associated risk exposure.
18	The Proposal Evaluation Criteria outlined on page 4 of the RFP shows that cost is 20% (weighted) of the score. Can you please provide the criteria used to achieve the highest score in this category – i.e., is it lowest average hourly rate, lowest rates overall, or some other factor(s)?	Cost proposals will be evaluated based on their overall reasonableness, competitiveness, and value in relation to the services proposed. VCE will consider proposed rates, anticipated level of effort, and the extent to which the cost proposal aligns with the firm's qualifications, experience, and proposed approach. The highest score will not necessarily be awarded solely to the proposal with the lowest rates or lowest overall cost.
19	Does VCE have an anticipated annual budget for the initial three-year term? Additionally, may proposers structure pricing as a base scope with separately priced optional or variable services, such as paid media, expanded multilingual content, printing, postage, or new program launches?	Please see Question #13 for budget information. VCE recognizes that firms may use different approaches to structuring project costs. Proposers may include costs either within the fixed project fee or as separately itemized budget components. Proposals should clearly identify all assumptions, direct costs, and fees so that VCE can understand the proposed cost structure and compare proposals consistently. Any proposed costs should be developed with consideration of the project's overall budget constraints.

20	To help firms develop an appropriate staffing and pricing model, can VCE provide the anticipated volume or cadence for recurring services such as website updates, social media content, collateral development, press releases/media outreach, email communications, customer notifications, and other ongoing marketing activities? If no established volume exists, should proposers recommend a production cadence based on anticipated program needs?	Please see Question #7. Proposers can recommend cadence and approach if it fits within the RFP proposal criteria.
21	The RFP states that the selected firm will work in collaboration with VCE vendors. Can VCE clarify which marketing, communications, website, media, translation, printing, or other vendors currently support VCE; which responsibilities are expected to remain with those vendors versus transition to the selected firm; and whether VCE anticipates a formal transition of website access, social media administration, brand assets, historical analytics, and other existing materials prior to the January 1, 2027 contract start?	VCE currently works with a variety of internal and external resources to support communications, marketing, website management, translation, media placement, printing, and related functions. The specific mix of resources may change over time based on VCE's operational needs and procurement activities. The selected firm should be prepared to collaborate with VCE staff and any third-party vendors engaged by VCE during the contract term. Final allocation of responsibilities will be established during contract implementation and may evolve as needs change. VCE anticipates a transition process prior to the January 1, 2027 contract start date, including the transfer or provision of access to relevant accounts, assets, materials, and historical information necessary for contract performance, as applicable and available. This may include website access, social media administration, brand assets, and other communications resources needed to support continuity of services.
22	Does VCE have any preference or requirement regarding the geographic location of the selected firm or key personnel? Should proposers anticipate regular in-person meetings, Board or Community Advisory Committee meetings, community engagement activities, events, or other on-site support within VCE's service territory, and if so, at approximately what frequency?	VCE does not require the selected firm or key personnel to be located within VCE's service territory, nor will proposals be evaluated based solely on geographic location. However, familiarity with VCE's service area, stakeholders, and communities may be beneficial in performing the Scope of Work. VCE anticipates that most coordination and project management activities can be conducted remotely. The selected firm should be prepared to participate in periodic virtual or in-person meetings, Board of Directors and Community Advisory Committee meetings, and other project-related activities within VCE's service territory as needed. The frequency of in-person participation will vary based on VCE's operational and programmatic needs and cannot be estimated with precision at this time. Proposers should demonstrate their ability to provide both remote support and in-person services when required.
23	The Proposal Evaluation Criteria outlined on page 4 of the RFP shows that cost is 20% (weighted) of the score. Can you please provide the criteria used to achieve the highest score in this category – i.e., is it lowest average hourly rate, lowest rates overall, or some other factor(s)?	Cost proposals will be evaluated based on their overall reasonableness, competitiveness, and value in relation to the services proposed. VCE will consider proposed rates, anticipated level of effort, and the extent to which the cost proposal aligns with the firm's qualifications, experience, and proposed approach. The highest score will not necessarily be awarded solely to the proposal with the lowest rates or lowest overall cost.
24	In the submission requirements it lists resumes for staff dedicated to 50% or more of the VCE scope of work – for other staff should they just be included in the hourly rates or do we need to provide any additional information for our full team?	VCE does not require resumes for all personnel included in the proposed rate schedule. The purpose of this requirement is to understand the qualifications and experience of the key staff who will be primarily responsible for delivering services to VCE. If no staff member is expected to devote 50% or more of their time to the contract, please provide resumes for the primary personnel who will serve VCE and describe the supporting team as appropriate.

