Communications Committee Meeting - September 3, 2020

1. Agenda Packet
   Documents:

   200903 AGENDA PACKET - POSTED 200828.PDF

2. Related Agenda Items
   Documents:

   AGENDA ITEM NO. 4 B - POSTED 200902.PDF
   AGENDA ITEM 4. B. - PRESENTATION - POSTED 200904.PDF
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

AGENDA

DATE: Thursday, September 3, 2020  TIME: 4:00 p.m.

Notice: Pursuant to Governor Newsom’s Executive Orders N-29-20 and 33-20, which in part, provide waivers to certain Brown Act provisions, meetings of the Board of Directors will be held by teleconference. There will be no physical location from which members of the public may participate. Instead, the public may listen and/or view the meeting proceedings and provide public comment and comments on agenda items by following these instructions:

To join via Zoom Webinar from a computer, tablet, or smartphone,
   click on the link below:
   https://zoom.us/j/91458023440

To join this meeting via telephone, please dial:
   1-669-900-6833 or 1-253-215-8782
   Meeting ID: 914 5802 3440

If you are unable to access the meeting using this call-in information, please contact the Board Secretary at (619) 409-6703 for assistance.

To provide public comment on non-agenda items or to provide public comment on any item of the agenda:

Before the meeting:
   - Go to www.sweetwater.org; click on the “HOW DO I…” at the top of the page; and then click on the “Public Comment” link in the Contact section.
   OR
   - Physically deposit your public comment in the Authority’s payment drop box located in the public parking lot at the Authority’s Administrative Office at 505 Garrett Avenue, Chula Vista.
   OR
   - Mail your comments to 505 Garrett Avenue, Chula Vista, CA 91910 [Attention: Public Comment].

All written public comment submissions must be received 1 hour in advance of the meeting and will be read aloud to the Board during the appropriate portion of the meeting with a reading limit of 3 minutes for each comment.
During the meeting:

The Chair will inquire prior to Board discussion if there are any comments from the public on each item.

- Via Zoom Webinar go to Participants List, hover over your name and click on “Raise Hand.” This will notify the moderator that you wish to speak during Oral Communication or during a specific item on the agenda.

- Via phone, you can raise your hand by pressing *9 to notify the moderator that you wish to speak during the current item.

Any person with a disability who requires a modification or accommodation in order to participate in a meeting should direct such request to the Board Secretary at (619) 409-6703 at least forty-eight (48) hours before the meeting, if possible. The above public comment procedures supersede any Authority standard public comment policies and procedures to the contrary.

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

2. ITEMS TO BE ADDED, WITHDRAWN, OR REORDERED IN THE AGENDA.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT.
   Opportunity for members of the public to address the Committee. (Government Code Section 54954.3).

4. ACTION AGENDA.
   The following items on the Action Agenda call for discussion and action by the Committee. All items are placed on the Agenda so that the Committee may discuss and take action on the item if the Committee is so inclined, including items listed for information.

   A. Policy for the Procurement of Services (including Construction), Supplies, and Equipment – Update on Implementation of Preferential Purchasing for Local Businesses with Regard to Outreach to Communicate with the Local Vendor Community (Information Item)

   B. Consideration of Public Opinion Survey Consultant Selection

5. DIRECTORS’ COMMENTS.
   Directors’ comments are comments by Directors concerning Authority business that may be of interest to the Committee. Directors’ comments are placed on the Agenda to enable individual Board members to convey information to the Board and the Public. There is no discussion or action taken on comments made by Board members.

6. NEXT MEETING DATE: Monday, December 7, 2020 at 4:00 p.m.

7. ADJOURNMENT.

This agenda was posted at least seventy-two (72) hours before the meeting in a location freely accessible to the Public on the exterior bulletin board at the main entrance to the Authority’s office and it is also posted on the Authority’s website at www.sweetwater.org. No action may be taken on any item not appearing on the posted agenda, except as provided by California Government Code Section 54954.2. Any writings or documents provided to a majority of the members of the Sweetwater Authority Governing Board regarding any item on this agenda will be made available for public inspection at the Authority Administration Office, located at 505 Garrett Avenue, Chula Vista, CA 91910, during normal business hours. Upon request, this agenda will be made available in appropriate alternative formats to persons with disabilities, as required by Section 202 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Any person with a disability who requires a modification or accommodation in order to participate in a meeting should direct such request to the Board Secretary at (619) 409-6703 at least forty-eight (48) hours before the meeting, if possible.

To e-subscribe to receive meeting agendas and other pertinent information, please visit www.sweetwater.org.
TO: Governing Board (Communications Committee)

FROM: Management

DATE: August 28, 2020

SUBJECT: Policy for the Procurement of Services (including Construction), Supplies, and Equipment – Update on Implementation of Preferential Purchasing for Local Businesses with Regard to Outreach to Communicate with the Local Vendor Community

SUMMARY

The Authority’s revisions to its purchasing/procurement policy created a preferential purchasing program for local businesses. Through that policy, the Board directed agency staff to, on a biannual basis, undertake outreach to communicate with the local vendor community to provide information on how to better access the Authority’s procurement process. As part of the FY 2020-21 Strategic Plan Workplan, the Board directed that the Authority communicate with local vendors via a direct mail piece on how to do business with the Authority, create and maintain a vendor database, and report to the Communications Committee in the first quarter of the fiscal year. The purpose of this memo is to report on the vendor database and direct mail piece.

In order to engage and track the local vendor community interest, staff created a vendor webpage and online form where interested businesses can submit their information to be included in the Authority’s vendor database. To publicize this new program, the Authority has completed the following tasks since June 2020:

- Updates to the Authority webpage and creation of an online vendor form used to capture information to populate the vendor database
- Press Release to local media
- Direct Mail postcard sent to local businesses in the Authority’s service area
- Posted on the Authority’s social media channels (Facebook and Twitter)
- Local vendor focus in listing for upcoming National City of Chamber Annual Directory
- Created a paid-for advertisement on the Authority Facebook page
Memo to: Governing Board (Communications Committee)
Subject: Policy for the Procurement of Services (including Construction), Supplies, and Equipment – Update on Implementation of Preferential Purchasing for Local Businesses with Regard to Outreach to Communicate with the Local Vendor Community
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PAST BOARD ACTIONS


May 13, 2020 The Governing Board approved the changes made to the Policy for the Procurement of Services as presented, and incorporate the policy into the final Policy 517 – Financial Policies, that will be included and approved with the FY 2020-21 Budget.

April 22, 2020 The Governing Board considered the Policy for the Procurement of Services (including Construction), Supplies, and Equipment and directed staff to bring the policy back to the Board with the following changes: Add language as requested by legal counsel; add language that the business must be a rate payer in good standing; add language to include small business; add language that the outreach is done every six months; and add language for a waiver of liability as it applies to disposition.

June 7, 2019 The Governing Board approved the FY 2019-20 Strategic Plan Work Plan that included the goal to update the Authority’s purchasing policy.

FISCAL IMPACT
Monies for the direct mail piece were included in the FY 2020-21 Budget.

POLICY

Strategic Plan Goal 4: Customer Service, Citizen Engagement, and Community Relations - Provide high quality customer service based on customer feedback and serve the community through education, outreach, and partnerships.

- Objective CS4: Support local, small, and disadvantaged businesses in the community
  - Communicate with local vendors via a direct mail piece on how to do business with Sweetwater Authority and create and maintain a vendor database Communications

Board Policy 517 – Financial Policies; Section on Policy for the Procurement of Services (including Construction), Supplies, and Equipment

- Section - Preferential Purchasing for Local Businesses:
Authority staff will maintain a vendor database that will include, but not be limited to, local, small, and disadvantaged businesses ("Local, Small, and/or Disadvantaged Business") within the Authority’s service area. Authority staff may provide preferences to Local, Small, and/or Disadvantaged Businesses as part of the selection process for non-professional services, supplies, and equipment, unless prohibited by Federal or State laws. If a Local, Small, and/or Disadvantaged Business is not the lowest bidder, then Authority staff may provide a preference of up to 10 percent over the lowest procured price when awarding a purchase involving Local, Small, and/or Disadvantaged Business. In addition, Authority staff, on a biannual basis, will undertake outreach to communicate with the local vendor community to provide information on how to better access the Authority’s procurement process. In order to qualify for this local preference a Local, Small, and/or Disadvantaged Business must provide proof of having a current valid local business license and either (a) be an Authority rate payer in good standing for the past six months, or (b) receive Authority water service at its business location for the past six months, paid by a third party.

CONCLUSION
This is an information item.

ATTACHMENTS
1. Postcard
2. Press Release
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Business opportunities for local vendors
Looking for more business opportunities? Sign up to be included in Sweetwater Authority’s vendor database!

Sweetwater Authority contracts with vendors for over 80 unique services, supplies or equipment types. Thanks to recent updates to policies, it is easier than ever for local companies to access Authority procurements.

Visit www.sweetwater.org/vendors for more information.
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sweetwater Authority expands contract opportunities for local businesses, vendors

Doing business with Sweetwater Authority (Authority) is easier than ever for local companies, thanks to revisions in the water agency’s procurement policy recently approved by its Governing Board. The revised policy created a preferential purchasing program for local businesses and directed agency staff to engage the local vendor community through a newly created vendor webpage and online form where interested businesses can submit their information to be included in the Authority’s vendor database.

Governing Board Chair Steve Castaneda said, “This policy change reflects the Governing Board’s priority in supporting economic stability within the Authority’s service area of National City, Chula Vista and Bonita, by increasing opportunities for local businesses in agency contracts.”

Interested service providers are encouraged to submit their information to be included in the Authority’s vendor database through an easy-to-complete online form. The database will help facilitate communication between the Authority and vendors about contract opportunities within one of over 80 specific service, supplies or equipment types.

Governing Board Member Josie Calderon-Scott, an advocate of the policy update, is excited about the changes and said, “Especially in these tough economic times, I am grateful that the Authority is doing its part to work with local vendors and stimulating the economy.”

The webpage also allows vendors to access the Authority’s terms and conditions and insurance requirements to ensure they possess the proper qualifications required to enter into business with the agency.

For more information visit www.sweetwater.org/vendors.

Sweetwater Authority is a public water agency providing safe, reliable water to National City, Chula Vista and Bonita.

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TO: Governing Board (Communications Committee)

FROM: Management

DATE: August 28, 2020

SUBJECT: Consideration of Public Opinion Survey Consultant Selection

SUMMARY
As part of the Authority’s Strategic Communications Plan, the Authority is to conduct a public opinion poll/survey every five years. The last survey was conducted in 2014. In the approved Strategic Work Plan a public opinion survey is to be conducted by January 2021. The Authority sent out a Request for Proposals (RFP) seeking assistance with the survey. Attached are the four proposals that were submitted to the Authority for consideration.

The Authority is seeking a consultant to conduct two surveys. A survey of current residential Authority customers/account holders to gather customer’s opinions and awareness of the Authority, including (but not limited to):

a. Interaction with Authority employees
b. Programs
c. Water Conservation/Rebate Programs
d. Tap Water
e. Communications Preferences
f. Social Media
g. Website

This survey will provide the Authority with a follow-up to its 2015 survey of customer information that will guide the Authority in shaping future projects and programs.

The second survey will be designed to connect with developer customers. For this survey, the consultant may conduct a focus group, or utilize a phone or online version. The results from this survey will help the Authority in improving its outreach and service to developer customers.

Following the selection process outlined in the RFP, proposals will be evaluated based upon, but not limited to, related experience of the respondents, knowledge of the Authority, professional qualifications of individuals to be assigned to the project, fees, and overall proposal content. Statements will be reviewed by the Authority. Oral interviews of the most responsive firms by the Authority’s staff and/or its
Memo to: Governing Board (Communications Committee)
Subject: Consideration of Public Opinion Survey Consultant Selection
August 28, 2020
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Communications Committee may be scheduled shortly after the deadline submission date. All consultants selected for interviews will be notified of the selection as soon as possible.

PAST BOARD ACTIONS
June 24, 2020 The Governing Board approved the FY 2020-21 Budget and Strategic Work Plan.

