

CITY OF ALAMEDA, CALIFORNIA

Office of the City Manager

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
Communications Consultant Services

RFP No. [26-08]

Release Date	September 1, 2026
Questions Due	September 4, 2026, 5:00 p.m. Pacific Time
Proposals Due	September 11, 2026, 4:00 p.m. Pacific Time
Submit To	atomfohrde@alamedaca.gov
Contact	Alyssa Tomfohrde, Communications Manager

1. Invitation and Purpose

The City of Alameda is seeking proposals from qualified consultants, firms, or individual practitioners to provide on-call and project-based communications support to the City Manager’s Office. The selected consultant will work under the direction of the City’s Communications Manager to strengthen the City’s day-to-day communications output and to develop a multi-year strategic communications plan.

The City is a full-service charter city with a residential population of approximately 80,000. Communications functions are centralized in the City Manager’s Office and currently staffed by a Communications Manager supported by departmental liaisons. The City’s objective in issuing this Request for Proposals (RFP) is to secure flexible, experienced professional support that extends the capacity of existing staff rather than duplicating it.

The City anticipates awarding single or multiple professional services agreements, with the possibility of establishing an as-needed bench of two or three consultants if proposals demonstrate complementary specialties. The City reserves the right to award all, some, or none of the services described in this RFP.

2. Background

The City communicates with residents, businesses, employees, and regional partners through City websites, social media channels, newsletters, media relations, printed notices, public meeting materials, and emergency notification systems. Communications volume has grown substantially in recent years, driven by capital project outreach, housing and land use initiatives, emergency preparedness messaging, increased public interest in City Council proceedings, and ADA requirements.

The City faces three practical challenges that this engagement is intended to address:

- **Throughput.** Routine press releases, media inquiries, and social media content compete with long-range planning work.
- **Consistency.** Departments produce public-facing content at varying levels of quality and in varying voices, without a shared editorial standard consistently applied.
- **Strategy.** The City does not currently operate under an adopted, measurable communications plan tied to Council priorities.

Proposers should assume they are supplementing a functioning but capacity-constrained operation. The City is not seeking to outsource its communications function.

3. Scope of Services

The scope below is organized into four tasks. Task 4 will be authorized only if warranted by funding and need.

Task 1. Press Releases and Media Relations

Working from staff-provided background material, interviews with subject matter experts, and City Council agenda documents, the consultant will:

- Draft press releases, media advisories, and statements for review and approval by the Communications Manager, with a standard turnaround of three business days and expedited turnaround of one business day when requested.
- Prepare talking points, question-and-answer documents, and briefing memoranda for the City Manager, department directors, and designated spokespersons.

- Maintain and periodically update the City's media contact list, including local, regional, ethnic, and trade press.
- Draft op-eds, guest columns, and letters to the editor for signature by City officials, subject to City review and applicable policy.
- Provide media training or coaching sessions for staff and, if requested, elected and appointed officials.
- Support crisis and incident communications on an on-call basis, including after-hours availability under a defined escalation protocol.

Assumed volume for cost proposal purposes: four to six press releases per month, one to two briefing documents per month, and up to eight hours per month of media relations advisory time.

Task 2. Social Media Support

The consultant will support and, in defined instances, directly execute social media activity across the City's channels. Publishing authority and final approval remain with City staff. Services include:

- Development of a rolling monthly editorial calendar coordinated with department work plans, Council meeting cycles, and seasonal City programs.
- Drafting of post copy, caption text, and short-form scripts, including plain-language with ADA access prioritized, and translated versions where applicable.
- Production or adaptation of simple graphics, static templates, photos, and short-form video suitable for municipal channels, consistent with City brand standards.
- Community management support, including drafting responses to routine inquiries and flagging comments requiring staff or legal review.
- Monthly analytics reporting with interpretation, trend analysis, and specific recommendations for the following period.
- Recommendations on channel strategy, including whether to add, consolidate, or discontinue specific platforms.

Assumed volume for cost proposal purposes: twelve to twenty drafted posts per month, one analytics report per month, and one editorial calendar per month.