25	Exhibit D lists privacy and cybersecurity liability coverage of \$5 million per occurrence and notes that this requirement may be reduced or eliminated based on the scope of services. Would VCE consider a lower limit or removal of this requirement if the selected consultant's work does not involve hosting customer data, accessing sensitive customer information or managing VCE's information systems?	VCE recognizes that insurance needs may vary depending on the nature of the services provided. As indicated in Exhibit D, privacy and cybersecurity liability coverage requirements may be reduced or eliminated where warranted by the scope of work. VCE will review any proposed exceptions or modifications during the contract negotiation phase and make determinations based on the services to be performed and the associated risk exposure.
26	Please also clarify whether proposers should identify any requested adjustment in their proposal and proposed contract redlines, and whether proof of the final required coverage is needed with the proposal or only after award.	Proposers should include any desired contract redlines in their proposal. VCE will review any proposed exceptions or modifications, and insurance coverage, during the contract negotiation phase.
27	What is the anticipated annual budget or not-to-exceed amount for this contract?	Please see Question #4
28	Who currently provides these services, and what was the annual spend over the last two to three years?	VCE's current contract for communications and marketing support is a public record and is available through VCE's public meeting materials and contract records. Interested proposers may review those materials for information regarding the current scope of services and contract structure. Proposers should note, however, that this RFP reflects VCE's current needs and priorities, which may differ from prior contractual arrangements.
29	Does the scope include paid media placement? If so, is media spend part of the contract budget or paid separately?	Media spend is not included in this RFP scope.
30	Are printing, postage and translation billed as pass-through costs? About how many compliance notices go out each year?	Printing, postage and translation may be considered pass-through costs. VCE anticipates that the selected firm will support the development, design, production coordination, and distribution of such materials, including coordination with printing and mailing vendors, as applicable. VCE typically issues a limited number of major compliance-related customer notices each year that may require design updates and production coordination, as well as additional recurring notices that generally involve less extensive revisions.
31	What platform is the website built on, and who hosts it? Is a redesign expected during the term, or maintenance only? Is ADA remediation in scope?	VCE's website is currently built on the WordPress platform. Information regarding website hosting and administrative access will be provided to the selected firm during the transition and contract implementation process. The primary expectation is ongoing website maintenance, content updates, and support for VCE's communications and outreach activities. VCE may consider future website enhancements or redesign efforts during the contract term if organizational needs warrant. ADA accessibility support is within the scope of services. VCE expects the selected firm to support the agency's ongoing accessibility objectives, including maintaining accessible website content and digital communications materials and assisting with accessibility remediation efforts as needed.
32	Beyond English and Spanish, are other languages needed?	No

33	Which marketing functions are handled by other VCE vendors?	VCE may utilize third-party vendors for specialized services such as printing, website hosting, technology support, and other project-specific needs. The specific vendors and allocation of responsibilities may change over time based on operational requirements and procurement activities. The selected firm will be expected to provide the communications, marketing, and outreach services described in the Scope of Work and to coordinate with VCE staff and any third-party vendors as needed to support successful project delivery. The precise division of responsibilities will be established during contract implementation and may evolve throughout the contract term.
34	Do resumes, collateral examples, and references count toward the 10-page limit?	The 10-page limit applies to the proposer's narrative response to the RFP requirements. Supporting materials, such as resumes of key personnel, references, and representative work samples, may be submitted as appendices and will not count toward the page limit, provided they are directly relevant to the proposal. VCE requests that appendices be limited to materials necessary to demonstrate qualifications and relevant experience.
35	What level of cyber liability coverage does VCE expect for this scope?	VCE recognizes that insurance needs may vary depending on the nature of the services provided. VCE will review any proposed exceptions or modifications during the contract negotiation phase and make determinations based on the services to be performed and the associated risk exposure.
36	Is VCE able to share an anticipated annual budget or not-to-exceed amount for this contract? (Section VI.9)	Please see Question #4.
37	Should proposed fees include the cost of paid media placements, or will media purchases be billed to VCE separately as pass-through expenses?	They will be billed as pass-through costs.
38	What approximate annual paid media spend should firms plan for, if any?	There is not an established budget for paid media.
39	Will print production, postage and mail house services continue to be contracted directly by VCE?	Yes
40	Should proposed fees include Spanish translation of all materials? (Section II.1.b)	VCE recognizes that firms may use different approaches to structuring project costs. Proposers may include translation costs either within the fixed project fee or as separately itemized budget components. Proposals should clearly identify all assumptions, direct costs, and fees so that VCE can understand the proposed cost structure and compare proposals consistently. Any proposed costs should be developed with consideration of the project's overall budget constraints.