FISCAL IMPACT
Funds for this survey in the amount of $40,000 were included in the FY 2020-21 Budget.

POLICY
Strategic Plan Goal 4: Customer Service, Citizen Engagement, and Community Relations - Provide high quality customer service based on customer feedback and serve the community through education, outreach, and partnerships.

- Objective CS1: Develop an outreach program that includes a multi-faceted approach to communications and customer outreach - including, but not limited to, press releases, web-based communications, social media, community presentations, community events, educational opportunities, and periodically surveying customer opinion
  - 003.00 Conduct a Customer Opinion Survey Communications

- Objective CS3: Explore and implement process improvements to better serve developer customers
  - 001.00 Conduct an opinion survey for developer customers to determine further improvements to the developer process

Board Policy 517, Financial Policies, Preferential Purchasing for Local Businesses – While the preferential purchasing for local businesses component of the Board’s Financial Policies does not apply to this procurement of professional service with regard to providing preference, the Authority did include in the RFP a statement that the Sweetwater Authority encourages participation by local, small and/or disadvantaged businesses.
ALTERNATIVES
1. Provide input on consultant selection for the proposals received in response to the RFP for Public Opinion Survey.

2. Defer to staff to review the proposals and select a consultant.

3. Other direction as recommended to the Governing Board.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION
Staff seeks input from the Communications Committee on the selection of the consultant for the Public Opinion Survey.

ATTACHMENTS
1. Rating Sheet for Proposal Review
2. Request for Proposals for Public Opinion Survey
3. Proposals
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### SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL RANKINGS BY STAFF

#### 2020 Public Opinion Survey

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August 6, 2020

Subject: REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL FOR PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

The Sweetwater Authority (Authority) is seeking proposals from qualified firms to conduct a Public Opinion Survey. The intent of the poll is for the Authority to obtain information from its customers to include (but not limited to):

- Demographic information/statistics
- Awareness of the agency
- Customer satisfaction
- Communications preferences
- Program awareness
- Developer outreach

Consultants are invited to submit an electronic proposal as described in the Statement of Requirements and Proposal Requirements below. Proposals must be received no later than 3:00 p.m. PST on August 28, 2020. Proposals will be reviewed, and those firms who most appropriately meet the Authority's may be considered for an interview by Authority’s staff and/or the Governing Board’s Communications Committee.

Sweetwater Authority encourages participation by local, small and/or disadvantaged businesses.

BACKGROUND
The Authority is staffed with approximately 130 water professionals providing safe, reliable water service to more than 190,000 people in the City of National City, the unincorporated area of Bonita, and the western portion of the City of Chula Vista. Employees are spread amongst three locations representing a total of five departments. The Authority is governed by a seven-member Board of elected and appointed officials. In addition to its more than 33,000 account holders, the Authority also works with developers in the service area. On average, the Authority interacts with 200 to 400 developer customers on an annual basis.

STATEMENT OF REQUIREMENTS
The consultant shall perform the following tasks.

A. Project Description
The Authority is seeking a consultant to conduct two surveys. A survey of current residential Authority customers/account holders will be designed to gather customer’s opinions and awareness of the Agency, including (but not limited to):

a. Interaction with Authority employees
b. Programs
c. Water Conservation/Rebate Programs
d. Tap Water
e. Communications Preferences
f. Social Media
g. Website

This survey will provide the Authority with a follow-up to its 2015 survey of customer information that will guide the agency in shaping future projects and programs.

A second survey is will be designed to connect with Developer Customers. For this survey, the consultant may conduct a focus group, or utilize a phone or online version. The results from this survey will help the Authority in improving its outreach with future developer customers.

B. Scope of Work

**Task 1: Meet with the Authority to Plan Survey**

The consultant selected will meet with the Authority’s Project Manager and other key staff members to refine the scope of work and develop a project schedule. After the initial meeting, the selected consultant will develop a plan for the project that includes, but is not limited to, milestones, and quality control measures for each task. The plan will be reviewed by Authority staff. The selected consultant and the Authority will communicate throughout the study via Zoom meetings, email, phone call and conference calls as needed.

**Task 2: Sample Design**

The survey will be conducted by using a database of current Authority account holders. The Authority will provide this information (phone numbers, names, and addresses associated with the account) to the consultant. The sample must include equal representation from all three areas of the Authority’s service area: Bonita, Chula Vista and National City (proportionate to the number of accounts both residential and non-residential).

The selected consultant will work with the Authority’s Project Manager to design a representative probability sample with appropriate questions to deliver desired information that falls within the bounds of the acceptable margin of error (+/-5%) for customers within all three communities of the Authority’s service area. The proposer also should discuss how they plan to minimize non-response bias for the overall sample, as well as subgroups. The consultant will also hold a special meeting with Authority Governing Board members to solicit feedback for the survey.
**Task 3: Create Survey Instrument**

The Authority is open to several different survey instruments. This includes, but is not limited to, an online survey, phone survey or a mail survey. The survey instrument will take respondents no longer than 10 to 15 minutes to complete. The instrument will be approved by the Authority’s Project Manager. There will be an English and Spanish version of the survey. The consultant is responsible for having all survey materials translated into Spanish.

**Task 4: Surveyors and Data Editors**

The consultant will be responsible for hiring and training its staff needed to collect and validate the survey data.

**Task 5: Pre-test Survey Instrument**

The instrument will be pre-tested with no fewer than 20 combined respondents in English and Spanish. The selected consultant will provide the Authority with a brief written evaluation report of the pretest results, including any recommendations for change or improvements. All changes to the instruments or procedures must be approved by the Authority’s project manager.

**Task 6: Conduct Surveys**

Proposals must be very specific and detailed in describing how the survey will be conducted. They should include, but not be limited to, the discussion of these topics:

a. Ability to have bilingual Spanish speaking Surveyors to assist in gathering of data
b. Overall workflow throughout the survey
c. Number of interviewers, supervisors, coders and other personnel
d. Sample size and selection
e. Days of week, and hours a day survey will be conducted
f. Monitoring of hard to reach populations to ensure that they are represented.

**Task 7: Process data and ensure quality of data**

The selected consultant is responsible for editing, coding, correcting, and validating all survey data. Quality control procedures should be discussed in detail. Data may need to be weighted to adjust for strategic oversampling.

**Task 8: Prepare Final Draft Report Summarizing the Results of the Survey**

The report shall include:

- An Executive Summary that highlights the most interesting and significant findings of the survey.
- A recommendation for future surveys
- A “Conclusions” section that discusses survey findings.
- An analysis of the results. This section should include a discussion of the results (including graphic and tabular illustrations of significant findings).
• Frequency distributions of responses to all questions and cross-tabulations as specified by the Authority Project Manager.

• A description of the sampling, survey and methodologies

• A copy of the surveys (English and Spanish versions)

• A summary of the survey in Power Point. The Consultant will present the survey findings to the Authority Governing Board

The consultant will finalize the report based on the Authority’s review and comments on the draft version and provide a final PDF version and sources files for the final report.

C. Required Meetings

1. Kick-off meeting with Project Manager and Staff
2. Survey Development meeting with Governing Board
3. Presentation of Customer and Developer Survey Results to Governing Board

D. Required Deliverables

1. Pre-test evaluation report.
2. The draft and final report (as defined in Task 8).
3. The survey data
4. An electronic version of the final report (original source files and a PDF)

E. Project Budget

The budget for this project is not to exceed $40,000. Once a consultant has been selected, the Authority Project Manager and the consultant will develop a billing schedule based on key project milestones.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

A. Provide a brief overview of the entire proposal describing the highlights of the proposal. In addition to the proposal overview, please provide the following basic description information regarding the Consultant:

1. Legal name and address of company
2. Legal form of company (partnership, corporation, joint venture, etc.). If joint venture, identify the members of the joint venture and provide all information required within this section for each member
3. If company is a wholly owned subsidiary of "parent company"
4. Address(es) of office(s) working on this project
5. Name, title, address, and telephone number of the person to contact concerning the proposal
B. Provide a brief description of the Consultant understanding of the project and proposed technical and management approach. Describe anticipated project challenges and the approach to address those challenges. Discuss lines of communication needed to establish and achieve expectations and maintain the project schedule. Include a detailed scope of work as Appendix A of the Consultant’s proposal. The scope of work shall include any information required to further clarify the scope of work included in the Request for Proposal (RFP). The scope of work shall reflect the cost estimate and the schedule included in the body of the consultant’s proposal.

C. Indicate role and responsibility of Prime Consultant and all Subconsultants. Describe proposed project team organization, including identification and responsibilities of key personnel. Describe each key team member’s experience, emphasizing experience with similar projects and experience working in the local environment. Provide the office location of each key team member. The Authority’s proposal evaluation will consider the entire team. However, emphasis will be placed on the consultant’s Project Manager. The Project Manager to the project shall not be reassigned without prior written approval from the Authority. Describe proposed local presence for interfacing with the Authority’s Project Manager and staff. Furnish resumes of key personnel.

D. Provide a brief description of Consultant’s experience in completing similar consulting efforts. List three (3) projects of a similar nature with the name of the owner and owner’s representative, telephone numbers, type of work performed, timeframe that work was performed, and value of consulting agreements. Identify team members proposed for the Project and their roles on the representative reference projects. Projects currently being performed may be submitted for consideration.

E. Provide a detailed schedule that incorporates the following target dates and deliverables. If these dates are practically unattainable given the scope of work and the Consultant’s prior experience, please state why and provide an alternative schedule. The goal is to implement survey findings into projects and the Budget for the Authority’s Fiscal Year 2021-22.

F. Deliverables and Target Date:

1. SWA and Consultant Kick-Off Meeting-September 2020
2. Special Board Meeting (to obtain feedback and input on the survey from the Authority’s Board members)-October 2020
3. Survey/Sample Design – November 2020
4. Pre-test survey instrument – November 2020
5. Conduct Survey-December 2020
6. Process and Ensure Quality of Data-December 2020
G. The Consultant’s proposal shall include a detailed cost for the project. The cost detail shall provide the number of hours and associated cost for each staff classification (including both professional and administrative classifications) as they relate to each task identified in the Statement of Requirements. In addition, an estimate of all direct costs such as materials and reproduction costs shall be provided for each task. Sub-consultant costs shall be allocated on a per task basis but do not need to be separated by each staff classification.

In addition to the fee spreadsheet, a typical Consultant rate table shall be provided that lists the Consultant’s typical hourly charges per labor classification category.

H. The proposed consultant shall certify that it takes no exception(s) to this RFP including but not limited to the Authority’s standard Agreement for Services, included as Attachment B. If the proposed consultant does take exception(s) to any portion of the RFP and/or Agreement for Services, the specific exception(s) shall be identified and explained.

I. The proposed consultant shall confirm in its proposal the receipt of all addenda issued to this RFP. The proposed consultant is not required to include copies of the actual addenda in its proposal.

J. Addenda- The proposed consultant shall confirm in its proposal the receipt of all addenda issued to this RFP. The proposed consultant is not required to include copies of the actual addenda in its proposal.

K. The selected consultant shall be required to sign a NON-DISCLOSURE / CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT, included as Attachment C. The proposed consultant shall certify that it takes no exception(s) to this NON-DISCLOSURE / CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT. If the proposed consultant does take exception(s) to any portion of the NON-DISCLOSURE / CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT, the specific exception(s) shall be identified and explained.

