



REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

For

Ava Community Energy Authority

**Marketing and Communications Services including Public Relations,
Campaign Support, Media Planning, Event Support, and Digital
Accessibility Support**

RESPONSE DUE

by

5:00 p.m. PT

on

April 10, 2026

For complete information regarding this project, see RFP posted at AvaEnergy.org or contact the Ava representative listed below. Thank you for your interest!

Theresa McDermit | Head of Marketing, Ava
510-641-0957
tmcdermit@avaenergy.org

**AVA COMMUNITY ENERGY
REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL
SPECIFICATIONS, TERMS & CONDITIONS
for**

**Ava Community Energy Authority:
Marketing and Communications Services including Public Relations,
Campaign Support, Media Planning, Event Support, and Digital
Accessibility Support**

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STATEMENT OF WORK

Ava Community Energy (Ava) is seeking proposals from qualified firms or individuals (“Vendor”) to provide a variety of marketing support services including, but not limited to: Public Relations, Campaign/Creative Support, Media Management, Event Support, and Digital Accessibility Support. The objective of this solicitation is to identify a pool of on-demand resources (which may be wholly within a firm or include multiple firms or individuals) that Ava can utilize as needed. Vendors can submit proposals for one or more sections of this solicitation. The proposing Vendor shall have relevant expertise, experience, and an approach that demonstrates its ability to provide the required service(s). The successful Vendor(s) will assist with the areas listed below:

- **Public Relations** for both day-to-day reputation management, as well as the execution of specific, time-bound campaigns
- **Campaign and Creative Support** including efforts to build awareness and engagement with Ava over an extended period, as well as program-specific efforts
- **Media Management** including media strategy, planning, placement and optimization of relevant campaigns
- **Event Support** including conceiving, managing and executing events for Ava customers, stakeholders, or staff. Staff augmentation for tabling and other public engagement events is also in this scope.
- **Digital Accessibility Support** including providing website and document support to meet ADA compliance standards and inclusivity best practices, as well as developing staff training and resources

Both the type and volume of Ava’s marketing efforts have evolved in recent years. We now seek qualified partners to augment the expertise of Ava staff on both an ongoing and ad hoc basis, as determined by the specific service.

As a result of this RFP, Ava intends to award one or more on-call Vendor agreements based upon the highest-ranked scores as described in the Evaluation Criteria.

BACKGROUND

Ava is a not-for-profit public agency that operates a Community Choice Energy program for Alameda County and San Joaquin County with eighteen member jurisdictions, serving more than 762,000 residential and commercial customers. Ava initiated service in June 2018 and is one of 25 community choice aggregation (CCA) programs operating in California. CCAs are expediting the climate action goals of their communities and those of California. Ava is committed to providing clean power at competitive rates while reinvesting in our local communities. For more information about Ava Community Energy, visit <https://avaenergy.org/>.

TERM OF AGREEMENT

The initial term of the Agreement(s) will be for one (1) year. Ava reserves the right to extend the agreement(s) for four (4) additional years.

STATEMENT OF REQUIREMENTS

The successful proposal submittal(s) must demonstrate that the Consultant has the appropriate professional and technical background as well as access to adequate resources to fulfill the stated scope of work.

Scope 1: Public Relations

Ava is looking for a partner or partners to work closely with Ava to support both on-going media relations as well as program-specific PR efforts.

Selected partner will engage with Ava to:

Ongoing PR

- Hone a proactive external communications strategy aimed at building awareness, educating, and engaging core stakeholder audiences
- Craft content including press releases, byline articles, talking points, and op-eds in support of proactive strategy
- Cultivate and leverage relationships with relevant journalists and influencers
- Provide communications counsel and coaching to Ava spokespeople, including on short notice, if needed
- Conceive, plan, and execute launch events, pop-ups, community outreach, or other similar activities, as needed

Program-Specific PR

- Develop deep understanding of the objectives and audience of relevant program(s)
- Proactively recommend interventions to increase participation in relevant program
- Stay abreast of program changes, and mine ongoing results to adjust approach and publicize positive outcomes

Scope 2: Campaign and Creative Support

Ava seeks an agency partner or partners to provide creative and operational support for both broad awareness and program specific activities. While traditional advertising is likely to factor into many of our plans, we also aspire to non-traditional or more bespoke initiatives that address both Ava's desire to significantly raise awareness and engagement with our brand, and at the same time benefit the communities we serve.