41	Does VCE prefer an hourly rate schedule, a monthly retainer, or a hybrid structure? (Section VI.9)	VCE recognizes that firms may use different approaches to structuring project costs. Proposals should clearly identify all assumptions, direct costs, and fees so that VCE can understand the proposed cost structure and compare proposals consistently. Any proposed costs should be developed with consideration of the project's overall budget constraints.

42	Can VCE share the approximate volume of work completed over the last 12 months, such as campaigns, website updates, social posts, emails, mailers, collateral pieces and press releases?	VCE is unable to provide a complete accounting of campaigns, website updates, social media posts, emails, mailers, collateral pieces, press releases, or similar activities over the previous 12 months. The volume of work varies throughout the year based on program priorities, operational needs, and communications opportunities. Proposers should assume a level of effort generally consistent with supporting a full-service communications and marketing program for a public agency of VCE's size and scope.
43	Are there known seasonal peaks or program launches in 2027 that firms should plan capacity around?	Communications and outreach needs may fluctuate throughout the year based on operational priorities, regulatory developments, customer programs, Board direction, and other agency needs. Proposers should demonstrate the ability to provide flexible support and adjust staffing resources as needed during the contract term.
44	Is VCE seeking routine maintenance and incremental improvements to the existing website, or does it anticipate a redesign or platform migration during the contract term?	The primary expectation is ongoing website maintenance, content updates, and support for VCE's communications and outreach activities. VCE may consider future website enhancements or redesign efforts during the contract term if organizational needs warrant.
45	Has VCE completed an accessibility audit of the current website against WCAG 2.1 Level AA? (Section II.1.b)	No
46	Does VCE expect the selected firm to bring the website into compliance with ADA Title II, or to maintain compliance that is already in place? (Section II.1.b)	VCE is in the process of bringing the website into compliance with ADA Title II, and it is the expectation that that work will continue.
47	Will the selected firm be responsible for website hosting, security, backups and software updates, or will those remain with VCE or another vendor?	VCE has not finalized responsibility for website hosting, security, backups, and software updates under the new contract. The selected firm will be expected to support the website in accordance with the final scope of services, and specific responsibilities for technical website maintenance will be determined during contract negotiations and transition planning.
48	Will the selected firm deploy customer emails through VCE's email platform, or provide content and creative only?	VCE is open to a range of service models. The selected firm may be asked to provide content and creative services, email deployment support, or both, depending on the firm's capabilities and VCE's needs. Specific responsibilities will be determined during contract implementation.
49	Does VCE send customer email through Salesforce, or through a separate email marketing platform? If separate, what platform are you using?	VCE currently distributes customer communications through two existing email marketing platforms. The selected firm should be prepared to work within VCE's existing communications technology environment. Platform-specific details will be provided to the selected firm during the transition process.
50	Which VCE staff roles, if any, will share responsibility with the selected firm for maintaining and improving VCE's social media presence? (Section II.1.c)	VCE anticipates a collaborative approach between the selected firm and VCE staff. VCE staff will remain involved in strategy, oversight, and approvals, while the selected firm will provide communications and marketing support consistent with the Scope of Work. The specific division of responsibilities will be determined during contract implementation.
51	Which VCE staff roles, if any, will share responsibility with the selected firm for press outreach and media relations? (Section II.2.a)	Please see Question #50.

52	Will administrative access to VCE's website, social media and analytics accounts be transferred to the selected firm at the start of the contract?	VCE will work with the selected firm during contract implementation to determine the appropriate level of access to website, social media, analytics, and other communications platforms. Access will be provided as necessary to support the contracted services and may be phased in during the transition period.
53	Will VCE provide the selected firm with editable source files for existing brand assets and program collateral? (Section II.1.a)	VCE expects to provide the selected firm with available brand assets and program materials needed to support contract services. The availability of editable source files will vary and will be addressed during the transition and contract implementation process.
54	Will customer focus group and survey work be performed under this contract, or solely under RFP 2026-VCE-FOCUS?	RFP 2026-VCE-FOCUS is a separate scope. However, we anticipate that the successful firm would work collaboratively with the selected Focus Group firm.
55	Are Sections VI.3 through VI.9 (resumes, prior experience, conflicts, litigation, other factors, references and rates) excluded from the page limits stated in Sections VI.1 and VI.2?	Please see Question #34.