L. Additional Information: Interested parties may submit written questions regarding this RFP to Leslie Payne at lpayne@sweetwater.org. Questions must be received no later than 3:00 p.m. PST on August 20, 2020. The Authority’s responses to any questions will be shared as an Addendum with all other proposers via e-mail. The Authority may request additional information or clarification from any or all proposers after initial evaluation.
HOW TO SUBMIT PROPOSAL

Letter Proposals must be delivered electronically, via the Authority’s secure file transfer system NO LATER THAN 3:00 p.m. PST on Friday, August 28, 2020. Please note the following:

- The secure file transfer system will REQUIRE you to set up an account by providing a valid email address. This email address must be validated by the system before it will allow you to upload your response document.
- The secure file transfer system must be accessed using an up to date internet browser. Examples include but not limited to: Chrome, Safari, Internet Explorer 11 or later, Firefox.
- The email address used to register for the system to submit the response will receive a confirmation email when the file is first accessed by Authority staff.
- Response should be uploaded in advance of the response deadline. The time stamp on the file received by the system will be used to determine whether the response was submitted on time.
- File Format: The response must be in pdf format, and include scanned copies of all pages with required signatures present.
- File Transfer system web page address: https://sendit.sweetwater.org/filedrop/PublicOpinionPoll

SELECTION PROCESS

Proposals will be evaluated based upon, but not limited to, related experience of the respondents, knowledge of the Authority, professional qualifications of individuals to be assigned to the project, fees, and overall proposal content. Statements will be reviewed by the Authority. Oral interviews of the most responsive firms by the Authority’s staff and/or its Communications Committee may be scheduled shortly after the deadline submission date. All consultants selected for interviews will be notified of the selection as soon as possible.

The Authority reserves the right to reject any and all proposals and to waive informalities and minor irregularities in any proposal reviewed. Further, the Authority may reject any proposals which do not conform to the instructions herewith. Additionally, the Authority reserves the right to negotiate all final terms and conditions of any agreement entered into. Nothing in the RFP shall be deemed to commit the Authority to engage any consultant. Proposals must be received no later than 3:00 p.m. PST on August 28, 2020.

Should you have any questions, please contact Leslie Payne at (619) 409-6723 or lpayne@sweetwater.org. Thank you for your interest.

Enclosures:
Attachment A: Standard Consultant Agreement for Services
Attachment B: Non-Disclosure Agreement
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COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Prepared for

SWEETWATER AUTHORITY

August 28, 2020

John Nienstedt, President

Competitive Edge Research & Communication
1620 5th Avenue, Suite 825
San Diego, CA. 92101

(O) 619.702.2372

john@cerc.net
www.cerc.net
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INTRODUCTION

Thank you for this opportunity for Competitive Edge Research & Communication, Inc. (CERC) to propose public opinion research for the Sweetwater Authority. We understand Sweetwater Authority seeks a partner to complete research among its customer base to obtain demographic information, measure and understand awareness of the agency, customer satisfaction, communication channel preferences, and program awareness. This survey will provide the Authority with a follow-up to its 2015 customer survey that will guide the agency in shaping future projects and programs. The agency also seeks to conduct research among developer customers to evaluate outreach methods for this group and provide direction for future developer outreach programs.

CERC is a small local public opinion research firm with more than 30 years of experience in accurately measuring public and voter opinions and attitudes at the regional, state and national levels. CERC has experience conducting research in San Diego County. We have assessed opinions and attitudes on a wide range of issues relating specifically to the local market and have unparalleled knowledge of issues affecting the region’s residents. Some sample programs and strengths follow:

**Competitive Edge Research has conducted two comprehensive studies for the San Diego Public Utilities Department when it needed to know how customers felt about it.** These extensive 400-person customer surveys clearly showed the Department what its strong points were and where it needed to improve. More importantly, as is a staple of all CERC research, analysis showed why customers held the opinions they did and how the Department could best address its shortcomings. The results became a mainstay in the Department’s playbook for how to address important issues.

**The Western States Petroleum Association hired CERC as part of team investigating voter attitudes towards climate change and air pollution.** This comprehensive research began with a series of in-depth focus groups to dig into the electorate’s psyche in four metro areas. Those findings led to a 1,600-person statewide voter survey that showed where voters stood on the topic and how WSPA could work to change opinion.

**San Diego Gas & Electric retained CERC to conduct research among environmental stakeholders and decision makers.** Twenty members of this particular population – akin to Sweetwater Authority’s developer customers – took part in in-depth interviews to dig in to how they considered issues and how they saw the client relate to the environment. The resulting report gave SDG&E insight into why opinion leaders held strong views on the utility’s environmental record, and most important, what it could do to improve perceptions.
Competitive Edge identifies hot-button issues. We conduct actionable, bullet-proof research that will help the Sweetwater Authority put its best foot forward to gain insight into the perceptions and needs of the Sweetwater Authority customer base and developer-related issues. We are experts benchmarking public opinion, identifying opinion dynamics and message-testing. We’ve developed a patent-pending MPower message-testing system to determine the true persuasive power of a given message. Our research products are always designed with your organization's objectives firmly in mind – no cookie-cutter solutions. Whether messages ultimately take the form of television ads, earned media or promotional and public education efforts, clients know what to do to be successful.

Competitive Edge Research does not subcontract core research operations. We maintain our own survey center in El Paso, Texas, providing quality controls and cost efficiencies unmatched by firms that subcontract data collection operations. We can quickly field a research project, tightly manage the interview and data capture process to deliver results faster and at more competitive rates.

Competitive Edge Research delivers key insights via robust methodologies and analytical techniques. The research that we conduct provides key insights to clients who need to explore concepts, effectively plan activities, develop and test messaging and/or determine program and campaign effectiveness. We expertly integrate mixed-mode research methodologies, apply advanced statistical analysis and deliver clear, top quality presentations of the findings. We want our clients to have the confidence they need to make critical decisions.

Competitive Edge Research will assign its “A” team to this project. CERC President John Nienstedt, Director of Operations Ronald Zavala, Research Manager Lawrence Sherman, and Research Analyst Rachel Lawler will serve as the executive team for this project. Nienstedt will serve as principal client liaison and analyze the data along with Lawler, while Zavala will oversee data collection and Sherman will manage the research process from start to finish. This executive team leverages a wealth of survey design and data collection leadership and capabilities with a combined 75+ years of professional research experience.

Upon reviewing the scope of work, CERC has prepared a single cost proposal for Sweetwater Authority that delivers a robust awareness and attitudinal customer survey that draws proportionally across the three (3) locations in the service area (City of Chula Vista, City of National City, and Bonita area) delivering statistically representative findings at the 95% confidence interval with a margin of error of +/-4.9%. The sample size used for the survey will also enable important subgroup analysis, including differing perceptions of Spanish speaking customers when compared to the general population. A multimodal approach to data collection will be employed, which includes email, text, and phone contact using a randomized subset of Sweetwater Authority’s customer database. This data collection methodology has been used extensively by CERC to provide maximum coverage and allow for deeper penetration into the Hispanic/Spanish-speaking portion of the customer base.
Additionally, CERC’s proposal addresses the developer research objectives by employing a state-of-the-art online focus group component. CERC believes that qualitative research is the most appropriate methodology with regard to this research component and will be the most effective method of truly ascertaining relevant, insightful, and actionable perspectives from developer customers. An added benefit to this methodology is that some quantitative data can also be gathered during the sessions. The online focus group methodology we are proposing will provide insight into the needs of developers so that improvements can be made to enhance relationships with the agency. It also provides a forum in which topics can be discussed dynamically based on real-time input from developers.

Some important methodological points:

- **To ensure complete coverage of all customers in the Sweetwater Authority service area,** CERC will utilize a database of customers, provided by the Authority, covering the entire service area from which to draw the sample frame. A random sample will be drawn from the customer database so that the three primary locations within the service area, National City, Chula Vista, and Bonita are represented proportionately based on the distribution of residential customer accounts. In the data collection phase, CERC will utilize a multimodal approach to contact customers by landline and cell phone plus email and text message to maximize coverage of the customer universe. After conducting the surveys, CERC will use standard industry raking procedures to weight the data and thereby accurately reflect the overall Sweetwater Authority customer universe. Additional emphasis will be placed on administering the survey in the respondent’s language of preference (English or Spanish) within all contact modes. By affording the respondents the opportunity to complete the survey in their preferred language, coverage will be maximized among the Spanish-speaking community and will provide a solid basis to analyze how their perceptions differ from the English-speaking population.

- **Overall topline results (frequency distributions of responses to all questions) will be produced and delivered within one day of completing fielding.** The topline results will allow the Authority to broadly examine survey responses. CERC will then analyze this initial data and prepare a preliminary memo, submitting it the following day.

- **CERC will take extreme care in analyzing the data and only employs the most appropriate and robust statistical techniques.** This may include multiple regression analysis, ordinal regression, logistic regression, paired sample T-tests, factor analysis, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and/or chi-square auto-interaction detection (CHAID).

- **Our final report is comprehensive and thorough** consisting of an executive summary, topline results, information about methodology, a tabulation of all calls made and a tabulation of survey results, in addition to detailed conclusions and recommendations. It is delivered in print and electronic format, and collected data is also delivered in SPSS format after being anonymized.
• CERC will review the report results with Authority staff, answer questions regarding the implications of the responses and discuss related issues. As a result of current local restrictions, the presentation will likely be conducted using a virtual meeting platform, such as Zoom. After the report and presentation are delivered to all appropriate parties, CERC President, John Nienstedt will continue to be available by phone or email to answer further questions.

CERC’s findings are held to the highest industry standards and often become a matter of public record. The Sweetwater Authority can rest assured that we supply insights without vested interest and that our analysis and insights are fueled by the meticulous collection of accurate data.

John Nienstedt, President of CERC, is the authorized representative with the authority to enter into a binding agreement and authorize changes to the scope, terms and conditions of the agreement if our team is selected. Competitive Edge is located at 1620 5th Avenue, Suite 825, San Diego, California 92101. John can be reached at 800-576-CERC and via e-mail at john@cerc.net.

Respectfully submitted, we hope this proposal comprehensively details our experience, expertise and desire to partner with the Sweetwater Authority. We look forward to working with you.
PROFILE OF COMPETITIVE EDGE RESEARCH

Competitive Edge Research and Communications, Inc. has serviced regional and national public opinion research needs for 33 years, conducting thousands of studies and literally millions of interviews. We’ve built our reputation through high-caliber analysis that delivers actionable insights for important projects and decisions. Recent clients have included San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer, Sempra Energy, Associated Builders and Contractors, San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce, San Diego Tourism Authority, San Diego Workforce Partnership, SANDAG, San Diego Public Utilities Department, North County Transportation District, San Diego Padres, the Red Cross and Rady’s Children Hospital.

Our research services span a wide range of quantitative and qualitative offerings that leverage industry-leading methodologies and advanced statistical techniques. From dial-testing to integrated mixed-mode methods to CHAID analysis, we choose and leverage the right tools for the job. CERC also maintains our own professional call center and focus group facility, and conducts telephone and online surveying using state-of-the-art software. We currently consist of eight full-time professional/managerial staff in addition to more than 100 highly-trained part-time interviewers.

Please address any questions regarding this proposal to CERC’s President, John Nienstedt, whom you can reach at john@cerc.net or at 619.702.2372.

KEY PERSONNEL

For this project, we will designate John Nienstedt as the Sweetwater Authority’s client liaison and project manager. John will serve as the Sweetwater Authority’s principal point of contact and will oversee the project internally at CERC. He will personally manage each stage of the project and ensure that all deliverables and progress reports are provided to the Sweetwater Authority on a timely basis.

Please find below the general descriptions and career backgrounds of the key CERC personnel assigned to this Sweetwater Authority project.

John Nienstedt, President, is a featured speaker at campaign seminars, and is frequently called upon by television, radio and print media to shed light on polling issues. He has presented scientific papers at national conferences and is a Member of the American Association for Public Opinion Research and the Market Research Association. John was named San Diego County’s 2018 Pollster of the Year and he received the SBA’s Entrepreneurial Success Award for San Diego in 2000. His M.A. and B.A. degrees in Political Science are from San Diego State University.
John’s expertise includes:

**Questionnaire design**

Has designed thousands of questionnaires ranging in complexity from simple tracking studies to 100 question surveys. Well-versed in bias-avoidance tactics, including primacy, recency and wording order effects. Frequently incorporates split sample designs to test hypotheses. Has conducted experiments to determine optimum wording of questions and introduction. Uses pre-tests when warranted with emphasis on cognitive interviewing. Spanish translation.

**Sampling (RDD, list-assisted, and hybrid)**

Has conducted thousands of studies that rely on each type of sampling method and pioneered use of blended sampling which effectively marries listed and RDD samples. Well-versed in intricacies of sample selection in both listed and RDD samples. Has also designed area-based samples when and used nth number random samples to for in-person studies.