This is a developing area for the agency, and we expect that the successful partner or partners will play a role in conceiving, as well as executing, future awareness building activities. In the more immediate term, we have a defined need for campaign support for our Ava Charge program:

Ava Charge

Ava launched its network of fast EV chargers in 2025 at the Oakland City Center West Garage. The Ava Charge station at that site is the largest non-Tesla charging station in Northern California. By siting our stations near the places that people live, work, and play, Ava seeks to encourage electric vehicle adoption among residents of multi-family housing and others for whom access to reliable charging is in question.

Ava seeks on-going support to:

1. Introduce new sites as they come online
2. Drive utilization of existing sites

Required Competencies

Ava Charge and other programs may require:

- Marketing strategy and planning (creative ideation, audience identification and strategy, messaging development, channel strategy, etc.)
- Creative development and production
- Campaign management and reporting
- Media strategy, placement, and optimization (see Scope 3)
- Event concepting, management, and execution (see Scope 4)
- Earned media support or an ability to tightly integrate with other partners (see Scope 1)

Ava Awareness and Engagement

As noted above, we are at the beginning stages of a multi-year effort to amplify awareness of Ava, encouraging stakeholders in our service area to embrace the benefits of energy choice by taking advantage of the of the programs and incentives that they're eligible for as an Ava customer. We seek a creative partner who can:

- Understand our brand, business model, and operating approach as shaped in part by Ava's position and governance as a public agency
- Familiarize themselves with the breadth of our existing marketing and communications activities and assets
- Ideate, plan, and execute new initiatives that leverage the above for increased customer awareness, favorability, and engagement, with an emphasis placed on innovative integrated initiatives beyond traditional advertising

We recognize that brand reputation is not built overnight. The successful partner or partners will demonstrate clear strategic thinking, as well as a track record of operationalizing, measuring, and optimizing initiatives born out of that strategic thought.

Scope 3: Media Management

Ava seeks both ad hoc and ongoing media management support to address:

- Ongoing awareness

- Mass enrollment of new customers or city-wide change of service activities
- Program enrollment and demand generation
- Other special events or initiatives

Bidders are asked to demonstrate expertise across the following areas:

- Media strategy, planning and placement
- Fluency with standard channels (e.g. digital, streaming, OOH), as well as innovative executions
- Measurement, optimization, and reporting
- Familiarity with audiences and media opportunities in Alameda and San Joaquin Counties
- Project Management, including an ability and willingness to align with Ava's existing project management norms
- Flexibility in approach based on campaign objectives

Scope 4: Event Management

We foresee three areas for which we have the potential need for external event support; they are:

- Generating greater value from existing activities: Ava maintains an ambitious calendar of outreach activities including engagement with local CBOs, sponsorships with teams like the Oakland Ballers and the Oakland Roots, and tabling at community events throughout our service territory.
- Successfully executing ad hoc events: Each year we engage in various one-off events, including ribbon cuttings and facilities tours which require the coordination of disparate stakeholders that may include elected officials, media, and members of the general public.
- Conceiving and executing net-new events to drive positive brand sentiment and benefit the communities we serve.