56	May collateral examples be submitted through a secure download link? (Section VI.2)	No
57	Does VCE have an anticipated annual budget or annual not-to-exceed amount for professional services under this contract that it can share with proposers?	Please see Question #4.
58	Does VCE currently anticipate selecting one prime consultant to perform the full scope, or is VCE considering awarding portions of the scope to more than one firm?	VCE currently anticipates selecting a single firm to provide the services described in the RFP. However, as stated in the RFP, VCE reserves the right to award all or a portion of the Scope of Work as determined to be in the best interest of the agency.
59	Should proposed professional fees include costs such as paid media, printing, postage/direct mail, translation, photography or video production, website hosting/software, stock assets and other third-party expenses, or would those costs generally be separately authorized and reimbursed?	These costs would be separately authorized and reimbursed.
60	To assist firms in developing an appropriate staffing and fee structure, can VCE provide an approximate current or anticipated volume for recurring work, such as monthly social media content, website updates, newsletters/email communications, collateral pieces, press releases, direct-mail assignments and major campaigns or program launches?	Deliverable volume may vary significantly based on agency needs and priorities throughout the contract term. Proposers should develop staffing and fee structures based on the Scope of Work and their professional judgment regarding the resources necessary to provide the requested services.
61	Does VCE anticipate that the selected consultant will plan, negotiate, purchase and manage paid media, or will the consultant primarily provide strategy, creative and coordination while media purchasing is handled separately? If media buying is contemplated, can VCE provide an approximate annual media-spend range?	VCE does not currently anticipate substantial ongoing paid-media purchasing as part of the contract and is not providing an anticipated annual media-spend range. Paid-media needs, if any, will vary based on program priorities and available budgets. Proposers should identify the media-related services they are able to provide, and specific responsibilities will be determined during contract implementation.
62	What content management system and hosting environment currently support the VCE website? Does VCE anticipate significant redesign, redevelopment or re-platforming during the contract period, or should firms primarily plan for ongoing content management, enhancement, accessibility compliance and maintenance?	VCE's website is currently built on the WordPress platform. The primary expectation is ongoing website maintenance, content updates, and support for VCE's communications and outreach activities. VCE may consider future website enhancements or redesign efforts during the contract term if organizational needs warrant.

63	The RFP notes that the selected firm will collaborate with VCE vendors. Can VCE describe the principal functions currently handled by other vendors or internal staff, particularly for website technology, printing/mail fulfillment, translation, paid media, customer data/CRM functions and program implementation?	VCE may utilize third-party vendors for specialized services such as printing, website hosting, technology support, and other project-specific needs. The specific vendors and allocation of responsibilities may change over time based on operational requirements and procurement activities. The selected firm will be expected to provide the communications, marketing, and outreach services described in the Scope of Work and to coordinate with VCE staff and any third-party vendors as needed to support successful project delivery. The precise division of responsibilities will be established during contract implementation and may evolve throughout the contract term.
64	Does VCE anticipate regular in-person attendance within Davis, Woodland, Winters or Yolo County for Board or staff meetings, community events, media activity or stakeholder engagement? If so, can VCE provide an approximate expected frequency?	VCE anticipates that most coordination and project management activities can be conducted remotely. However, the selected firm should be prepared to participate in periodic virtual or in-person meetings, Board and Community Advisory Committee meetings, and other project-related activities within VCE's service territory as needed. While regular in-person attendance is not required, familiarity with and occasional presence within VCE's service area may be beneficial in supporting community engagement and stakeholder outreach efforts. Because participation needs will vary based on agency priorities and project requirements, VCE is unable to provide an estimated frequency at this time.
65	Beyond maintaining English- and Spanish-language communications, does VCE anticipate communications or translation needs in additional languages during the contract term? Does VCE have an established internal review/approval process for Spanish-language materials?	No. VCE has an established review and approval process for Spanish materials.
66	Are there current baseline metrics or priority KPIs that VCE expects the selected firm to improve, such as brand awareness, customer satisfaction, opt-out rate, UltraGreen opt-ups, program participation, website engagement, email performance or social engagement? What analytics, customer research or relevant performance data will be available to the selected consultant?	VCE has not established required KPIs for this contract. Depending on the nature of the work performed, VCE may consider metrics such as customer engagement, website traffic, email performance, social media activity, program participation, customer awareness, and other communications-related measures. However, VCE's primary objective is to obtain high-quality strategic communications, marketing, outreach, and related support services that effectively advance agency goals and priorities. Relevant analytics, research, and performance information available to VCE may be shared with the selected firm, as appropriate and subject to applicable confidentiality and data access requirements. The specific metrics, reporting expectations, and performance measures associated with the contract will be established collaboratively following contract award.