**Data collection methods**

Fully automated CATI phone room on premises, staff has over one half a century of combined experience in managing survey call center operations, bilingual interviewers. Professional focus group moderator. Conducts dial-tests using Perception Analyzer to test TV ads, debates, movies, speeches and other visual stimuli.

**Quality control methods**

Has constructed proprietary methods based on ANOVA, regression and factor analysis to systematically detect interviewer errors, rigorous audio and visual monitoring, pioneered the use of performance scores to evaluate interviewers which we continually refine.

**Data analysis**

Has developed patent pending MPower message testing system to determine the true persuasive power of messaging. Advanced analytic statistical toolbox includes: ANOVA; multiple, logistic, multinomial logistic, and ordinal regression; factor analysis; chi-squared automatic interaction detection (CHAID); repeated measures. Completed SPSS training seminars on advanced statistical techniques and advanced regression techniques. Completed AAPOR short courses: Weighting Survey Data; Latent Class Analysis; Web Survey Implementation; Data Imputation; Sampling from Cell Phones; List-assisted Sampling.

**Report-writing**

Has written hundreds of detailed reports on public and voter opinion. Emphasis on providing actionable recommendations. Has written numerous published commentaries on local public opinion. Has appeared numerous times on television and radio to discuss CERC results.

**Presentations**

Has conducted thousands of presentations over the past 27 years using the most up-to-date formats and technology to relate important findings to our clients.
Ronald Zavalá, Director of Operations, began his phone center career as an interviewer in 1996. Since then, he’s acquired a wealth of interviewing, supervisory and management skills, having worked in qualitative research, medical data and quantitative research. Ronald was honored as the Outstanding Graduate in his class, Magna Cum Laude and Phi Beta Kappa, at San Diego State University where he received his Bachelor of Arts in Classics. He also holds a teaching credential from SDSU. He is fluent in Spanish and served honorably for two enlistments in the U.S. Navy as a Quartermaster (navigator’s assistant).

Lawrence Sherman, Research Manager, has been a part of the CERC team since February 2006. He started as an Audio-Visual Technician, became an interviewer, and then progressed to Floor Support. In 2010 he became an Assistant Call Center Manager. Then, in 2017, Lawrence was promoted to Research Manager. His responsibilities include project management of the firm’s data collection, report production and data charting as well as web survey programming and panel management.

David Ferree, Call Center Manager, has worked in survey research since 1996 when he managed a call center in Reading, Pennsylvania and was responsible for all personnel management, project management and facility management. He has served as a Director of Site Development, a Director of Training and Development and a Director of Field Services. David is a Spanish speaker, develops administrative structure for bilingual research and advising cultural aspects of design and implementation.

**RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

We believe successful projects hinge on thorough understanding of the individual research needs of our clients. This requires an ongoing and iterative exchange of information and ideas between CERC and the Sweetwater Authority. All communication between Sweetwater Authority and CERC will be through Zoom meetings, email, and phone.

In considering the goals stated in the Sweetwater Authority’s RFP, we propose to conduct a mixed-mode survey of 400 customers in the Sweetwater Authority service area during the first two weeks of December. Additionally, CERC proposes to conduct an online focus group with developers. The focus group will be conducted during the first two weeks of December, also. There is no conflict in scheduling both the quantitative survey and the focus group during the same general time as the customer research and developer research are independent of one another.
The objective of the survey is to benchmark awareness of the agency and evaluate satisfaction with the agency related to:

- Interaction with Authority employees
- Agency programs
- Water conservation and rebate programs
- Tap water
- Communications preferences
- Social media presence
- The agency website

Additional qualitative research will be undertaken to gain feedback from developers concerning their attitudes regarding Sweetwater Authority policies, programs and satisfaction with agency outreach.

**Mixed-Mode Method**

Competitive Edge Research has designed and implemented mixed-mode survey methods for more than a decade, whereby we have evolved our digital practices to meet and eventually exceed industry expectations. Today, we’ve tightly integrated our computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) and computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI) systems at the vendor level, to avoid pitfalls that more loosely coupled system integration schemas present. As such, our telephone, cell phone and internet surveying data is seamlessly woven together at the raw, analytical and presentational levels.

**Spanish Language**

Competitive Edge maintains an exceptionally strong Spanish language capability. Our President, John Nienstedt, our Director of Operations, Ronald Zavala, and our Call Center Manager, David Ferree are all English-Spanish bilingual. Furthermore, a large proportion of our interviewers are bilingual, many with native Spanish proficiency. As such, CERC offers expert experience throughout the organization in controlling for language-related bias.
APPENDIX A: SCOPE OF WORK

The following outlines our methodological approach to administer a customer survey among residential Sweetwater Authority customers and a focus group among developers.

GENERAL METHODOLOGY- RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER SURVEY

CERC will achieve the objectives sought by Sweetwater Authority by designing a statistically representative sample plan and implementing a multimodal survey that is representative of the Sweetwater Authority service area. The sampling plan and questionnaire will be developed in consultation with the Authority’s Project Manager. Emphasis will be placed on sampling the three primary geographic areas (Chula Vista, National City, and Bonita) in proportion to the distribution of residential accounts within each community. The multimodal approach will ensure the greatest possible coverage of the customer base. In addition, offering all respondents the option to take the survey in English or Spanish will provide insight to differences in attitudes and perceptions of the Spanish speaking population relative to English-speakers.

PROJECT TASKS

Task 1: MEETING TO PLAN SURVEYS

CERC President John Nienstedt will meet with the Sweetwater Authority Project Manager and staff via Zoom meetings to refine the scope of work, finalize the mixed-mode research methodology, formulate the final timeline and determine progress reporting mechanisms. CERC will recommend the appropriate mixed-mode survey strategy and methodology to provide the most reliable data, objective results and actionable findings.

Deliverables: Finalized Scope of Work and Project Schedule

Task 2: DEVELOP SAMPLING PLAN

We will develop a comprehensive sampling plan with the proper distribution of landline, cellular phone and email/web survey respondents necessary to correct for mode effects and obtain a representative sample. This sampling plan will weight demographics to customer parameters and correct for any demographic bias. Effectively determining the correct sampling method is crucial and will also allow us to confidently analyze differences between subgroups, such as age segments and geographical considerations, among others.

From a purely statistical perspective, a sample of 400 will result in a maximum margin of sampling error of +/- 4.9% at the 95% Confidence Level. The sample size provides a high level of confidence in the survey’s overall results and allows for further subgroup analysis.
**Deliverables:** Sampling Plan

**Task 3: CREATE SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

CERC will draft the survey instrument for Sweetwater Authority review and approval. The survey will consist of 30 questions. We will recommend additional questions and work to determine the correct wording and ordering of questions to eliminate survey design bias and obtain the highest response rates and corresponding data accuracy.

Survey responses will be collected by trained Competitive Edge interviewers with households on both landlines and cell phones, as well as via email/web.

**Deliverables:** Survey Instrument and Survey Procedures

**Task 4: SURVEYORS AND DATA EDITORS**

CERC will utilize experienced telephone interviewers working at our El Paso, TX call center to administer the survey by phone. All interviewers who conduct phone surveys will be trained on specifics related to the Sweetwater Authority customer survey, including terminology, coding, and probing.

**Deliverables:** Call center staffing and training of surveyor staff

**Task 5: PRETEST SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

CERC pretests surveys via cognitive interviewing techniques to check for errors and ensure that all questions are clear and understood by a live sample. This pretest will also ensure the ease of survey administration and flow. This is our final check on survey design.

The results of this pre-test will be shared and reviewed with the Sweetwater Authority team to determine any adjustments to the questionnaire before interviewing proceeds. A minimum of 20 surveys will be completed by phone and will allow for testing the survey in English and Spanish.

**Deliverables:** Evaluation of pretest results with recommendations for revisions, as needed

**Task 6: CONDUCT SURVEY**

CERC’s trained professional interviewers will conduct the phone surveys and collect data using our computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) program. CATI programming allows CERC to automatically route the interviewer through the interview to ensure that skip-patterns are used properly, that only the correct codes are entered, that data entry errors are prevented, and that quality control is maintained.
CERC maintains a staff of approximately 100 professional telephone interviewers at our El Paso call center. A subset of the interviewer staff will be dedicated to the Sweetwater Authority survey and will include a contingent of fully bilingual interviewers. The majority of telephone interviewing will be conducted during evening and weekend hours. We estimate the survey will be conducted during one week, which will include weekend shifts on both Saturday and Sunday. The same quality control procedures are maintained for interviews completed in Spanish and English.

Achieving a representative sample across all demographic groups is critical to the success of the project. To this end, CERC will monitor survey progress throughout the field period to ensure representation of hard to reach populations. The multimode approach as well as a strong emphasis on bilingual interviewing will help to ensure representativeness across all demographic groups.

CERC is at the forefront of computerized predictive dialer-based telephone interviewing. Our system uses algorithms optimized for research and one of the most powerful scripting engines available. This enables the implementation of complex questionnaires in a fraction of the time of most other systems. CERC’S CATI system is also able to track all calls made during a project. This ensures that the disposition (including refusals, disconnects, answering machines, wrong numbers, etc.) of each dial is recorded, and that dispositions can be monitored in real-time.

CERC will also create a web survey conducted via email using computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI) software that is tightly integrated with our CATI system for seamless data collection. This integration provides specific advantages, such as the ability to interview a statistically reliable number of respondents despite falling incidence rates for telephone interviews.

**Deliverables:** Progress Reports

**Task 7: PROCESS DATA & CONDUCT QUALITY CONTROL**

Data will be edited, cleaned, coded (including open-end coding), validated, weighted and tabulated in SPSS format by CERC staff, following industry standard procedures.

Call Center Manager, David Ferree, will be present during all shifts to ensure quality is maintained. Our quality control methodology is rigorous and multi-pronged, including a 10:1 ratio of interviews to quality control staff. We employ real-time visual and audio monitoring, as well as remote monitoring capability, using our CATI and telecommunications systems. Furthermore, we systemically analyze interviewer performance using a proprietary formula that encompasses such variables as cooperation rate, refusal rate, evaluation monitoring and interviewer performance scores to ensure the highest quality interviewing. We treat quality control as an upmost business objective at CERC and leave nothing to chance.

**Deliverables:** Clean Data File in SPSS Format, Topline Report, Initial Analysis
Task 8: ANALYZE DATA AND WRITE SUMMARY REPORTS

Competitive Edge Research’s reports are based on more than three decades of experience analyzing complex opinion and behavioral data. The final report for this survey project will be comprehensive and thorough and will consist of the following:

- An executive summary
- Topline results
- Information about the survey and sampling methodology
- A recommendation for future surveys,
- Analysis of the results, including graphic and tabular illustrations of significant findings
- A Conclusions section with recommendations
- Frequency distributions of responses to all questions
- Crosstabulations as specified by the Authority Project Manager
- A copy of the surveys (English and Spanish)
- A PowerPoint summary of findings which will used for the presentation to the Governing Board

The final report will be delivered in print and electronic format, and anonymized collected data will be delivered in SPSS format.

Competitive Edge Research President John Nienstedt will present the final results using PowerPoint slides to the Sweetwater Authority Governing Board via an in-person or virtual meeting. He will also submit all final deliverables to the Sweetwater Authority.

**Deliverables:** Final Report and Presentation with Recommendations

**GENERAL METHODOLOGY- FOCUS GROUP WITH DEVELOPERS**

We propose to hold an online focus group discussion among developers. Considering the nature of the online platform, we recommend a group size of 6-8 participants, ensuring full participation by all attendees.

CERC, with Authority input, will handle all aspects of the project: design of the moderator's guide, recruiting, the moderator, stipends, platform, and compilation of a full report. We encourage your team to view the proceedings. You will also receive video and transcripts of the proceedings.

CERC has conducted hundreds of focus groups, both in-person and online. Although we do maintain our own focus group facilities, we would proceed with an online focus group due to current conditions. We would recruit participants from a list of developers provided by the Authority.
Focus groups are the way – usually the only way – to dig deep into the attitudes, psyche, and language of the target segment, developers, in this case. Although they do not “test” things, because their results are not generalizable to the larger population of all developers, the focus group will help uncover attitudes toward the Authority and suggest improved ways for the Authority to communicate/interact with developers. Furthermore, considering the relatively small size of the developer pool, we consider qualitative focus group research to be the more appropriate methodology, in contrast to a quantitative, structured survey.