Bidders should respond with their ability to meet the following requirements. Please share relevant examples of your work, calling out the event objective and detailing results:

- Concepting
- Staffing augmentation
- Audience engagement
- Event Management, including the creation of content and other creative assets

Scope 5: Digital Accessibility Support

Ava seeks both ad hoc and ongoing digital accessibility support. We seek a partner who can:

- Enhance existing materials for broad usability through implementation of accessibility best practices
- Support staff in the development of new materials that comply with legal requirements for public agencies

- Develop trainings and resources on accessibility

Bidders are asked to demonstrate expertise across the following areas:

- Fluency in accessibility best practices and familiarity with requirements for public agencies
- Experience evaluating and revising web-based content to ensure compliance with WCAG 2.2 AA requirements
- Experience developing educational and practical resources to assist others on understanding, engaging with, and complying with accessibility requirements

QUALIFICATIONS

Minimum Qualifications

- Demonstrated experience and excellence in the service type(s) that you are proposing
- Flexibility to adjust time dedicated to work on projects based on Ava needs
- Ability to respond to client requests within one business day

Desirable Qualifications

- Located within Alameda or San Joaquin Counties
- Additional preference given to businesses with at least 25% of employees residing within Alameda or San Joaquin Counties
- Union Membership
- DBE, DVBE, MBE, WBE, SLEB, and/or LGBTBE certification
- B corporation certification, as a proxy for the company's high standards of responsible behavior and integrity in its business practices, environmental track record, and commitment to fair employment practices and compensation

CONSULTANT SERVICES

Ava intends to award one or more Consulting Services Agreement based upon the highest-ranked score for each technical area described in Section 4. The selected consultants shall comprise a shortlist of available consultants.

PROPOSED CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Action	Date
1. Issuance of RFP	March 16, 2026
2. Deadline for questions/clarifications	March 23, 2026 at 9:00 a.m. PT
3. Question Responses posted Online	March 26, 2026
4. Deadline to submit proposals	April 10, 2026 At 5:00 pm PT
5. Proposal Evaluation	April 13 - 17
6. Finalist selection/interviews	April 20 - 29
7. Final Negotiations and/or Best and Final Offer	April 30 – May 8
8. Award of Contract by Board of Directors (only if required by Procurement Policy, i.e. contracts >\$250,000 for 1 yr)	May 20

PROCEDURES, TERMS, AND CONDITIONS

GENERAL

Incurring Cost

This RFP does not commit Ava to award or pay any cost incurred in the submission of the proposal, or in making necessary studies or designs for the preparation thereof, nor procure or contract for services or supplies. Further, no reimbursable cost may be incurred in anticipation of a contract award.

Claims Against Ava

Neither your organization nor any of your representatives will have any claims whatsoever against Ava or any of its respective officials, agents, or employees arising out of or relating to this RFP or these RFP procedures, except as set forth in the terms of a definitive agreement between Ava and your organization.

Guarantee of Proposal

Responses to this RFP, including proposal prices, will be considered firm and irrevocable for one hundred eighty (180) days after the due date for receipt of proposals.

Basis for Proposal

Only information supplied by Ava in writing by the Contact in connection with this RFP should be used as the basis for the preparation of Consultant(s)'s proposal.

Form of Proposals

Proposals must be submitted electronically by e-mail to tmcdermit@avaenergy.org.

Amended Proposals

Bidders may submit amended proposals before the Deadline to Submit Proposals. Such amended proposals must be complete replacements for previously submitted proposals and must be clearly identified in a written format. The Contact will not merge, collate, or assemble proposal materials.

Withdrawal of Proposal

Bidders may withdraw their proposals at any time prior to the Deadline to Submit Proposals. The Consultant(s) must submit a written withdrawal request signed by the Consultant(s)'s duly authorized representative addressed to and submitted to the Contact.

Late Responses

To be considered, proposals must be received electronically by email and (optional) in person or via courier/mail or to the place specified by April 10, 2026 by 5:00 pm PT. No late responses will be considered.