67	Section VI requests resumes of staff "dedicated to 50% or more of the VCE Scope of Work." Could VCE clarify whether the 50% threshold refers to an individual's percentage of the overall VCE scope/responsibility, or to the percentage of that individual's working time expected to be dedicated to VCE?	VCE is clarifying that proposers should provide resumes for the key personnel who will have primary responsibility for performing and overseeing the Scope of Work. VCE does not require any proposed staff member to dedicate a minimum percentage of their working time to the contract.
68	Does VCE anticipate a formal transition period with the existing consultant, including transfer of website credentials, source/design files, editorial calendars, analytics accounts, media relationships, brand assets and other historical materials to the selected firm?	VCE anticipates a transition process prior to the January 1, 2027 contract start date, including the transfer or provision of access to relevant accounts, assets, materials, and historical information necessary for contract performance, as applicable and available. This may include website access, social media administration, brand assets, and other communications resources needed to support continuity of services.

69	Given the approximately three-year initial term and two potential one-year extensions, may proposers identify reasonable annual adjustments to hourly rates or fee structures for future contract years, or should proposed rates remain fixed throughout the initial three-year period?	Proposers should submit rates that will remain in effect throughout the initial three-year term of the contract. Any rate adjustments associated with optional contract extensions, if applicable, may be proposed and will be subject to mutual agreement at the time an extension is considered.
70	Exhibit D references privacy and cybersecurity liability coverage of \$5 million per occurrence and notes that this requirement may be reduced or eliminated depending on scope. Does VCE anticipate requiring the full \$5 million cyber liability limit for the Marketing, Website and Social Media Services contract?	Privacy and cybersecurity liability requirements may be addressed during contract negotiations with the selected proposer. VCE recognizes that insurance needs may vary depending on the nature of the services provided. As indicated in Exhibit D, privacy and cybersecurity liability coverage requirements may be reduced or eliminated where warranted by the scope of work. VCE will review any proposed exceptions or modifications during the contract negotiation phase and make determinations based on the services to be performed and the associated risk exposure.
71	Will GO 156/Supplier Clearinghouse certification status itself be considered as part of proposal evaluation, or is the requested supplier diversity information primarily for VCE's annual reporting purposes?	Supplier diversity information is being requested to support VCE's supplier diversity tracking, reporting, and related program objectives. GO 156/Supplier Clearinghouse certification status, in and of itself, is not a separate evaluation criterion and will not be assigned independent scoring. Proposals will be evaluated based on the criteria identified in the RFP.
72	Will the existing brand style guide, content calendar, and past outreach/campaign performance data be provided to the incoming firm?	Yes
73	Does VCE's current Outreach and Marketing Plan extend through the next contract term, or would refreshing/updating the plan be part of this scope of work?	VCE is currently developing its Outreach and Marketing Plan and anticipates that this work will continue into the next contract period. While the selected firm will be expected to support implementation of the plan, VCE may also seek the firm's assistance in refining, updating, or expanding communications and outreach strategies over the course of the contract term.
74	Is VCE looking to expand its marketing and communications approach in any new directions (channels, audiences, program areas, etc.) over the next three years?	VCE has not established a specific expansion plan for its marketing and communications activities over the next three years. However, VCE expects communications priorities, outreach approaches, and customer engagement needs to evolve over time. The selected firm should demonstrate the flexibility and strategic expertise necessary to support both ongoing communications activities and future initiatives as agency needs develop.
75	Does the current scope include paid media and/or ad spend management, or does it only include organic social? If it does include paid media, what has your historical paid media budget been?	Media spend is not included in this RFP scope.
76	What platform is the current VCE website on?	The current VCE website is a WordPress site.
77	Can VCE clarify the scope of "website maintenance"? Does this include ongoing content updates only, or does it also encompass technical/backend maintenance, hosting coordination, and/or functionality development?	The vendor will be responsible for ongoing website content management and updates. The vendor may also be asked to support minor back-end website maintenance and coordinate with VCE's website hosting and technical service providers. Major website development, platform migrations, or significant back-end system changes are not anticipated under this scope.

78	Does 'maintaining social media presence' include ongoing community management (responding to comments, messages, and public inquiries), or is the scope limited to content creation, scheduling, and posting?	Maintaining VCE's social media presence is primarily intended to include content strategy, content creation, scheduling, posting, and performance monitoring. Depending on VCE's needs and the selected firm's capabilities, the scope may also include limited support related to social media engagement and community management. Specific responsibilities will be established during contract implementation.