**Note:** Tasks associated with Focus Group designated as “a” version

**PROJECT TASKS**

**Task 1a: MEETING TO PLAN DEVELOPER FOCUS GROUP**

As part of the initial Zoom meeting with Sweetwater Authority, CERC President John Nienstedt will also review the objectives and procedures for the focus group among developers. The discussion will focus on the objectives of the research with developers and the implementation of the online focus group. After the initial meeting, further communication between John Nienstedt and Sweetwater Authority will proceed by phone and email.

**Deliverables:** Finalized Scope of Work and Project Schedule for Focus Group

**Task 2a: CREATE RECRUITMENT SCREENER AND RECRUIT DEVELOPER PARTICIPANTS**

CERC will develop a Recruitment Screener for recruiting participants to the developer focus group. The screener will be developed in consultation with Sweetwater Authority.

**Deliverables:** Recruitment Screener

**Task 3a: CREATE MODERATOR’S GUIDE**

In consultation with Sweetwater Authority, CERC will develop a Moderator’s Guide for the focus group.

**Deliverables:** Moderator’s Guide

**Task 4a: CONDUCT FOCUS GROUP WITH DEVELOPERS**

CERC will hold an online focus group discussion among developers. Considering the nature of the online platform, we recommend a group size of 6-8 participants, ensuring full participation by all attendees. We encourage the Sweetwater team to view the proceedings. You will also receive video and transcripts of the proceedings.
Deliverables: Focus Groups, Video and Transcript of Proceedings

Task 5a: ANALYZE AND WRITE FINAL REPORT

Competitive Edge will provide a Final Report on the Focus Group and make a presentation of the results as part of the Final Report and Presentation of the Customer Survey results. Competitive Edge Research’s qualitative reports are based on three decades of experience conducting focus groups. The final report for this survey project will be comprehensive and thorough and will consist of the following:

- An executive summary
- Analysis of the results, including significant findings
- A recommendation for future research among developers
- A Conclusions section with recommendations
- A copy of the screener and Moderator’s Guide
- A PowerPoint summary of findings which will used for the presentation to the Governing Board

The final report will be delivered in print and electronic format, along with an audio/video recording of the group.

Competitive Edge Research President John Nienstedt will present the final results using PowerPoint slides to the Sweetwater Authority Governing Board via an in-person or virtual meeting, as well as submission of all final deliverables to the Sweetwater Authority.

Deliverables: Final Report on Developer Focus Group and Presentation with Recommendations

PROSPECTIVE TIMING

CERC will readily meet Sweetwater Authority’s timelines for the survey and focus group, which the Sweetwater Authority RFP defines as completed no later than December. CERC has proposed a focus groups among developers during December. For the customer survey, CERC will meet Sweetwater Authority’s timeline for our initial meeting, finalization of the survey questionnaire and pretesting. Data collection will require one week in December and be conducted during evenings before 9pm and weekends. The topline report will be delivered one day thereafter. We will analyze the data, write the final report, and develop a presentation which will be delivered by January 27, 2021, as per Sweetwater Authority’s proposed schedule.

The research will therefore take two months to complete (December 2020-January 2021). The overall project will take place over a period lasting four months, beginning with the kick-off meeting in September until the final Report and presentation are delivered by January 27, 2021.
### CUSTOMER SURVEY

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<tr>
<th>Task</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Meet with Authority to Plan Survey</td>
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<td>September</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sample Design</td>
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<td>November</td>
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<td>Create Survey Instrument</td>
<td>1 Week</td>
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<tr>
<td>Process/Ensure Data Quality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deliver Report for Review</td>
<td>1 week</td>
<td>January 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare Presentation</td>
<td>2 weeks</td>
<td>January 8-22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deliver Final Report and Presentation</td>
<td>1 day</td>
<td>January 27</td>
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### DEVELOPER FOCUS GROUP

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Task 3a
Create Screener for Focus Group recruitment 1 day November
Develop Moderator’s Guide for Focus Group 1 week November

Task 4a
Hiring/Training Recruiters 1 week November

Task 5a
There is no Task 5a for the Focus Group

Task 6a
Recruit Focus Group Participants 1 week Nov 30-Dec 4
Conduct Focus Group 1 day December 8

Task 7a
There is no Task 7a for the Focus Group

Task 8a
(Concurrent with Report and Presentation for Customer Survey)
Deliver Report for Review 1 week January 8
Prepare Presentation 2 weeks January 8-22
Deliver Final Report and Presentation 1 day January 27

PRICE/TERMS

Our cost proposal for the 2020 Sweetwater Authority survey and focus group is $39,640. An invoice for half this amount will be submitted to the Sweetwater Authority before the project begins. Final payment is required when the final report and presentation is delivered.

NO EXCEPTIONS TO RFP

CERC has reviewed the RFP and takes no exception to it, including but not limited to the Authority’s Standard Agreement for Services.

NON-DISCLOSURE AGREEMENT
CERC will sign the Authority’s NON-DISCLOSURE/CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT and will take no exceptions to it.

**ATTACHMENT A: DETAILED COST ESTIMATES**

Detailed cost estimates follow in spreadsheet format.
## Sweetwater Authority Customer Survey

### Cost Proposal Form

**CERC:**

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<th>Combined Overhead (%)</th>
<th>Fee (%)</th>
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### Task 1: Meet with Authority to Plan Survey

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### Task 2: Develop Sampling Plan

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### Task 6: Conduct Survey

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### Task 7: Process and Quality Control Data

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**Total Project Hours:** 399

**Total Amount:** $26,065
## PROJECT: Sweetwater Authority Developer Focus Group

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### Task 1a  
Meet with Authority to Plan Study

- **John**  
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### Task 2a  
Create Screener and Recruit 1 Focus Group

- **John**  
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### Task 3a  
Develop Moderator’s Guide

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### Task 5a  
Analyze Data and Write Report

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  Labor Amount: $1,300.00  
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**TOTAL PROJECT HOURS: 75**  
**FOCUS GROUPS COST: $6,875**
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**TOTAL OTHER COSTS** $6,700

**TOTAL PROJECT COSTS** $39,640
Dear Ms. Payne:

On behalf of DeGrave Communications, I am pleased to present this proposal to support Sweetwater Authority with its public opinion surveys. With our in-depth experience developing award-winning communications, marketing and research strategies for dozens of public-sector agencies, we believe we are the perfect fit and will bring a unique understanding to this project.

Our exceptional work is accomplished through a multi-pronged approach:

**Collaboration:** Consider our team a seamless extension of your staff. From start to finish, our approach makes sure your team is engaged in the process.

**Strategy:** Effective communications, marketing and branding campaigns are created— not copied. We approach each engagement with a fresh perspective in order to meet the project goals.

**Results:** Our strategies are data driven and all projects start with a solid foundation of research to ensure exceptional quantifiable results for our clients.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit our proposal and look forward to developing surveys that will provide Sweetwater Authority with data-driven information that will guide the Authority’s projects and programs as well as future outreach with developer customers for years to come.

Warm regards,

Liselle Reguiero DeGrave, APR
President & Founder
DeGrave Communications, Inc.
40575 Cal Oaks Road D2-137, Murrieta, CA 92562
951.764.0865 | Liselle@DeGravePR.com
DeGravePR.com
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<td>B. Project Approach</td>
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<td>C. Roles and Responsibilities</td>
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<td>D. Relevant Projects</td>
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<td>E. Project Schedule</td>
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<td>Appendix A - Scope of Work</td>
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A. PROJECT UNDERSTANDING/APPROACH
Sweetwater Authority provides water service to nearly 200,000 people in National City, the unincorporated area of Bonita and the western portion of Chula Vista and is seeking a firm to develop and deploy two external surveys.

Now more than ever, studies have shown that the majority of people distrust their utility agency and government. Often viewing utilities as faceless, heartless entities.

The Authority, therefore, has an opportunity to use survey data to proactively position itself in the community as a visionary utility leader that cares about customers and the community; fosters goodwill amongst stakeholders and builds trust and satisfaction with the community.

**Survey one** would include the Authority's current residential customers/account holders and will be designed to gather customers' opinions and awareness of the Agency, including but not limited to:

- Interaction with Authority employees
- Programs, including water conservation and rebates
- Tap water
- Communications preferences
- Social media
- Website

**Survey two** would be designed to connect with Developer customers, and may include focus groups, phone or online survey. Research results will help the Authority improve its outreach efforts with future developer customers.

In addition, the survey will be a follow-up to the Authority's 2015 survey in order to track performance over time. Both quantitative and qualitative survey data will be used to assist in decision making on Authority services, programs, policies and budget considerations.

**We’ll accomplish this through our proven methodology:**

- **Collaboration**
- **Strategy**
- **Results**
DeGrave Communications is here to assist the Authority with effectively designing, developing, administering and interpreting results for its Customer/Account Holder and Developer surveys. Our team of knowledgeable communications and research strategists have decades of experience and use an innovative community and stakeholder engagement platform in partnership with our award-winning survey partner, ntropy. This platform gives us the ability to provide the City with brand personalization, multiple languages, response deduplication, complex logic and more. Data is then dynamically displayed in real-time and interactive dashboards to help the City make data driven decisions. In addition, our team weaves in traditional data gathering methods such as phone and mail surveys and focus groups to ensure all populations are represented.

As part of this effort, our team will successfully accomplish these surveys through (full details on our approach are located in the appendices “project approach” section):

- Host a planning meeting with the Authority to plan the surveys.
- Provide a sample design of the survey with a representative probability sample and appropriate questions to meet an acceptable margin of error (+/- 5%) while minimizing non-response bias for the overall sample and subgroups as well as host a meeting with the Authority’s Governing Board members to solicit feedback.
- Create a survey instrument and ensure that all materials are translated into Spanish.
- Manage and train staff needed to collect and validate survey data.
- Pre-test the survey instrument and provide evaluation.
- Conduct surveys in English and Spanish, manage workflow, oversee personnel, etc.
- Ensure quality control of data.
- Prepare a final draft report summarizing the data.

In addition, we thoroughly lay out our project approach, similar experience, schedule of deliverables and costs.

**CONSULTANT INFORMATION**

*Legal Name and Address and Address of Office Working on this Project:*
DeGrave Communications, Inc.
40575 Cal Oaks Road D2-137
Murrieta, CA 92562

*Legal Form of Company:*
S-Corp

*Name, Title, Address and Telephone Number of Proposal Point Person:*
Liselle Reguiero DeGrave, APR
President & Founder
DeGrave Communications, Inc.
40575 Cal Oaks Road D2-137, Murrieta, CA 92562
951.764.0865
Liselle@DeGravePR.com
DeGravePR.com
B. PROJECT APPROACH
Providing the Sweetwater Authority exceptional customer service from each project’s start to finish is DeGrave Communications’ goal. Our leadership team is local and can be readily available when needed. DeGrave Communications uses the following tools and best practices to support consistent and transparent communications throughout the project.

**WEEKLY CLIENT CHECK-IN**
These regular meetings (when needed) will allow the Sweetwater Authority and DeGrave Communications to share progress updates and next steps to ensure all team members are aligned and that the project continues to move forward and meet all deadlines. Meetings can be held in person (social distance permitting) or will be held via Zoom call.

**WEEKLY DEGRAVE STRATEGY MEETINGS**
These meetings allow the internal DeGrave Communications team to touch base on project deliverables and timelines.

**SMARTSHEETS**
Our team uses Smartsheets for day-to-day project management, timelines, approvals and follow-ups. We will give the team access to the project management sheets upon project kick-off.

**DROPBOX**
Dropbox is used for all digital assets, such as logos, marketing materials and documents throughout the process. DeGrave Communications will set up a stand-alone Dropbox folder and provide the Sweetwater Authority’s team access.
**APPROACH: PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

Effective communications, marketing and branding strategies are created – not copied.

