



- **Board of Directors**
Communications and Legislation Committee

3/8/2022 Board Meeting

7-5

Subject

Authorize entering into a three-year contract with GP Generate, LLC for media placement services related to drought awareness and water conservation not to exceed \$10.5 million; the General Manager has determined that the proposed action is exempt or otherwise not subject to CEQA

Executive Summary

To address ongoing drought conditions and climate change impacts to Southern California's water supply, staff proposes to expand its current advertising and outreach efforts to increase public awareness and promote conservation actions and programs. In October 2021, staff informed the Board of plans to initiate a request for proposals seeking media placement services for a three-year multimedia, multilingual water conservation campaign not to exceed \$10.5 million for media placements using radio, digital, social media and outdoor advertising platforms. Staff recently completed a competitive consultant selection process. Following the interview and analysis of four finalist agencies, staff recommends the Board authorize the General Manager to enter into a three-year agreement with GP Generate, LLC for multimedia placement consulting services not to exceed \$10.5 million.

Details

In response to worsening drought conditions in 2021, Governor Newsom declared a Drought Emergency in California and called for voluntary cuts to water use. In August 2021, Metropolitan's Board adopted a Water Supply Alert and in November 2021 adopted a Drought Emergency Resolution, calling for increased efforts to maximize conservation, especially in communities that are more dependent on Metropolitan's deliveries of State Water Project (SWP) supplies. To support these actions, Metropolitan staff developed and implemented a highly-visible public outreach campaign. The summer phase launched in August using \$510,000 from the External Affairs fiscal year (FY) 2021/22 board-approved advertising budget. Outreach began with social media and then expanded to digital marketing, targeted radio ads, billboards, and other platforms. Results generated 27 million impressions, driving over 30,000 new visitors to bewaterwise.com. Traffic and weather radio advertisements were purchased on 42 English and Spanish-language stations, and 26 out-of-home billboards and transit shelter posters were installed throughout the Southern California region. Print advertisements were featured in grocery stores within disadvantaged communities, along with Spanish-language displays in many popular Latino grocery stores.

In September, staff informed the Board of plans to use up to \$1 million from the FY 2021/22 board-approved Conservation Credits budget to continue a drought awareness conservation campaign that would run throughout the fall and winter. The campaign is currently live on social, digital, radio, and outdoor platforms and leverages ethnic and grassroots media strategies to reach the region's many diverse communities. The media plan includes more targeted advertising for SWP dependent areas using digital media, outdoor advertising, and rebate point-of-purchase information in retail stores. This phase of the campaign concludes in spring 2022 and is on target to achieve over 30 million impressions.

Water Conservation Advertising Budget

Funding for future media placement services will come from existing and future conservation program budgets since the advertising supports and helps facilitate the demand management program goals and objectives.

Campaign activities will include digital/connected TV, radio traffic spots, out-of-home (billboards, transit), print (including community newspapers), Google search, social media, and strategic and media buy services. Funding not to exceed \$3.5 million for FY 2021/22 will come from the Board-approved budget, and contract capacity will provide for expenditures of not to exceed \$3.5 million for FY 2022/23 and \$3.5 million for FY 2023/24 in FY 2022/23-FY 2023/24, if needed. The expenditures for the next two fiscal years are included in the currently proposed biennial budget, which the Board will consider for approval on April 12, 2022. Actual expenditures for media and conservation outreach in FY 2022/23 and FY 2023/24 would not exceed the Board's biennial budget, if approved in April, and will be determined, in part, based on water supply conditions and Board direction. Staff will continue to inform the Board on conservation expenditures and will seek Board approval for any additional budget authorization, up to the contract capacity if needed.

This funding will purchase advertising to promote Metropolitan's water use efficiency programs and drive traffic to Metropolitan's bewaterwise.com® website, the district's primary online water-saving portal where consumers can find water-saving tips, education resources, member agency programs, and access to Metropolitan's conservation rebates. A portion of this funding also will be used for strategic input to advise in-house creative development on cultural resonance, relevance, and sensitivity to ensure messaging effectively engages diverse audiences. This will include research activities with focus groups and pre-and post-campaign assessments to determine quantifiable measures of success.

FISCAL YEAR	CONTRACT CAPACITY
	Media planning and placement, strategic input, research
FY 21/22 March – June 30, 2022	Up to \$3.5 million
FY 22/23 July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023	Up to \$3.5 million
FY 23/24 July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024	Up to \$3.5 million
	Up to \$10.5 million

Evaluation Process

Six firms responded to the request for proposals, specifically, RFP-KH-404523. The proposals were evaluated by an internal selection committee consisting of three staff members representing External Affairs and Water Resource Management. The evaluation criteria included qualifications and staffing, record of past performance, technical approach and methodology, draft media plan, environmental sensitivity, and small business representation. The four firms that received the highest cumulative scores were invited to interview on Jan. 4 and Jan. 18, 2022. GP Generate received the highest cumulative score by the selection committee in the review process and interview. Based on the comprehensive review, the committee recommends GP Generate be awarded the contract.