79	What is VCE's current social media posting cadence and content volume - specifically, how many social posts/week, press releases or op-eds/year, e-blast or collateral pieces/year?	VCE has not established fixed quantities for social media posts, press releases, email communications, collateral materials, or other communications activities. Deliverable volume may vary throughout the contract term based on agency priorities and needs.
80	What data and analytics does VCE currently use for both marketing/communication and for program/customer tracking? What has your historical reporting cadence been?	VCE uses a variety of data sources and performance metrics to support communications, marketing, customer engagement, and program-related activities. Depending on the initiative, they may include website analytics, email performance metrics, social media analytics, customer participation information, customer service and enrollment data, survey results, and other operational or program-related information. VCE has not established a single standardized reporting framework or reporting cadence applicable to all communications and marketing activities. Reporting needs vary based on the nature of the project, campaign, program, or communications objective. Relevant data, analytics, and performance information available to VCE may be shared with the selected firm, as appropriate and subject to applicable confidentiality and data access requirements. Specific reporting expectations will be established during contract implementation based on the services being performed.
81	The background section references 'coordinating customer notifications for compliance purposes.' Can VCE clarify what this involves and whether this work is included within the two task categories listed in the Detailed Scope of Services, or represents a separate/additional responsibility?	"Coordinating customer notifications for compliance purposes" generally refers to customer communications that are required by applicable regulations, policies, or program requirements. These notifications may include recurring customer notices as well as periodic updates when regulatory or program changes occur. VCE anticipates that the selected firm will support the development, design, production coordination, and distribution of such materials, including coordination with printing and mailing vendors, as applicable. This work is included within the communications, marketing, and outreach services described in the Scope of Work and is not intended to represent a separate line of services. VCE typically issues a limited number of major compliance-related customer notices each year that may require design updates and production coordination, as well as additional recurring notices that generally involve less extensive revisions.
82	Could you confirm whether the prime contractor may use qualified specialist subcontractors while remaining fully responsible for the contract, quality and deliverables?	Yes
83	Can VCE provide the current website platform/CMS being used (e.g., WordPress, Drupal, custom CMS, etc.)?	WordPress

84	Approximately how many website updates or content requests are expected on a monthly basis?	VCE has not established a fixed volume of website updates or content requests. Website-related work varies throughout the year based on agency priorities, program activities, regulatory requirements, and communications needs. The selected firm should anticipate ongoing website maintenance, content updates, accessibility support, and occasional enhancements to existing website content and functionality. VCE is not providing estimated monthly quantities for website updates as part of this procurement.
85	Are website hosting, security monitoring, backups, plugin management, and ADA compliance remediation included within the expected scope, or are these handled by separate vendors?	VCE currently utilizes third-party resources to support certain website-related technical functions. The selected firm is expected to support website maintenance, content updates, and accessibility efforts and may also be asked to assist with technical website functions, as appropriate. The specific allocation of responsibilities among VCE, the selected firm, and other service providers will be determined during contract implementation.
86	What are the current social media channels managed by VCE, and can VCE share approximate follower counts and engagement metrics for each platform?	VCE utilizes social media as one component of its broader communications and customer engagement program. The selected firm will be provided access to relevant account information, analytics, and performance data necessary to support contract services. VCE is not providing platform-specific audience or engagement metrics as part of this procurement.
87	Does VCE have an incumbent contractor currently providing marketing, website, communications, or social media services? If yes, will a transition period be provided?	Yes. VCE currently has a contract in place for communications and marketing support services. Information regarding the current contract is publicly available through VCE's public records. VCE anticipates a transition period prior to contract commencement and will work with the selected firm to facilitate the transfer of relevant information, access, and materials necessary to support contract performance.
88	Does VCE anticipate a fixed monthly retainer model, time-and-materials model, or is VCE open to alternative pricing structures?	VCE recognizes that firms may use different approaches to structuring project costs. Proposals should clearly identify all assumptions, direct costs, and fees so that VCE can understand the proposed cost structure and compare proposals consistently. Any proposed costs should be developed with consideration of the project's overall budget constraints.
89	Can VCE provide an estimated annual budget range for these services?	Please see Question #4.
90	Will graphic design, content writing, translation, media outreach, website administration, and social media management all be awarded under a single contract, or may portions of the scope be subcontracted?	VCE prefers that each proposal covers the entire scope of work. VCE currently anticipates selecting a single firm to provide the services described in the RFP. However, as stated in the RFP, VCE reserves the right to award all or a portion of the Scope of Work as determined to be in the best interest of the agency.