**We know public-sector, water and communications:** Working with DeGrave Communications, our clients benefit from the large agency expertise, in-depth capabilities and top-notch advisory services while receiving an unmatched level of personal, hands-on experience.

We understand the unique challenges facing government agencies while also providing results-driven cutting edge strategies and tactics that resonate with our clients and the communities they serve.

Our top team members have over 100 years combined experience working in cities and special districts throughout California. In addition, our firm is headed up by award-winning public relations professionals who hold the elite Accreditation in Public Relations to ensure our clients receive the highest level of service focused on multifaceted, precise and measurable communications strategies for our clients. The rest of our carefully curated team for this project has worked with dozens of public sector clients in California, nationally and internationally producing exceptional results.

When it comes to crafting impactful communications, marketing and research strategies, we rely on using our four-pronged approach of research, planning, implementation and evaluation.

**Phase 1: Research**

Upon engagement with DeGrave Communications, our firm will embark on a research and discovery process for this project. Our team will move forward using information gathered in the research phase to develop and deploy the resident survey and present data from the survey.

We recommend using the following methodologies to accomplish this phase:

**KICKOFF MEETING**

We will commence with a kickoff meeting to include key Authority staff and the DeGrave Communications team. The Authority will provide an overview of pinpoint key milestones, identify roles and responsibilities for both DeGrave and Authority’s team members and agree on contract deliverables. After this meeting and assessment of prior survey data and customer identification in this phase, our team will develop the project plan.

**REVIEW PRIOR CUSTOMER SURVEY DATA**

During this phase, we will also review prior data and insights from the Authority’s previous survey to assist with benchmarking and developing the 2020 survey.
APPROACH: PROJECT MANAGEMENT

CUSTOMER IDENTIFICATION
The Authority is home to a diverse population. In order to ensure that we are effectively communicating the survey and including inclusive participation by all residents, DeGrave Communications will examine the best ways to engage and drive survey participation with these populations and provide recommendation of outreach strategies and tactics to the Authority. In addition, the survey will be sensitive to cultural and legal issues among the foreign-born population.

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH PRESENTATION
Prior to moving to Phase 2, our team will provide the Authority with a high-level project plan and survey recommendations. This will include (but is not limited to) milestones and quality control measures for each task.

Phase 2: Planning
SURVEY DEVELOPMENT
Using the data and insights uncovered in Phase 1, we will begin to develop the surveys. We will provide drafts of the statistically valid surveys to the Authority for review, comments and approval during this phase.

SAMPLE DESIGN
Working with the Authority, our team will design a representative probability sample that will minimize non-response bias for the overall sample and subgroups. This design will ensure equal, proportionate representation across the Authority’s service area: Bonita, Chula Vista and National City.

PRELIMINARY SURVEY DESIGN PRESENTATION
After the sample design, our firm will meet with the Authority’s Governing Board to solicit feedback.

SURVEY INSTRUMENT CREATION
Once we receive feedback on the survey, we will work with the Authority’s Project Manager to select the survey instrument and confirm the deployment methods for the survey (including email, SMS, website widgets, mobile apps, phone, mail etc.).

SURVEY TRANSLATION
Prior to the survey deployment, we will translate the survey to Spanish representative of a large number of the Authority residents.

SURVEYORS AND EDITORS
We ensure that all DeGrave team members working on this project are trained in data collection and validation of survey data.

SURVEY MAPPING AND OTHER FUNCTIONS
DeGrave Communications uses an interactive, real time survey software that allows for our team as well as the Authority’s team to filter responses by time, date, location, demographics and more. This functionality allows a mapping function that can drill down into specific demographics by neighborhood throughout the Authority’s service area.
**APPROACH: PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

**Phase 3: Implementation**

**SURVEY PRE-TEST**
Prior to launching the surveys, our team will work with no fewer than 20 combined respondents in English and Spanish to pretest results and make changes if needed.

**SURVEY DEPLOYMENT**
After the pre-test, we will deploy the survey to the two survey groups using the agreed upon methods discussed in Phase 2.

**SURVEY ANALYSIS, TABULATION AND REPORT**
When the survey is complete, we will analyze and tabulate data and provide a report to the Authority.

**PRELIMINARY FINDINGS MEETING**
Prior to finalizing the survey results and recommendations, we will meet with Authority’s staff and discuss initial findings and agree on next steps.

**QUALITY CONTROL**
Throughout the entire survey process, our team will be responsible for processing and ensuring the quality of the data.

**FINAL REPORT**
DeGrave Communications will present the final report summarizing the results of the survey.

**Phase 4: Evaluation**

For this project, our team will continually evaluate the progress and refine our approach to successfully meet the project’s goals on target and on time.

**TECHNICAL SUPPORT**
Our team is available to assist the Authority with technical support related to the survey and resolve any problems as they are encountered. In addition, we will provide a hands-on tutorial for key City staff, which will go over how to review data and use the analysis functionality of our survey software to ensure maximum effectiveness.
C. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
WHO WE ARE

For Sweetwater Authority’s communications and outreach efforts, DeGrave Communications has assembled a top-notch team of award-winning industry leaders with extensive water industry knowledge who specialize in communications, marketing and research.

Our team is designed to leverage the strengths of our staff within a streamlined structure to provide exceptional results with a high level of customer service and quality. We’ve also tapped into our talented extended team members to support our efforts in meeting your objectives.

PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATIONS

- CA Department of General Services SB Micro
- California Public Utilities Commission WMBE
- FEMA NIMS/ICS

AFFILIATIONS

- California Association of Public Information Officials
- National Association of Women Business Owners
- Public Relations Society of America

2003

- Founded

30

- Clients

Locally Based in Murrieta, CA

15+

- Industry Awards

3

- Team Members with Accreditations in PR

Woman Owned Small Business

100+

- Collective Years in Marketing, Communications and Branding

Multilingual Capabilities

FEMA Certified

Multilingual Capabilities
RESUMES

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Sweetwater Authority

Liselle DeGrave, APR
Principal in Charge

Rachel McGuire, MBA, APR
Director

Reema Boccia, APR
Sr. Project Manager

Matthew Salisbury
Data and Research Strategist

SUBCONTRACTORS
For this engagement, DeGrave Communications, Inc. will subcontract the data collection, platform and analysis.
Liselle DeGrave, APR

A veteran communicator, Liselle’s expertise includes spearheading communications, marketing and branding projects for public-sector clients. She has overseen numerous surveys for clients running the gamut from project/program specific surveys to large-scale customer surveys. Liselle will lead DeGrave’s integrated team of communications and research professionals for this engagement.

Rachel McGuire, MBA, APR

Rachel is a leader in the field of public-sector communications and brings more than 15 years of experience working in-house and in an agency setting to this project along with a proven track record of award-winning communications. During her career, Rachel has overseen the development of numerous customer surveys for public-sector clients and surveys for nonprofit associations. She will oversee the day-to-day project management efforts.

Matthew Salisbury

Matthew is the founder and CEO of ntropy, a market research and customer experience platform that helps public and private agencies make data driven decisions. He has directed dozens of customer surveys for clients in the US and internationally. For this project, Matt will oversee the research strategy and data analysis.

Reema Boccia, APR

San Diego-based Reema Makani Boccia, APR, is an award-winning public relations and marketing professional with more than 15 years of experience working with public- and private-sector clients and nonprofits throughout California. Reema will be responsible for executing communications projects.
A veteran communicator, Liselle’s expertise includes spearheading communications, marketing and branding projects for public-sector clients. She has overseen numerous surveys for clients running the gamut from project/program specific surveys to large-scale customer surveys. Liselle will lead DeGrave’s integrated team of communications and research professionals for this engagement.

Select Project Experience

**JURUPA COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT**
For JCSD, Liselle has overseen numerous projects including the development of the District’s first-ever Communications and Marketing Plan, which included an in-depth research phase with a customer survey, focus groups and one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders.

**CITY OF EASTVALE**
Liselle oversees communications support for the City and most recently has directed the development of the City’s Business Support Survey, which was sent to more than 500 businesses to gain insights into the economic impacts of COVID-19.

**WESTERN MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT**
Liselle has more than a decade of experience working with WMWD. For several years, Liselle oversaw the collection of community feedback for the District’s popular Earth Night in the Garden, which attracted thousand of visitors annually. Survey insights were used to gain an understanding of the types of visitors, reasons for visiting the event and understanding of water use practices.

**LAKE ELSINORE AND SAN JACINTO WATERSHEDS AUTHORITY**
Liselle oversees the award-winning, full service communications strategy and support for LESJWA. In 2020, Liselle developed an online customer survey to gain understanding of the agency’s social media efforts and impact.
MEET OUR TEAM

Rachel McGuire, MBA, APR
Senior Communications Manager

Rachel is a leader in the field of public-sector communications and brings more than 15 years of experience working in-house and in an agency setting to this project along with a proven track record of award-winning communications, marketing and branding strategies. For this engagement, Rachel will support the day-to-day project management efforts and work closely with the principal in charge and support team.

Select Project Experience

JURUPA COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT
For JCSD, Rachel has managed numerous projects including the development of the District’s first-ever Communications and Marketing Plan, which included an in-depth research phase with a customer survey, focus groups and one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders.

CITY OF EASTVALE
Rachel developed the City’s first-ever Business Support Survey, which was sent to more than 500 businesses to gain insights into the economic impacts of COVID-19.

WESTERN MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT
While working in-house, Rachel oversaw the development of WMWD’s Customer Satisfaction Survey, which was used to understand customer satisfaction, priorities and key issues. She also managed the Customer Communications Survey that provided information on customer satisfaction with the District’s communications efforts.

PUBLIC RELATIONS SOCIETY OF AMERICA
Rachel oversaw the development, data collection and reporting of 2020 PRSA-San Diego/Imperial Counties Chapter Membership Survey, which was developed to gain insight and understanding into membership satisfaction and deployed online.
Mathew is the founder and CEO of ntropy, a market research and customer experience platform that helps public and private agencies make data driven decisions. Matt would oversee the research strategy and data analysis for this engagement.

Select Project Experience

**JURUPA COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT**
Working with the DeGrave team, Matt oversaw JCSD’s Communications and Marketing Customer Satisfaction survey development and analysis component. The survey was available in English, Spanish and Chinese and was deployed to customers via SMS text and website link to gain insights on how JCSD customers viewed the District as well as opportunities to advance the District’s communication efforts.

**CITY OF EASTVALE**
In partnership with the DeGrave Communications team, Matt was part of the City of Eastvale’s Business Support Survey team. The survey was sent to businesses via SMS text and website link to gain insight’s into the economic impacts of COVID-19.

**CITY OF SYDNEY**
For the City of Sydney, Matt developed and hosted a survey database for a multi-year period to provide live reporting for the City’s Community Strategic Plan for 2050. Through ntropy’s community engagement software, community members were able to provide feedback to direct the City’s future priorities and key issues.

**UNION SQUARE BUSINESS DISTRICT**
Matt oversaw the collecting of feedback at the District’s popular Winter Walk Event, which attracts more that 2.2 million visitors annually. The data research solution allowed event attendees to quickly give feedback. Insights were used to gain a better understanding of the economic impact the event was having on the local area as well as examining trends in data from attendees.
San Diego-based Reema Makani Boccia, APR, is an award-winning public relations and marketing professional with more than 15 years of experience working with public- and private-sector clients and nonprofits throughout California. Reema will be responsible for executing communications projects.

Select Project Experience

CITY OF SAN DIEGO
Reema is currently subcontracted as the exclusive community liaison on three City of San Diego public works projects, serving as the point of contact for community outreach, communication and PR coordination on behalf of construction companies serving as the prime contractor.

WESTERN MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT
For years, Reema has worked on numerous projects for the District, including crafting content for news releases and the District’s Consumer Confidence Report.

FRIENDS OF BALBOA PARK
Reema has consulted for nonprofit Friends of Balboa Park for five years and has overseen a number of surveys, including collecting data on membership engagement and participation with other park institutions.

