

## Marketing and Public Relations Services RFP Q&A

As outlined in the Request for Proposal issued January 9, 2024, the San Mateo County Libraries shall respond in writing to written communications and reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to determine appropriate and adequate responses to written comments, questions, and requests for clarification. In cases where similar questions were submitted by multiple firms, SMCL has listed and responded to these questions once.

### **What is the demographic and psychographic of your audience?**

*High-level overviews of this data are included in our Annual Reports at [Annual Reports](#). We worked with a researcher in 2020-21 to conduct a data and demographic study to inform strategic planning efforts. The most current data was presented to the board in [February 2022](#). SMCL also collects an assortment of ongoing surveys and a wide variety of data internally that we would be happy to provide to the selected proposer.*

### **Budget Questions:**

**What is the budget range for the scope of work in the RFP?**

**Do you have a budget in mind?**

**Can you give me a ballpark estimate or range of your monthly or yearly target expenditure?**

**Can you please share the estimated annual budget for this initiative (agency fees, media and production)?**

*SMCL has not established a specific budget for this project. We look forward to your recommendations for the appropriate budget range for an impactful marketing plan. The last time we contracted for design and marketing services was for our rebranding effort in 2015, at a cost of approximately \$600,000. To support the media relations and marketing campaigns the libraries envision, we are open to a multi-year contract.*

**Can you please give us an idea of the total media buying budget for 2023 - how and where (generally) did you buy placement? What was the cadence of placement? Who is responsible for the creative?**

*In 2023, the libraries did not focus heavily on media buying. We are hoping to fill that need by hiring a marketing and public relations firm. All current creatives are done by our in-house and contracted designers. We expect our agency partner to be responsible for the creatives.*

**How many agencies have you invited to participate in this RFP?**

This is an open request for proposals from any firm.

**Agency Work Questions:**

**Is there an incumbent?**

**Before this RFP, were you working with an agency? If yes, why are you looking for a new one?**

No

**What are you looking for in an agency partner?**

*We are looking for firms with applicable knowledge and experience, especially those who understand and can communicate the power of libraries. We are looking for an agency partner that can come up with innovative ideas on how to get the word out about SMCL in unconventional and traditional ways, while maintaining our brand voice and design. We need the work of the agency to complement and extend our communications department's work. The agency should work closely with the communications team and should be able to supply the creatives, text and translations needed under the supervision of the Communications Manager.*

**Are there any key dates/events (or expectations) that should drive/inform the overall timeline for the work?**

*We will be finalizing our strategic plan this summer and would like to plan some strong messaging and campaigns around our new vision, mission and strategic goals. The new plan will also identify target audiences to reach more users and increase library use.*

*Our summer learning program is always a big initiative and this year we will partner with County Parks. Other significant dates/events include back to school in August, completion and communication of our annual report in August, library card sign-up month in September, banned books month in October and various other library events and new services coming this year and next (first library outpost vending machine, new bookmobile, capital campaigns for new libraries, etc.).*

**What's worked with communications well up until now? What hasn't worked for you?**

*The communications team supports the marketing and communication needs of our 13 libraries and divisions well. However, they do not have the capacity to focus on media buying and to perform wider outreach marketing needs to the entire county.*

**Can you share what of SMCL's collections, programs and services will be a priority, or marketing driver, for 2024?**

*We look forward to continuing to market our various digital and print collections, literacy offerings, and vast array of free programming and services that benefit our communities. We are finalizing our new strategic plan which will help us focus on what areas and to whom we want to prioritize. We encourage you to view some of our previous [Annual Reports](#) for examples of priorities we've focused on in the past.*

**Current/Previous Work Questions:**

**Have you done marketing/communications for similar objectives prior to this RFP? If so, can you please share any data insights from that work? (i.e., What has/has not worked well?)**

**Do you have baseline reports or marketing summaries from past campaigns/initiatives you can share as a benchmark?**

*Our current marketing/communications work is centered around very specific initiatives and project launches. The marketing and communications created by our in-house communications team are often short-term campaigns that last a few weeks. This is the nature of keeping up with the fast pace of our new initiative launches and our workload.*

*On average, the communications team is marketing at least one new offering or program launch per month. Because many of our marketing efforts are project-specific, we are hoping to expand our reach to get the word out about all SMCL offerings in general to the entire county in various languages.*

*In recent years, we have not put out a general marketing or communications campaign to up brand recognition and promote all general library offerings. Given the wide range of our programs and services, specific campaigns have been the focus. However, our desire is to increase the general public's understanding of all there is to benefit from at our libraries.*

*Our communications/marketing support for various projects will usually include blogs, eNewsletter blasts, social media, flyers, posters, digital advertisement in our libraries, feature stories in our Director's Reports and Annual Reports and press releases. Some data insights include: eNewsletter open rate at 45% and 1.8 Million Website visitors.*

**What does success look like to you?**

*The focus of our campaigns will be on reaching community members who don't currently use the library and to measurably increase the use and knowledge of San Mateo County Libraries to all residents. Success with an agency partner will include multilingual campaigns to boost library card signups and visits, and an overarching supportive approach to optimizing our new SMCL strategic plan being developed.*