91	For the multilingual website requirement, are languages limited to English and Spanish, or are additional languages anticipated?	Languages beyond English and Spanish are not anticipated.
92	Are there specific performance KPIs or success metrics that VCE expects the selected vendor to achieve during the contract period?	Please see Question #66.

93	Will VCE permit fully remote delivery of services, with virtual planning and coordination meetings, except where in-person attendance may specifically be required?	VCE encourages proposals from firms with experience serving public agencies, community choice aggregators, utilities, or organizations operating within Northern California and VCE's service area. Familiarity with VCE's service area, stakeholders, and communities may be beneficial in performing the Scope of Work. VCE anticipates that most coordination and project management activities can be conducted remotely. The selected firm should be prepared to participate in periodic virtual or in-person meetings, Board of Directors and Community Advisory Committee meetings, and other project-related activities within VCE's service territory as needed. The frequency of in-person participation will vary based on VCE's operational and programmatic needs. Proposers should demonstrate their ability to provide both remote support and in-person services when required.
94	Apart from the sample agreement included in the RFP, are there any terms that VCE anticipates will be non-negotiable during contract discussions?	VCE has not identified any additional non-negotiable contract terms beyond those reflected in the sample agreement. Proposers are encouraged to identify any requested exceptions or modifications in their proposals. VCE will review proposed changes during contract negotiations and reserves the right to determine whether requested modifications are acceptable.
95	Could you please confirm whether an international/remote digital studio is eligible to submit directly, and whether California/US business registration, local office presence, or prior CCA/public-agency references are mandatory pass/fail requirements?	Qualified firms may submit proposals regardless of their geographic location. VCE does not require a local office presence within California or VCE's service territory. However, familiarity with VCE's service area, stakeholders, and communities may be beneficial in performing the Scope of Work. VCE does not require prior experience with a Community Choice Aggregator (CCA) or public agency as a condition of eligibility. Relevant experience may be considered as part of the proposal evaluation process in accordance with the criteria identified in the RFP. VCE anticipates that most coordination and project management activities can be conducted remotely. The selected firm should be prepared to participate in periodic virtual or in-person meetings, Board of Directors and Community Advisory Committee meetings, and other project-related activities within VCE's service territory as needed. The frequency of in-person participation will vary based on VCE's operational and programmatic needs and cannot be estimated with precision at this time. Proposers should demonstrate their ability to provide both remote support and in-person services when required. Proposers are responsible for ensuring that they satisfy any applicable legal, business registration, insurance, tax, or other requirements necessary to enter into and perform a contract with VCE.
96	Whether VCE expects vendors to provide hosting services for the bilingual website, or only manage updates while VCE retains direct ownership of accounts.	VCE anticipates providing the selected firm with appropriate access to website resources necessary to perform the Scope of Work. The specific allocation of responsibilities for website hosting, account administration, maintenance, and technical support will be determined during contract implementation and may involve coordination among VCE, the selected firm, and other service providers.
97	Preferred approach for bilingual functionality: native CMS support or third-party translation tools.	VCE does not have a preferred approach for bilingual website functionality at this time. Proposers are encouraged to describe their recommended solution and the associated benefits, costs, and maintenance considerations.

98	Expectations for ADA compliance: is independent auditing required, or will vendor self-certification suffice.	VCE has not prescribed a specific approach to accessibility verification at this time. Proposers may describe their standard practices for accessibility testing, auditing, remediation, and quality assurance. Final accessibility expectations and any associated review or reporting requirements will be established during contract implementation based on VCE's needs and applicable accessibility requirements.
99	Scope of press outreach: should vendors include proactive media campaigns beyond compliance notifications.	The Scope of Work may include support for press releases, media inquiries, and other communications activities as needed. VCE has not established an expectation for ongoing proactive media campaigns and is not seeking a dedicated media relations program under this contract. Proposers may, however, describe any relevant media outreach capabilities they can provide.
100	Whether optional add-on services (e.g. analytics dashboards, extended training) should be included in the proposal or priced separately.	Proposals should be based on the Scope of Work described in the RFP. Any optional services or enhancements beyond the requested scope may be included at the proposer's discretion but should be separately identified and priced.
101	Internal budget ceiling or preferred cost range for this project	Please see Question #4.
102	Does VCE use a standard, off-the-shelf CRM/billing platform, or a custom/proprietary system? This affects the technical scope of any data-integration work we may propose.	VCE uses industry-standard systems and third-party service providers to support customer account, billing, and related functions. VCE is not seeking significant data integration, CRM implementation, or billing-system development services as part of the Scope of Work. Should project-specific integration or data-related needs arise during the contract term, VCE will work with the selected firm and relevant service providers to determine the appropriate approach.