PUBLIC RELATIONS SOCIETY OF AMERICA, SAN DIEGO & IMPERIAL COUNTIES CHAPTER
Serving on the board of directors of the local chapter of PRSA for 8 years, Reema oversaw several outreach initiatives, including a Western District Conference feedback survey and post event surveys following professional flagship events for the chapter.
D. CURRENT RELEVANT PROJECTS
RELEVANT PROJECTS

JURUPA COMMUNITY SERVICES DISTRICT

DATE OF WORK: 2019 to Present

PROJECT LEAD:
DeGrave Communications in partnership with ntropy

PROJECT ROLES:
Liselle DeGrave served as the principal in charge; Rachel McGuire served as the director; Matt Salisbury served as the data strategist

HOW SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED:
SMS, email, social media and website widgets

VALUE OF PROJECT: $20,000

CURRENT CONTACT:
ALISON LOUKEH, Community Affairs Supervisor
11201 Harrel Street, Jurupa Valley, CA 91752
951.727.8007, aloukeh@jcsd.us

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
Located in Southern California, Jurupa Community Services District (JCSD) provides a vast array of public services, including parks and recreation, water, wastewater, graffiti abatement and streetlights to more than 140,000 community members in the cities of Eastvale and Jurupa Valley. Our team deployed JCSD’s Communications and Marketing Satisfaction Survey in English, Spanish and Chinese and received 400 responses (which equals a 99 percent confidence rate and 6 percent margin of error) from throughout the agency’s service area. The data collected from the survey was analyzed along with qualitative feedback from in-depth interviews, focus groups and communication audits to develop the District’s Strategic Communications and Marketing Plan.

The survey provided key findings in customer sentiments that helped guide the development of the three-year Strategic Communications and Marketing Plan, including:

- 94 percent of respondents preferred to receive District communication in English; 3 percent preferred Spanish and 1.6 percent preferred Chinese
- Nearly 75 percent of respondents were “satisfied” or “extremely satisfied” with JCSD’s communication efforts
- Another nearly 20 percent held a neutral opinion when it came to JCSD’s communications efforts
- Issues of concern included cost and rates of water and sewer services; water quality, how JCSD is spending ratepayer money; parks and recreation services and landscaping in public areas
- Top ways to get information included newsletters, bill stuffers and the website
CITY OF EASTVALE

DATE OF WORK: 2019 to Present

PROJECT LEAD:
DeGrave Communications in partnership with ntropy

PROJECT ROLES:
Liselle DeGrave served as the principal in charge; Rachel McGuire served as the director; Matt Salisbury served as the data strategist

HOW SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED:
SMS, email and social media

VALUE OF PROJECT: $5,000

CURRENT CONTACT:
GINA GIBSON-WILLIAMS
Director of Community Development
12363 Limonite Ave, Ste. 910
Eastvale, CA 91752
951.703.44255
Ggibson-williams@eastvaleca.gov

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
The City of Eastvale understands the many challenges facing its local business community during the unprecedented pandemic and its committed to providing resources to support local businesses. As part this effort the City of Eastvale’s COVID-19 survey was offered its business community to provide the City with valuable input from local businesses in order to help the City make data driven decisions on how to best provide resources.

The survey provided key questions on the economic impact of COVID-19:

- Workforce status of local businesses
- Current business status for businesses in the area
- Revenue loss
- Awareness of the City’s business support programs
- Types of business support needed
- Financial assistance needs
SAN FRANCISCO’S UNION SQUARE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

DATE OF WORK: 2019 to Present

PROJECT LEAD: ntropy

PROJECT ROLES: Matt Salisbury served as the data strategist

VALUE OF PROJECT: $20,000 annually for multiple surveys

HOW SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED: SMS, email, social media, LinkedIn and website widgets

CURRENT CONTACT: ROBBIE SILVER
Director of Marketing and Public Relations
323 Geary St., Ste. 203, San Francisco, CA 94102
415.781.7880, x8108, robbie@unionsquarebid.com

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:
As a retail and cultural hub in San Francisco, Union Square is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the City. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the Union Square Business Improvement District grappled with understanding the ripple effects of closures and event postponements would have in the area.

The survey provided key themes on the economic impact of COVID-19:

- Workforce status of local businesses
- Decrease in occupancy rates
- Current business status for businesses in the area
- Revenue loss
- Types of business support needed
CITY OF SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA

DATE OF WORK: 2019 to Present

PROJECT LEAD: ntropy

PROJECT ROLES: Matt Salisbury served as the data strategist

HOW SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED: SMS, email, social media, LinkedIn and website widgets

VALUE OF PROJECT: $40,000 annually for multiple surveys

CURRENT CONTACT: YVETTE ANDREWS
Strategic Community Consultation Manager
GPO Box 1591, Sydney, NSW 2001
02.9246.7742, yandrews@cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The City of Sydney was reviewing rules that control trading hours and areas for businesses, including bars, cafes, restaurants, shops, entertainment and music venues, opening at night in the Local Government Area (LGA). The community survey was used to gain understanding of community views on where and when late night trading should happen in Sydney.

ntropy developed the “Sydney Your Say App survey” which received 400 sign ups and 50,000 swipes. This survey app was part of a larger surveying effort, which included a phone surveys, online survey and pop-up engagement throughout Sydney’s precincts.

The survey provided key themes on business hours to the City of Sydney:

- Very little demand to reduce the size of late-night trading areas
- Strong appetite to increase trading hours
- Strong support for increased diversity of late-night businesses, less support for more pubs/nightclubs
- People want more late-night activity near where they live, not just where they visit
- Differences between age groups
- Strong demand for increased late-night activity around Green Square
REFERENCES

BONNIE WOODROME, APR
Community Affairs Supervisor
Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District
31315 Chaney Street
Lake Elsinore, CA 92530
951.674.3146, Ext 8274
bwoodrome@evmwd.net

Project Size and Description:
Various projects, including the 2020 Annual Report; PFAS strategy and outreach materials, news releases and media assistance, education program materials, videos, signage and collateral (fact sheets, posters, flyers).

ALISON LOUKEH
Community Affairs Supervisor
11201 Harrel Street
Jurupa Valley, CA 91752
951.727.8007
aloukeh@jcsd.us

Project Size and Description:
Various projects, including the District's Strategic Communications and Marketing Plan research and development; 2020 Consumer Confidence Report; ad buys; social media content; and collateral development (fact sheets, PPT templates, bill stuffers).

MARK NORTON
Water Resources and Planning Mgr.
11615 Sterling Avenue
Riverside, CA 92503
951.354.4220
mnorton@sawpa.org

Project Size and Description:
Lake Elsinore and San Jacinto Watersheds Authority (LESJWA) – Provide award-winning, full-service communications strategy and support, which includes serving as LESJWA's communications counsel; and managing media relations, social media, video/photography services, collateral development, community meeting facilitation and issues/crisis management.

Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority (SAWPA) – Oversaw SAWPA's blog and social media accounts as well as the award-winning Trust the Tap tri-county outreach campaign focused on educating the counties’ millions of residents about the safety of tap water.
KATHIE MARTIN  
Public Information Officer  
26521 Summit Circle  
Santa Clarita, CA 91350  
661.513.1265  
kmartin@scvwa.org

Project Size and Description:  
SCV Water serves nearly 300,000 residents and businesses in its 195 square-mile service territory. SCV Water’s steadfast approach to providing its customers and stakeholders with exceptional service extends to communicating transparently and regularly with the community on issues affecting the water supply – such as polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS) chemicals. Deliverables included communications strategy, news releases, collateral, construction outreach materials, social media posts and video.

KRISTEEN FARLOW, MPA  
External Affairs Manager  
380 East Vanderbilt Way  
San Bernardino, CA 92408  
909.387.9229  
kristeenf@sbvmwd.com

Project Size and Description:  
As-need communications support for projects, including managing the District’s annual social media program, coordinating special events and developing collateral items such as annual reports and brochures.
E. PROJECT SCHEDULE
This is a detailed look at the proposed project schedule by phase. Month ranges have been assigned to each phase of work. The DeGrave Communications team is available to begin work as soon as needed in order to meet the timeline goals of Sweetwater Authority.

### Phase 1: Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 2020</td>
<td>SWA and Consultant Kick-Off Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2020</td>
<td>Special Board Meeting (to obtain feedback and input on the survey from the Authority’s Board members)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Phase 2: Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| November 2020 | Survey/Sample Design  
|             | Pre-test survey instrument                                                  |

### Phase 3: Implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| December 2020 | Conduct Survey  
|               | Process and Ensure Quality of Data                                           |

### Phase 4: Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month 1</th>
<th>Month 2</th>
<th>Month 3</th>
<th>Month 4</th>
<th>Month 5</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| JANUARY 2021 | Deliver Draft Report for Review-January 8, 2021  
|             | Deliver Final Report and Presentation to Governing Board-January 27, 2021 |
F. DELIVERABLES AND TARGET DATE
DELIVERABLES AND TARGET DATE

1. SWA and Consultant Kick-Off Meeting
   SEPTEMBER 2020

2. Special Board Meeting (obtain feedback and input on the survey from the Authority’s Board members)
   OCTOBER 2020

3. Survey/Sample Design
   NOVEMBER 2020

4. Pre-test survey instrument
   NOVEMBER 2020

5. Conduct Survey
   DECEMBER 2020

6. Process and Ensure Quality of Data
   DECEMBER 2020

7. Deliver Draft Report for Review
   JANUARY 8, 2021

8. Deliver Final Report and Presentation to Governing Board
   JANUARY 27, 2021
G. COSTS
ESTIMATED COSTS

This section includes all proposed pricing. Pricing is reflective of the Scope of Work and proposal items listed within this solicitation.

Working with DeGrave Communications, you receive the large agency expertise, in-depth capabilities and top-notch advisory services while benefiting from an unmatched level of hands-on personal service. Our lean structure means that veteran, award-winning communicators, who hold the elite Accreditation in Public Relations credentials, handle the bulk of project work and client interaction from start to finish while still maintaining a competitive price point. We look forward to engaging with your team to identify project priorities and adjust resources and budgets for Sweetwater Authority.

Rates are based on time and materials calculated using the following hourly rates by staff classification and estimating staff hours required to complete tasks. We carefully manage our project budget to ensure we stay on budget.

SCOPE OF WORK CHANGES

The exact project scope of services has not been determined. Once projects and scope have been identified, projected “not-to-exceed” costs can be determined. The services being requested will be on an as-needed basis, not-to-exceed $40,000 in fiscal year 2020-21. In the event our clients need a change to the scope of work that will result in additional work, our team will propose a scope change that will include an itemized breakdown, timeline and costs.

BILLING

For this engagement, items will be billed for amounts noted per completed milestone. Payment term of net 30.

REIMBURSABLE EXPENSES

Mileage expenses are billed at $0.58 per mile. A customary 20 percent markup will be added to out-of-pocket expenses (such as printing, mailing, etc.) and are not included in this estimate.

HOURLY RATES

Principal-in-Charge $200
Senior Communications Manger $175
Data and Research Strategist $150

PRICING

All proposed Vendor hourly rates shall be firm and fixed for the duration of the contractual period.

PHASE 1: RESEARCH (TASKS 1, 2)

- KICKOFF MEETING
- REVIEW PRIOR CUSTOMER SURVEY DATA
- CUSTOMER IDENTIFICATION
- PRELIMINARY RESEARCH PRESENTATION
ESITMATED COSTS

Principal-in-Charge $200 x 15 hours = $3,000
Senior Communications Manger $175 x 20 hours = $3,500
Data and Research Strategist $150 x 20 hours = $3,000

Phase 1 total: $9,500

PHASE 2: PLANNING (TASKS 3, 4)

• SURVEY DEVELOPMENT
• SAMPLE DESIGN
• PRELIMINARY SURVEY DESIGN PRESENTATION
• SURVEY INSTRUMENT CREATION
• SURVEY TRANSLATION
• SURVEYORS AND EDITORS
• SURVEY MAPPING AND OTHER FUNCTIONS

Principal-in-Charge $200 x 25 hours = $5,000
Senior Communications Manger $175 x 30 hours = $5,250
Data and Research Strategist $150 x 35 hours = $4,500
Survey platform (flat cost) $3,360
Translation services (flat cost) $3,000

Phase 2 total: $21,110

PHASE 3: IMPLEMENTATION (TASKS 5, 6, 7, 8)

• SURVEY PRE-TEST
• SURVEY ANALYSIS, TABULATION AND REPORT
• PRELIMINARY FINDINGS MEETING
• QUALITY CONTROL
• FINAL REPORT
• TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Principal-in-Charge $200 x 10 hours = $2,000
Senior Communications Manger $175 x 15 hours = $2,625
Data and Research Strategist $150 x 20 hours = $3,000

Phase 3 total: $7,625

PHASE 4: EVALUATION

• CLOSING MEETING
• FEEDBACK

Principal-in-Charge $200 x 2 hours = $400
Senior Communications Manger $175 x 4 hours = $700
Data and Research Strategist $150 x 4 hours = $600

Phase 4 total: $1,700

PROJECT TOTAL: $39,935
H. EXCEPTIONS
I. RECEIPT OF ADDENDA
J. ADDENDA
H. DeGrave Communications, Inc. certifies that it takes no exception(s) to the enclosed RFP including but not limited to the Authority’s standard Agreement for Services, included as Attachment B.