California Public Records Act (CPRA)

All proposals become the property of Ava, which is a public agency subject to the disclosure requirements of the California Public Records Act ("CPRA"). If Consultant(s) proprietary information is contained in documents submitted to Ava, and Consultant(s) claims that such information falls within one or more CPRA exemptions, Consultant(s) must clearly mark such information "CONFIDENTIAL AND PROPRIETARY," and identify the specific lines containing the information. In the event of a request for such information, Ava will make best efforts to provide notice to Consultant(s) prior to such disclosure. If Consultant(s) contends that any documents are exempt from the California Public Records Act (CPRA) and wishes to prevent disclosure, it is required to obtain a protective order, injunctive relief, or other appropriate remedy from a court of law in Alameda County, before Ava's deadline for responding to the CPRA request. If Consultant(s) fails to obtain such remedy within Ava's deadline for responding to the CPRA request, Ava may disclose the requested information.

Consultant(s) further agrees that it shall defend, indemnify, and hold Ava or its agents, harmless against any claim, action, or litigation (including, but not limited to, all judgments, costs, fees, and attorney's fees) that may result from Ava's assertion of an exemption or privilege as a basis for withholding any information marked confidential by the Consultant(s).

DO NOT MARK YOUR ENTIRE BID CONFIDENTIAL. ONLY MARK THOSE PAGES THAT YOU BELIEVE CONTAIN PROPRIETARY INFORMATION.

Confidentiality

All data and information obtained from or on behalf of Ava by the Consultant(s) and its agents in this RFP process, including reports, recommendations, specifications, and data, shall be treated by the Consultant(s) and its agents as confidential. The Consultant(s) and its agents shall not disclose or communicate this information to a third party or use it in advertising, publicity, propaganda, or in another job or jobs, unless written consent is obtained from Ava.

Generally, each proposal and all documentation, including financial information, submitted by a Consultant(s) to Ava is confidential until a contract is awarded, when such documents become public record under State and local law, unless exempted under CPRA.

Electronic Mail Address

Most of the communication regarding this procurement will be conducted by electronic mail (e-mail). Potential Bidders agree to provide the Contact with a valid e-mail address to receive this communication.

Ava Rights

Ava and its Contact reserve the right to do any of the following at any time:

- a. Reject any or all proposal(s), without indicating any reason for such rejection;
- b. Waive or correct any minor or inadvertent defect, irregularity, or technical error in a proposal or the RFP process, or as part of any subsequent contract negotiation;
- c. Request that Bidders supplement or modify all or certain aspects of their proposals or other documents or materials submitted;
- d. Terminate the RFP, and at its option, issue a new RFP;
- e. Procure any equipment or services specified in this RFP by other means;
- f. Modify the selection process, the specifications or requirements for materials or services, or the contents or format of the proposals;
- g. Extend a deadline specified in this RFP, including deadlines for accepting proposals;
- h. Negotiate with any or none of the Bidders;
- i. Modify in the final agreement any terms and/or conditions described in this RFP;
- j. Terminate failed negotiations with any Consultant(s) without liability, and negotiate with other Consultant(s);
- k. Disqualify any Consultant(s) on the basis of a real or apparent conflict of interest, or evidence of collusion that is disclosed by the proposal or other data available to Ava;
- l. Eliminate, reject, or disqualify a proposal of any Consultant(s) who is not a responsible Consultant(s) or fails to submit a responsive offer as determined solely by A or its representative; or
- m. Accept all or a portion of a Consultant(s)'s proposal.

Supplier Diversity

Pursuant to California Senate Bill 255, Community Choice Aggregators (CCAs) are required to report to the California Public Utilities Commission on their diverse suppliers, as defined by CPUC General Order 156. Consistent with the California Public Utilities Code and California Public Utilities Commission policy objectives, Bidders that execute a contract with Ava will be required to complete a Supplier Diversity Questionnaire. Ava will not consider race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in procurement decisions; providing such information will not impact the selection process or good standing of executed contracts.

Ava encourages all eligible parties to get certified with the CPUC as a women, minority, disabled veteran and/or LGBT owned business enterprise (WMDVLGBTBE).

For overview information on the CPUC Supplier Diversity Program, please visit the program homepage (<https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/supplierdiversity/>). For information on the certification process and requirements, please visit the Certifications page (<https://www.cpuc.ca.gov/Certifications/>).