103	Approximately how many customer accounts does VCE currently serve (residential, commercial, and agricultural combined)? This helps us size our proposed approach accurately to VCE's real scale.	VCE serves around 62,000 customer accounts.
104	Is there a target volume VCE anticipates for collateral and campaign production (e.g., pieces per month, campaigns per year)?	No
105	Publicly available VCE board materials indicate recent spending of approximately \$140,000+ annually on comparable marketing and communications services. Is this representative of the budget VCE anticipates for this new contract, or does VCE expect the scope or budget to differ meaningfully?	Please see Question #4.
106	Is there an anticipated annual or multi-year budget range for agency fees, media/production and website support?	VCE's expenditures for communications, marketing, website support, media placement, printing, and related services may vary from year to year based on agency priorities, program needs, and available funding. VCE is not providing anticipated annual or multi-year budget ranges as part of this procurement. Proposers should submit pricing based on the services described in the RFP.
107	Which website CMS and marketing/analytics platforms are currently in use?	VCE's website is currently built on the WordPress platform. VCE utilizes a variety of tools and data sources to support communications, marketing, customer engagement, and performance tracking activities. Additional information regarding specific platforms, analytics tools, and related resources will be provided to the selected firm as appropriate during contract implementation. Proposers should describe their experience working with common marketing, communications, and analytics platforms relevant to the services described in the Scope of Work.

108	Does VCE expect the selected partner to provide Spanish-language translation directly, or is coordination with an approved translation resource acceptable?	Coordination with an approved translation resource is acceptable.
109	Are proposers permitted to identify specialist subcontractors/partners for selected workstreams while [firm] remains the prime contractor and single point of accountability?	Yes. Proposers may identify subcontractors, specialist consultants, or teaming partners to support specific elements of the Scope of Work. The proposer submitting the proposal will be considered the prime contractor and will remain responsible for overall contract performance, project management, coordination, and delivery of services.
110	Are there incumbent contracts or systems that the selected partner will be expected to transition from or integrate with at kickoff?	Yes. VCE currently utilizes contractor support for communications, marketing, website, social media, and related services. VCE anticipates a transition period prior to the commencement of the new contract to facilitate continuity of services. The selected firm may be expected to coordinate with existing contractors, vendors, systems, and platforms as appropriate to support a smooth transition and ongoing service delivery. Relevant access, assets, materials, and information necessary for contract performance will be provided, as appropriate and available.
111	Exhibit D of the Sample Agreement lists Privacy and Cybersecurity Liability of at least \$5,000,000, with a note that it “may be reduced or eliminated based on scope of services.” For a marketing/website/social media scope where the consultant would maintain the public website and social channels but would not host VCE customer PII systems, will VCE consider reducing or eliminating the \$5M cyber requirement (or accepting a lower commercially reasonable limit)?	Please see Question #17.
112	Does VCE have a preferred CMS and/or hosting stack for https://www.google.com/url?q=http://valleycleanenergy.org&source=gmail&ust=1789323482070000&sa=E that proposers should assume for pricing and approach (e.g., remain on the current platform vs. openness to migration)?	VCE's website is currently built on the WordPress platform. VCE does not currently anticipate a website platform migration as part of the base Scope of Work and proposers should assume ongoing support of the existing website environment. However, VCE may consider future website enhancements or modifications during the contract term if organizational needs warrant. Proposers may describe any relevant recommendations or capabilities related to website platforms, hosting, and migration services, but VCE is not requesting a platform migration as part of this procurement.
113	If VCE can share for pricing purposes only: is there an expected monthly hour band or approximate annual budget range for this engagement under the Board-approved budget process? (Estimates welcome; we understand final budget is Board-subject.)	Please see Question #4 for budget information. VCE recognizes that firms may use different approaches to structuring project costs. Proposers may include costs either within the fixed project fee or as separately itemized budget components. Proposals should clearly identify all assumptions, direct costs, and fees so that VCE can understand the proposed cost structure and compare proposals consistently. Any proposed costs should be developed with consideration of the project's overall budget constraints.
114	For Spanish-language website and collateral content, must translation be performed by a certified translator, or may qualified bilingual staff/consultant translation be acceptable for some content types (with certified translation reserved for legally sensitive customer notices)?	VCE has not prescribed a specific translation methodology or certification requirement as part of this procurement. Proposers should describe their approach to providing accurate, high-quality Spanish-language content and any quality assurance processes used. Translation expectations for specific materials may be established during contract implementation based on the nature of the communication.