Introduction to GP Generate

GP Generate is a minority-owned, small business advertising agency based in Los Angeles with expertise and focus in full-service media. Agency services include strategy planning and buying across traditional media (TV, radio, print, out-of-home), digital (programmatic, display, mobile, video), paid search, and social (organic and paid). GP Generate has a strong data-driven approach using in-house advanced analytics capabilities that provide real-time optimizations and detailed insights into campaign performance. This allows the agency to quickly adapt marketing strategies to the region's evolving water supply conditions in a changing media landscape. The agency has executed both awareness and performance-based campaigns for diverse target audiences, including demographics within the general market, Hispanic, African American, Asian, Pan-Asian, Chinese, Korean, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, and other ethnic segments. GP Generate's experience with government and utility partners,

including work as a subcontractor on Metropolitan's 2015-2018 H2 Love/Let's Take a Turn water conservation campaigns, will provide the district with advertising opportunities informed by research and relevant campaign executions.

The full team demonstrates a strong track record with strategic media planning and multicultural advertising across global, national and local outlets. GP Generate also is equipped with a research consultant to provide the district with qualitative and quantitative strategic input on campaign cultural relevancy and sensitivity across multiple ethnic markets. The agency's experience reflects a broad range of public awareness, behavior change, and social marketing campaigns that successfully reached diverse demographic groups in cost-effective ways. In addition to Metropolitan, past clients include other public agencies, utilities, non-profit organizations, and healthcare agencies with quantified campaign results. GP Generate also demonstrates a level of cost-consciousness beyond the scope of other proposals submitted. This is evident in the agency's tiered commission structure for this agreement which is well below the industry standard rate of 15%, providing greater cost-effectiveness and expanding the reach of the campaign messages.

External Affairs staff proposes to work with GP Generate to negotiate for cost-effective, high-value multicultural paid campaign buys supported by in-house creative design and development. GP Generate also will provide significant value-added benefits for the district given the agency's high volume of advertising and experience in the regional marketplace. Campaigns will continue to be executed in multiple languages with outreach to community-based organizations, collaboration with member agencies on customized campaign-related resources and materials, and high-visibility outreach activities throughout the region. Staff will regularly update the Board on campaign creative activities and media buys and provide progress reports.

Next Steps

With Board authorization, staff will finalize the agreement with GP Generate, LLC and begin preparing Metropolitan's campaign media plan. Staff has established an aggressive development schedule so that messaging, outreach, and media buy activities can be implemented in April 2022.

Policy

Metropolitan Water District Administrative Code Section 11104: Delegation of Responsibilities

Metropolitan Water District's Administrative Code Section 4210: Water Conservation (stating Metropolitan's policy to support water conservation programs)

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

CEQA determination for Option #1:

The proposed action is not defined as a project under CEQA (Public Resources Code Section 21065, State CEQA Guidelines Section 15378) because the proposed action will not cause either a direct physical change in the environment or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment and involves continuing administrative activities, such as general policy and procedure making (Section 15378(b)(2) of the State CEQA Guidelines). In addition, the proposed action is not defined as a project under CEQA because it involves the creation of government funding mechanisms or other government fiscal activities which do not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment (Section 15378(b)(4) of the State CEQA Guidelines).

CEQA determination for Option #2:

None required

Board Options

Option #1

Authorize the General Manager to enter into a three-year agreement with GP Generate, LLC for media placement and advertising consulting services not to exceed \$10.5 million.

Fiscal Impact: Funds not to exceed \$3.5 million are authorized for FY 2021/22. Contract capacity for FY 2022/23 and FY 2023/24 is \$3.5 million per year, if needed, but expenditures will not exceed the funding provided in the biennial budget, if approved, which will be considered by the Board on April 12, 2022.

Business Analysis: Sustained drought communication and conservation will help the region improve its water supply reliability, increase awareness of regional and local rebate programs, and highlight the value of a Southern California water-saving lifestyle. Prominent media placements and strategic advice would stress public messaging consistent with Metropolitan's strategic goals to effectively market the region's conservation programs.

Option #2

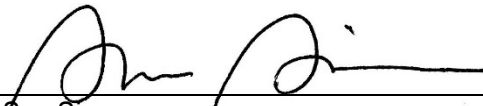
Do not authorize the General Manager to enter into a three-year agreement with GP Generate, LLC.

Fiscal Impact: Unquantified impact at this time, as the financial impacts will depend on the system enhancements and resource purchases required to meet demand during times of ongoing drought that will be necessary without additional conservation in the service area.

Business Analysis: The start of our spring media campaign precedes the higher demand months of summer. Having a campaign in place starting in April 2022 is critical to our continuing education about conservation and promotion of our rebates and programs. Staff would seek direction from the Board on whether to re-bid for media placement services. Re-bidding services would take two to four months and would delay a strong media campaign in the summer when water demands peak.

Staff Recommendation

Option #1

 _____ Sue Sims External Affairs Manager	2/24/2022 _____ Date
 _____ Adel Hagekhalil General Manager	2/28/2022 _____ Date