CITY OF LONG BEACH

Economic Development and Opportunity
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April 14, 2026

Honorable Mayor and City Council
City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommendation to adopt Specifications No. RFP ED-25-612 and award a contract to Sound Diplomacy, Inc., of Wilmington, DE, for the development of an Entertainment Strategic Plan, in an amount of $125,000, authorize a 10 percent contingency in the amount of $12,500, for a total contract amount not to exceed $137,500 for a period of one year; and, authorize the City Manager, or designee, to execute all documents necessary to enter into the contract, including any necessary subsequent amendments. (Citywide)

DISCUSSION

City Council approval is requested to enter into a contract with Sound Diplomacy, Inc. for the development of an Entertainment Strategic Plan that will identify key policies, programs, placemaking strategies, and partnerships the City will prioritize to strengthen its position as a destination for music and entertainment. This effort aligns with the City's Grow Long Beach Economic Blueprint, which identifies music and entertainment as key focus areas for driving local economic growth.

The Request for Proposals (RFP) was advertised in the Long Beach Press-Telegram on July 29, 2025, and 110 potential proposers were notified of the RFP opportunity. Of those proposers, 25 downloaded the RFP via the City's electronic bid system. The RFP document was made available from the Purchasing Division, located on the sixth floor of City Hall, and the Division's website at www.longbeach.gov/purchasing. An RFP announcement was also included in the Purchasing Division's weekly update of Open Bid Opportunities, which is sent to 44 local, minority-owned, and women-owned business groups. There were 11 proposals received on September 16, 2025. Of those 11 proposers, 3 were Minority-owned Business Enterprises (MBEs), 2 were Women-owned Business Enterprises (WBEs), 2 were certified Small Business Enterprises (SBEs), and 2 were Long Beach vendors (Local). The selection committee determined that Sound Diplomacy, Inc., of Wilmington, DE, (None) was the most qualified firm to provide the services.

Sound Diplomacy, Inc. is a global consulting firm specializing in music, culture, and the creative economy. The firm uses research, data analysis, and stakeholder engagement to demonstrate the economic and social value of creative industries and to develop strategies that help cities maximize their cultural and economic impact. Sound Diplomacy, Inc. provides strategic planning, policy development, and advisory services. The firm has advised more than 150 clients across over 40 countries, including numerous municipalities.

The following is a summary of Sound Diplomacy's scope of work:

1. **Stakeholder Engagement**
    - Objective: Gather input and insights from key stakeholders to ensure the plan reflects community needs and priorities.
    - Tasks:
        - Identify and engage key stakeholders, including city officials, local business owners and associations, cultural organizations, local musicians and performers, promoters, and venue operators.
        - Conduct stakeholder interviews, focus groups, and/or surveys to gather feedback.
        - Host workshops or town halls to discuss initial ideas and refine goals and objectives for the strategic plan.
        - Ensure diverse representation in stakeholder engagement to incorporate varied perspectives on entertainment and tourism in Long Beach.

2. **Case Studies**
    - Objective: Learn from successful models in other cities to inform Long Beach's Entertainment Strategic Plan.
    - Tasks:
        - Research and select 3-4 cities recognized as destinations for music and entertainment.
        - Analyze the key elements that contributed to their success, including policies, programs such as special nighttime management programs or positions, partnerships, placemaking, and marketing strategies.
        - Develop a summary that highlights best practices and recommendations for Long Beach based on these case studies.
        - Present the findings to stakeholders and provide strategic recommendations for adapting these elements to Long Beach.

3. **Music and Entertainment Venue Inventory**
    - Objective: Create a baseline inventory and assess the current landscape of music and entertainment venues in Long Beach to identify gaps and opportunities.
    - Tasks:
        - Compile an inventory of existing music and entertainment venues and special events in Long Beach, including public and private spaces.
        - Identify underutilized venues that could be optimized for entertainment purposes and assess their potential for expansion or re-purposing.

- Develop a venue map and resource guide for event producers, promoters, and other stakeholders.

4. **Local Ordinance Review**
   - Objective: Promote policies that foster the growth of music and entertainment while ensuring they align with community interests and protect quality of life.
     - Conduct a review of existing local ordinances, zoning laws, and permitting processes related to music and entertainment venues and events.
     - Identify barriers, inefficiencies, or regulations that may hinder the growth of music and entertainment in Long Beach.
     - Provide recommendations on how to streamline permitting processes, address noise or safety concerns, and align local policies with the strategic goals of the Entertainment Strategic Plan.

5. **Final Report and Implementation Plan**
   - Objective: Deliver a comprehensive final report that outlines the strategic plan, including actionable steps for implementation.
   - Tasks:
     - Compile findings from the stakeholder engagement, case studies, venue inventory, and ordinance review into a cohesive report.
     - Develop a clear, phased implementation plan that outlines specific actions, timelines, and responsibilities for achieving the goals of the Entertainment Strategic Plan.
     - Develop key performance indicators that measure the effectiveness of the Entertainment Strategic Plan.
     - Include a budget estimate and identify recommended financial resources—such as potential grants and other private resources—for implementing key components of the plan.
     - Provide an executive summary and presentation for city officials and key stakeholders, summarizing the key findings, recommendations, and implementation road map.

Local Business Outreach

To align with the City's outreach goal, Long Beach businesses are encouraged to submit proposals for City contracts. The Purchasing Division also assists businesses with registering on the Long Beach Buys platform to download RFP specifications. Through outreach, 16 Long Beach vendors were notified to submit proposals, of which 8 downloaded and 2 submitted proposals. The Purchasing Division is committed to continuing to perform outreach to local vendors to expand the bidder pool.

This matter was reviewed by Deputy City Attorney Ashleigh Stone on March 30, 2026, Purchasing Agent Michelle Wilson on March 23, 2026, and by Budget Management Officer Nader Kaamoush on March 27, 2026.

TIMING CONSIDERATIONS

City Council action to adopt Specifications No. RFP ED-25-612 and award a contract concurrently is requested on April 14, 2026, to ensure the contract is in place expeditiously.

FISCAL IMPACT

The total amount of the contract will not exceed $125,000, which is inclusive of a 10 percent contingency in the amount of $12,500. A total of $150,000 is currently budgeted to support the project. Of this amount, $75,000 is budgeted in the Tidelands Operating Fund Group and $75,000 is budgeted in the Special Advertising and Promotion Fund Group in the Economic Development and Opportunity Department. This project will have a minimal use of staff time that is beyond the normal budgeted scope of duties and normal workload and is consistent with City Council priorities. The development of the Entertainment Strategic Plan is not expected to have an impact on local jobs.

SUGGESTED ACTION:

Approve recommendation.

Respectfully submitted,

Bo Martinez
Director
Economic Development and Opportunity

APPROVED:

THOMAS B. MODICA
CITY MANAGER