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Evaluations will be based upon the information provided in the proposals and such other information requested by Contact or Ava, or as deemed appropriate by Ava. Proposals must provide clear, concise information and sufficient detail to enable reviewers/evaluators to evaluate the responsiveness and quality of the proposals to all RFP requirements. Evaluators will also review the proposals for format to ensure conformance with the RFP requirements. Proposals that fail to meet RFP requirements could be rejected. The Contact or Ava may waive minor irregularities in proposals if doing so would be in the best interest of Ava. Evaluators may recommend discontinuing evaluation of any proposal that is considered not in compliance with the RFP requirements.

The review/evaluation team will select the proposal that offers the greatest value to Ava based on an analysis of the following criteria:

Technical Evaluation Criteria		Points
1.	Understanding of the scope of work required by Ava <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality, clarity, and responsiveness of the proposal • Detailed summary of services provided relevant to services requested 	10%
2.	Vendor capabilities (minimum) (failure to meet any of the following will result in disqualification) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrated ability to provide required services (50) • Vendor references (10) 	60%
3.	Cost	15%
4.	Ava Special Procurement Preferences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bidder Location - Ava Service Area • Bidder Location - Disadvantaged Community • Union Labor • Disabled-Veteran Owned Business • B corporation certification 	5% 2.5% 2.5% 2.5% 2.5%
TOTAL		100

In addition to these technical evaluation criteria, Ava will also consider a set of Special Procurement Preferences, outlined in our Administrative Procurement Policy.

As reflected in the Evaluation Criteria, contract award will not be based solely on cost, but on a combination of factors as determined to be in the best interest of Ava. Ava will not be bound to award the contract(s) based solely on the lowest bid submitted.

Ava's form of a Consulting Services Agreement is attached as **Attachment A** and includes Ava's current insurance requirements. Please note that these requirements are subject to

change by Ava prior to execution of a contract with a selected Bidder and may require annual updating during the term of a Consulting Services Agreement. Bidders are expected to note any exceptions to the Consulting Services Agreement in the Bidder's response and failure to so may preclude consideration of any requested change at a later date.

After evaluating the proposals and discussing them further with the Finalists or the tentatively selected Consultant(s), Ava reserves the right to further negotiate the proposed work and/or method and amount of compensation. Ava further reserves the right to consider the changes make to the Consulting Services Agreement in its evaluation and selection.

INSTRUCTIONS TO BIDDERS

AVA CONTACT

The evaluation phase of the competitive process will begin upon receipt of bids until a contract has been awarded. Bidders must not have any contact with Ava personnel nor should they lobby evaluators or any member of the staff or Board of Directors during the evaluation process. Any communications outside of the procedures set forth in this RFP may result in disqualification of bidder.

All questions regarding these specifications, terms and conditions are to be submitted in writing, via e-mail, by 5:00 p.m. PT on Thursday, March 26, 2026 to:

Attn: Theresa McDermit
Ava Community Energy
E-Mail: tmcdermit@avaenergy.org

The Ava website will be the official notification posting place of all Requests for Interest, Proposals, Quotes and Addenda. Go to <http://www.AvaEnergy.org/solicitations> to view current opportunities.

SUBMITTAL OF PROPOSALS

All bids must be received at Ava Community Energy by 5:00 p.m. PT on Friday, April 10, 2026. Bids will be received only at the addresses shown below any bid received after that time and date or at a place other than the stated address will not be considered and will be returned to the bidder unopened. **Electronic bids must be submitted in a non-alterable format such as a .pdf.**

1. Bidders **must** submit an electronic copy of their proposal via email to the following:
 - a. Theresa McDermit, Head of Marketing - Ava: tmcdermit@avaenergy.org
2. Bidders are responsible for all their costs required for the preparation and submission of a bid.
3. Only one bid response will be accepted from any one person, partnership, corporation, or other entity; however, several alternatives may be included in one response. For purposes of this requirement, "partnership" means, and is limited to, a