Task 3. Strategic Communications Plan

The consultant will develop a three-year strategic communications plan for the City. The plan will be presented to the City Manager and, at the City's discretion, to the City Council. Required elements include:

- An assessment of current conditions, including an audit of existing channels, content, workflows, staffing, and vendor arrangements.
- Stakeholder input, at minimum comprising interviews with the City Manager, department directors, and a representative sample of Councilmembers, plus one staff-wide survey.

- Audience identification and segmentation, accounting for the community’s linguistic diversity, age distribution, and varying levels of digital access.
- Clearly stated goals and objectives aligned to adopted City Council priorities, with measurable performance indicators and baselines.
- Channel strategy and message architecture, including core messages and standing narratives for recurring topics.
- A language access and accessibility component addressing translation, interpretation, and compliance with applicable accessibility standards.
- An emergency and crisis communications framework, coordinated with the City’s existing emergency operations structure.
- Recommendations on staffing, organizational placement, technology, and budget, including a phased implementation schedule and estimated costs.
- An implementation and measurement matrix identifying responsible parties, timelines, and reporting cadence.

Deliverables for Task 3 include an existing conditions memorandum, a draft plan, one round of consolidated City comments, a final plan in editable and accessible formats, an executive summary suitable for public distribution, and one presentation.

Task 4. Optional and As-Needed Services

The City may authorize the following on a task order basis. Proposers should price these separately and are not required to offer all of them.

- Editorial style guide development or refinement, and staff training on its use.
- Website content architecture review and page-level content rewriting.
- Newsletter production, including layout and distribution management.
- Project-specific outreach campaigns, such as capital improvement, housing, or transportation initiatives.
- Community survey design, administration, and analysis.
- Photography, videography, podcasts, or audio production. Must be delivered in a timely fashion, in the format required for its intended use. For example, video content will be delivered using the recommended naming conventions, sizes, durations, various orientations, and formats, along with ADA-compliant captions as needed. The City will retain full usage rights in perpetuity.
- Graphic identity and brand standards work.

4. Term, Budget, and Contract Form

The City anticipates an initial agreement term of [two] years commencing on or about October 8, 2026 with the City's option to extend for up to [two] additional one-year terms upon satisfactory performance and appropriation of funds.

Proposers may propose retainer, hourly, or hybrid arrangements, provided the proposal clearly identifies what is included at each price point.

Any resulting agreement will be executed on the City's standard professional services agreement, attached as Attachment A. Proposers must identify any requested exceptions to that form in their proposal. Exceptions raised after selection may be grounds for the City to discontinue negotiations and select another proposer.

5. Anticipated Procurement Schedule

Milestone	Date
RFP issued	September 1, 2026
Optional pre-proposal conference (virtual)	September 3, 2026, 3:00 p.m.
Deadline for written questions	September 4, 2026, 5:00 p.m.
City responses and any addenda issued	September 8, 2026
Proposals due	September 11, 2026, 4:00 p.m.
Shortlist notification	~~September 16, 2026~~ UPDATE: September 29, 2026
Interviews with shortlisted proposers	~~September 21, 2026,~~ UPDATE: October 4, 2026
Anticipated selection and reference checks	~~September 25, 2026,~~ UPDATE: October 8, 2026
Anticipated notice to proceed	~~September 30, 2026,~~ TBD UPDATE: October 14, 2026

The City reserves the right to modify this schedule. Any changes will be issued by a written addendum posted to <https://www.alamedaca.gov/BUSINESS/Bid-on-City-Contracts/Request-for-Proposal-Communications-Support>

6. Proposal Content and Format

Proposals must not exceed [20] pages, exclusive of the cover letter, required forms, resumes, and work samples. Submit as a single searchable PDF. Organize the proposal in the following order.

A. Cover Letter (one page)

Signed by an individual authorized to bind the proposer. Include the firm name, address, telephone number, email address, and the name of the single point of contact for this procurement. State that the proposal remains valid for [90] days.

B. Firm Profile and Qualifications

- Legal name, form of organization, year established, office locations, and total staff.
- Description of the firm's municipal or public sector communications practice.
- Any certifications or designations relevant to the work.
- Disclosure of any current or prior contracts with the City, and of any work performed for parties with matters pending before the City.

C. Key Personnel

- Identify the individual who will serve as day-to-day lead and the percentage of that person's time committed to this engagement.
- Provide resumes for all proposed personnel, including subconsultants, and identify which tasks each will perform.
- Describe backup coverage arrangements and after-hours availability for crisis support.
- The City requires written approval before any substitution of identified key personnel.

D. Relevant Experience and References

- Describe three to five engagements completed within the past five years that are comparable in scope and setting, preferably for California cities of similar size.
- For each, state the client, contract value, dates of performance, personnel involved, and outcomes achieved.
- Provide three client references with name, title, organization, telephone number, and email address. At least two should be public agency clients.
- Note whether any engagement was terminated, suspended, or subject to a claim or dispute.

E. Approach and Work Plan

- Describe your understanding of the City's situation and what you consider the central communications challenge facing a city of this size.
- Describe your proposed workflow for Tasks 1 and 2, including intake, drafting, review, approval, and turnaround management.
- Provide a proposed methodology and schedule for Task 3, showing major activities, milestones, and City staff time required.

- Describe how you will coordinate with the Communications Manager and departmental staff, including proposed meeting cadence and project management tools.
- Describe how you approach language access and reaching residents who do not use digital channels.
- Identify what you need from the City to be successful.

F. Work Samples

Provide up to five samples relevant to the scope, such as press releases, social media content, or an excerpt from a communications plan. Identify your specific role in producing each sample and confirm that you have the right to share it.

G. Cost Proposal

Submit the cost proposal as a separate section using the format below. The City is not using a sealed cost proposal process; however, cost must be separable for evaluation purposes.

Item	Rate or Fee	Unit	Annual or Total Not-to-Exceed
Task 1 — Press releases and media relations			
Task 2 — Social media support			
Task 3 — Strategic communications plan			
Task 4 — Optional services (itemize)			
Expedited or after-hours surcharge, if any			
Reimbursable expenses (describe basis)			

Also, provide a complete hourly rate schedule by classification for the initial term and any option years, and state your assumptions regarding travel, materials, software licenses, stock media, and subconsultant markup.

H. Exceptions and Required Forms

- A statement of any exceptions to this RFP or to the sample agreement in Attachment A, with proposed alternative language. A statement that the proposer takes no exceptions is acceptable and preferred.
- Completed non-collusion declaration (Attachment B).

- Completed conflict of interest disclosure (Attachment C).
- Evidence of ability to meet the insurance requirements in Section 9.

7. Evaluation Criteria and Selection Process

An evaluation panel convened by the City Manager’s Office will review all responsive proposals against the criteria below. Award will be based on best overall value to the City, not on lowest cost alone.

Criterion	Weight
Relevant experience with California municipalities of comparable size and complexity	25%
Qualifications, availability, and continuity of assigned personnel	20%
Quality and practicality of the proposed approach and work plan	20%
Demonstrated writing and content quality shown in work samples	15%
Cost, rate structure, and overall value	15%
References and past performance	5%
Total	100%

The City may shortlist proposers for interviews, may request a short written or content exercise from shortlisted proposers, may seek clarification from any proposer, and may negotiate scope and fee with the highest-ranked proposer. The City may also make an award without interviews if it determines that a proposal fully meets the City’s needs.

8. Submission Instructions and Communications

Proposals must be received by **September 11, 2026, 4:00 p.m. Pacific Time**. Submit by email to atomfohrde@alamedaca.gov with the subject line “RFP 26-08 — Communications Consultant Services.” Files larger than [10] megabytes should be submitted via Dropbox. Late proposals will not be considered. The City is not responsible for delays in electronic transmission.

All questions regarding this RFP must be submitted in writing to atomfohrde@alamedaca.gov by the deadline in Section 5. From the release of this RFP until award, proposers shall not contact City Councilmembers, City officers, or City staff other than the designated contact regarding this procurement. Unauthorized contact may result in disqualification.