- legal partnership formed under one or more of the provisions of the California or other state's Corporations Code or an equivalent statute.
4. All other information regarding the bid responses will be held as confidential until the Review Committee has completed its evaluation, a recommended award has been made by the Ava Board of Directors, and the contract has been fully negotiated.
 5. California Government Code Section 4552: In submitting a bid to a public purchasing body, the bidder offers and agrees that if the bid is accepted, it will assign to the purchasing body all rights, title, and interest in and to all causes of action it may have under Section 4 of the Clayton Act (15 U.S.C. Sec. 15) or under the Cartwright Act (Chapter 2, commencing with Section 16700, of Part 2 of Division 7 of the Business and Professions Code), arising from purchases of goods, materials, or services by the bidder for sale to the purchasing body pursuant to the bid. Such assignment shall be made and become effective at the time the purchasing body tenders final payment to the bidder.
 6. Bidder expressly acknowledges that it is aware that if a false claim is knowingly submitted (as the terms "claim" and "knowingly" are defined in the California False Claims Act, Cal. Gov. Code, §12650 et seq.), Ava will be entitled to civil remedies set forth in the California False Claim Act. It may also be considered fraud and the Consultant(s) may be subject to criminal prosecution.
 7. The undersigned Bidder certifies that it is, at the time of bidding, and throughout the period of the contract, licensed by the State of California to do the type of work required under the terms of the Contract Documents. Bidder further certifies that it is regularly engaged in the general class and type of work called for in the Bid Documents.
 8. It is understood that Ava reserves the right to reject this bid and that the bid shall remain open to acceptance and is irrevocable for a period of one-hundred and eighty (180) days, unless otherwise specified in the Bid Documents.

RESPONSE FORMAT

1. Bid responses are to be straightforward, clear, concise and specific to the information requested.
2. **Objections for the form of Consulting Services Agreement:** Bidders must provide any and all specific objections to the Form Consulting Services Agreement in order for any changes to be considered. Stating an objection does not guarantee that Ava will accept such changes.

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION AND SUBMITTALS

All of the specific documentation listed below are required to be submitted in order for a bid to be deemed complete. Bidders shall submit all documentation, in the order listed below and clearly label each section with the appropriate title (i.e. Table of Contents, Letter of Transmittal, Key Personnel, etc.).

A. Organizational Description and Qualifications

1. Table of Contents:
 - Bid responses shall include a table of contents listing the individual sections of the proposal/quotation and their corresponding page numbers.
2. Letter of Transmittal:
 - Description of Bidder's capabilities and approach
 - Description of your organization, including size, resources, and organizational structure relevant to the proposal
 - Brief synopsis of the highlights of the proposal and overall benefits to Ava
 - Bidder must be clear about which services they are bidding on
3. Key Personnel:
 - Identification of lead contact and all key personnel associated with the proposal
 - Job title, years of employment with bidder, role in the proposed work, contact information (for lead contact only), educational background, relevant experience, certifications, and merits

B. Proposal Approach

1. Work Plan:
 - Presentation of a well-conceived workplan or example approach (for those scopes that are undefined)
 - Demonstration of how the workplan will meet Ava's objectives
 - Suggestions of innovations or modifications to the proposal scope, including added value

C. Costs

1. Fee Structure
 - Rate card or other description of fee structure for proposed work
2. Expenses
 - Anticipated reimbursable expenses, if any

D. Additional Information

1. References
 - Listing of three (3) similar engagements with contact information
 - References must include company name, contact person (name and email), address, telephone number, dates of services, and a description of the services provided.
 - References should have similar scope, volume, and requirements to those outlined in these specifications, terms, and conditions

- Bidders are encouraged to notify all references that responsible Ava staff may contact them to obtain a reference
- Ava staff may contact some or all of the references provide in order to determine Bidder's performance recode on work similar to that described in this request. Ava staff reserves the right to contact reference other than those provided in the Response and to use the information gained form them in the evaluation process

Attachment A
Ava Consulting Services Agreement

See Attachment.