Written responses to timely questions will be issued by addendum to all known proposers and posted at alamedaca.gov/BUSINESS/Bid-on-City-Contracts/Request-for-Proposal-Communications-Support. Only written addenda issued by the City modify this RFP; oral statements are not binding.

9. Insurance Requirements

The selected consultant must maintain, at its own expense and for the duration of the agreement, at least the following coverage, and must provide certificates and endorsements acceptable to the City before commencing work.

Coverage	Minimum Limits
Commercial general liability	\$1,000,000 per occurrence; \$2,000,000 aggregate
Automobile liability	\$1,000,000 combined single limit
Professional liability (errors and omissions)	\$1,000,000 per claim and aggregate
Workers' compensation and employers' liability	Statutory; \$1,000,000 employer's liability
Cyber liability, if applicable to the services	\$1,000,000 per claim

General and automobile liability policies must name the City, its officers, officials, employees, and volunteers as additional insureds, be primary and non-contributory, and include a waiver of subrogation. Sole proprietors without employees may request a waiver of the workers' compensation requirement.

10. General Terms and Conditions

Cost of Proposal Preparation

All costs of preparing and submitting a proposal, including any interview or presentation costs, are the sole responsibility of the proposer. The City will not reimburse any such costs.

Public Records

Proposals submitted to the City are subject to disclosure under the California Public Records Act. A proposer that believes specific information is exempt from disclosure must clearly identify each such portion and state the legal basis for the claimed exemption. Marking an entire proposal as confidential is not effective. The City will not defend a proposer's claim of exemption but will notify the proposer before releasing information identified as exempt, so the proposer may seek a protective order at its own expense.

Reservation of Rights

The City reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, to waive minor irregularities, to request additional information, to cancel or reissue this RFP, to modify the scope before or after award, to award without further discussion, and to make no award. This RFP does not commit the City to enter into any agreement.

Conflict of Interest

Proposers must disclose any relationship, financial interest, or engagement that could create an actual or apparent conflict of interest with respect to the City. Depending on the nature of the assigned work, the selected consultant may be designated a filer under the City's conflict of interest code and required to file statements of economic interests under the Political Reform Act.

Independent Contractor Status

The selected consultant will act as an independent contractor and not as an employee or agent of the City, and will not be entitled to City employee benefits.

Ownership of Work Product

All deliverables, drafts, data, graphics, photos, video, and other work products prepared under the agreement shall be the property of the City upon payment, and the City shall receive an unrestricted license to use, modify, and reproduce them. The consultant must identify any third-party or stock materials subject to license restrictions and secure rights sufficient for the City's intended use.

Nondiscrimination and Equal Opportunity

The selected consultant shall comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws prohibiting discrimination in employment and in the provision of services, and shall not discriminate on any protected basis.

Business License and Local Compliance

The selected consultant must obtain a City business license before commencing work and must comply with all applicable City ordinances, including any living wage or labor standards provisions in effect.

Accessibility

All public-facing deliverables must meet applicable accessibility standards, including [WCAG 2.1 Level AA] for digital content, and must be delivered in formats that permit the City to maintain compliance.

Assignment and Subcontracting

The consultant shall not assign the agreement or subcontract any portion of the services without the City's prior written consent. All subconsultants must be identified in the proposal.

Protest Procedure

A proposer wishing to protest the process or a proposed award must submit a written protest to the City Manager's Office within [five] business days of the notice of intended award, stating the specific

grounds for the protest and the relief requested. The City Manager or designee will issue a written determination, which shall be final.

Governing Law

This RFP and any resulting agreement shall be governed by the laws of the State of California, with venue in Alameda County.

11. Attachments

- Attachment A — Sample Professional Services Agreement & Insurance Requirements
- Attachment B — Current City Communications Inventory (channels, volumes, and platforms)
- Attachment C — Adopted City Council Priorities, 2026-2027

End of Request for Proposals