I. DeGrave Communications, Inc. confirms in the enclosed proposal the receipt of all addenda issued to this RFP.

J. Addenda - DeGrave Communications, Inc. confirms the receipt of all addenda issued to this RFP.
APPENDIX A - SCOPE OF WORK
APPENDIX A – DETAILED SCOPE OF WORK

The following “Detailed Scope of Work” outlines our survey approach as well as incorporates key deliverables and target dates requested by the Authority.

PHASE 1: RESEARCH

Upon engagement with DeGrave Communications, our firm will embark on a research and discovery process for this project. Our team will move forward using information gathered in the research phase to develop and deploy the resident survey and present data from the survey.

We recommend using the following methodologies to accomplish this phase:

KICKOFF MEETING

We will commence with a kickoff meeting to include key Authority staff and the DeGrave Communications team. The Authority will provide an overview of pinpoint key milestones, identify roles and responsibilities for both DeGrave and City team members and agree on contract deliverables. After this meeting and assessment of prior survey data and customer identification in this phase, our team will develop the project plan.

The tentative date of this SWA/Consultant kick of meeting is scheduled for September 2020.

REVIEW PRIOR CUSTOMER SURVEY DATA

During this phase, we will also review prior data and insights from the City’s previous survey to assist with benchmarking and developing the 2020 survey.

CUSTOMER IDENTIFICATION

The Authority is home to a diverse population. In order to ensure that we are effectively communicating the survey and including inclusive participation by all residents, DeGrave Communications will examine the best ways to engage and drive survey participation with these populations and provide recommendation of outreach strategies and tactics to the Authority. In addition, the survey will be sensitive to cultural and legal issues among the foreign-born population.

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH PRESENTATION

Prior to moving to Phase 2, our team will provide the Authority with a high-level project plan and survey recommendations. This will include (but is not limited to) milestones and quality control measures for each task.

SPECIAL BOARD MEETING

A Special Board Meeting will be held to obtain feedback and input on the survey from the Authority’s Board of Directors.

The tentative date of this board meeting is scheduled for October 2020.
APPENDIX A - DETAILED SCOPE OF WORK

PHASE 2: PLANNING

SURVEY DEVELOPMENT
Using the data and insights uncovered in Phase 1, we will begin to develop the surveys. We will provide drafts of the statistically valid surveys to the Authority for review, comments and approval during this phase.

SAMPLE DESIGN
Working with the Authority, our team will design a representative probability sample that will minimize non-response bias for the overall sample and subgroups. This design will ensure equal, proportionate representation across the Authority’s service area: Bonita, Chula Vista and National City.

The tentative date of completion for the sample design is November 2020.

SURVEY INSTRUMENT CREATION
Once we receive feedback on the survey, we will work with the Authority’s Project Manager to select the survey instrument and confirm the deployment methods for the survey (including email, SMS, website widgets, mobile apps, phone, mail etc.).

SURVEY TRANSLATION
Prior to the survey deployment, we will translate the survey to Spanish representative of a large number of the Authority residents.

SURVEYORS AND EDITORS
We ensure that all DeGrave team members working on this project are trained in data collection and validation of survey data.

SURVEY MAPPING AND OTHER FUNCTIONS
DeGrave Communications uses an interactive, real time survey software that allows for our team as well as the Authority’s team to filter responses by time, date, location, demographics and more. This functionality allows a mapping function that can drill down into specific demographics by neighborhood throughout the Authority’s service area.
APPENDIX A - DETAILED SCOPE OF WORK

RELEVANT SAMPLE POOL
Our data team obtains a wide and diverse demographic that will represent the Authority’s population using the following methodologies:

• **Multiple feedback channels:** We rely on multiple, different communication channels, which allow people to give feedback via SMS, email, social media, LinkedIn, website widgets and more. This eliminates barriers to giving feedback by ensuring people can participate in the survey over the channel that best works for them. When needed, we incorporate traditional survey methods, such as mail and phone.

• **Response monitoring:** Our team continuously monitors responses and adapts our strategy accordingly. Prior to launching, we will define what a representative sample looks like for the Authority. As responses are captured, we are able to compare in real-time which segments of the population are under or over represented. We can then adapt our strategy accordingly, which may involve targeted ads, using different channels or performing additional direct outreach.

The sample to the right shows a demographic breakdown of survey response, which allows us to analyze the sample pool by location,

METHODOLOGY FOR COLLECTING, ORGANIZING AND ANALYZING RESPONSES (KEYWORDS, TOPICS, ETC) FOR ACCOMMODATING OPEN-ENDED SURVEY QUESTIONS
A survey created with the ntropy platform can have multiple different languages associated – meaning that when respondents take a survey they can choose their preferred language. As the respondent answers each question, the response is automatically translated back to the Authority’s preferred language and then stored in our database.
Our team classifies each response and stores relationships between different response sets. This essentially means that an interactive data model is built that allows the Authority to slice and dice data by demographic, location, previous response, time and much more.

In addition, our team runs analytics on top of the data to extract actionable insights. For open-ended responses, we can code the common response into categories and/or provide a word cloud of common words and phrases. Our survey platform will allow the Authority to click on these words and phrases to investigate and analyze further.

The sample below demonstrates how our software allows you to click to show only responses from residents that described the City of Baltimore as “safe.”

**RESPONDENT INFORMATION AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any personally identifiable information can be “disconnected” from the survey response and excluded from dashboard analysis. This ensures that you can’t filter to see the identify behind a survey response, or vice versa (select an individual to see their response).

In addition, all information is stored securely, and no data is shared with third parties.

**DATA COLLECTED AND CAUSES AND/OR CORRELATIONS BETWEEN MICRO-VARIABLES AND MACRO-VARIABLES**

The output of the surveys is a fully interactive dashboard that allows you to segment and cross tab data to find correlations. Useful features include:

1. Filtering by location to compare responses block by block, suburb by suburb, council wards, neighborhood, or whatever designation you prefer.
2. Cross tab/pivot table analysis allows you to compare “paths” through the survey. This is especially useful for identifying which specific variables lead to different outcomes, opinions, or feelings.

3. External census data can be overlaid on top of survey responses to show how factors such as quality of life play into results. For example, we can overlay information, such as where level of education is high, then select survey responses from that area to see how people in an area with a high level of education responded.

**APPENDIX A - DETAILED SCOPE OF WORK**

**TECHNIQUES AND METHODOLOGY TO COMBAT NON-RESPONSE BIAS AND OTHER ISSUES**

We use several methods and techniques to combat non-responsive bias and other issues, including:

- Our platform allows for surveys that are always visually appealing, responsive to different devices, and optimized to provide a seamless user experience
- Our platform sends out reminders to prompt people to respond
- We can offer incentives, such as the chance to win a reward or the chance to donate to charity on completion
- We design surveys so that they aren’t too long and only ask one question at a time to ensure people aren’t overwhelmed and drop out
- We give clear descriptions around confidentiality and privacy and explain why the respondents feedback is important
- When needed, we can also incorporate traditional survey methods, including mail and phone, to miss any key populations

Once results are collected we will compare the response characteristics (such as demographics) to the population in order to determine if the responses are representative of the community. If we find the results are not representative then we’ll perform additional outreach to increase the sample size. We may also use non-response weighting to reduce the difference between the sample and the population if required.

Common problems which we address are:

- Undercoverage: which we address by designing a robust outreach strategy to reach all demographics in the population
- Voluntary response bias: which we address by introducing random samples
- Response bias: which we address by using skilled survey designs that avoid leading and loaded questions
PHASE 3: IMPLEMENTATION

SURVEY PRE-TEST
Prior to launching the surveys, our team will work with no fewer than 20 combined respondents in English and Spanish to pretest results and make changes if needed.

The pre-test for the survey instrument is scheduled for November 2020.

SURVEY DEPLOYMENT
After the pre-test, we will deploy the survey to the two survey groups using the agreed upon methods discussed in Phase 2.

The deployment is tentatively scheduled for December 2020. We recommend waiting until January to deploy if the date runs to close to the December holidays. In addition, waiting until January will allow customers to recover from election polling burnout.

SURVEY ANALYSIS, TABULATION AND REPORT
When the survey is complete, we will analyze and tabulate data and provide a report to the Authority.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS MEETING
Prior to finalizing the survey results and recommendations, we will meet with Authority’s staff and discuss initial findings and agree on next steps.

QUALITY CONTROL
Throughout the entire survey process, our team will be responsible for processing and ensuring the quality of the data.

FINAL REPORT
DeGrave Communications will present the final report summarizing the results of the survey.

The report is tentatively scheduled to be presented to the Authority on Jan. 8 with a final report and board presentation on Jan. 27.

Before the final board report, our team will review feedback from the Authority’s team, answer questions and make edits as needed.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT
Our team is available to assist the Authority with technical support related to the survey and resolve any problems as they are encountered. In addition, we will provide a hands-on tutorial for key Authority staff, which will go over how to review data and use the analysis functionality of our survey software to ensure maximum effectiveness.

PHASE 4: EVALUATION
For this project, our team will continually evaluate the progress and refine our approach to successfully meet the project’s goals on target and on time.
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Proposal to Conduct a Water Issues Public Opinion Survey

Prepared for
Sweetwater Authority
August 2020

For more information on this research project please contact:
Probe Research Inc.
603-191 Lombard Ave.
Winnipeg, MB R3B 0X1
Toll Free: 1-877-538-5545
Email: probe@probe-research.com
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<th>Criteria</th>
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August 28, 2020
Ms. Leslie Payne
Sweetwater Authority
505 Garett Avenue
Chula Vista, CA 91912-2328

Dear Ms. Payne,

It is our pleasure to submit this proposal to conduct the 2020 Public Opinion Survey on behalf of the Sweetwater Authority. We understand this research program will build upon the inaugural Sweetwater customer survey undertaken by our firm in 2015. We have also noted that this current research request is also seeking outreach investigation with service area developers – which is a new component introduced for the first time this year.

Probe Research is ideally suited to undertake this research, as our company has conducted consumer research and public opinion surveys on behalf of more than 500 private and public sector clients across North America since 1994. Perhaps most importantly, Probe Research worked closely and most effectively with Sweetwater Authority to design and execute its 2015 customer survey. Our experience working with you and your customers on that important assignment will allow us to seamlessly connect with the earlier research to produce tracking and trendline results where appropriate. As well, we have the background knowledge and experience required to modify the survey instrument by dispensing with issues that may have been so conclusive in 2015 that they do not require further tracking, while at the same time substituting current and emerging lines of inquiry.

In addition to our very relevant experience with the Sweetwater Authority (and similar experience with the San Diego County Water Authority and Helix Water District), our firm has also specialized in providing drinking water-related research to cities and municipalities in the United States and Canada since 2002 – offering clients unique access to comparative norms on important issues facing customers in the drinking water marketplace. Additionally, we are proud to have served a variety of San Diego-based organizations in recent years, including the San Diego Union Tribune, North Island Credit Union, San Diego Workforce Partnership, SG Komen for the Cure and Kitchen Advertising.

Our credentials, experience, reliability, and reputation for client service qualify us for this important and worthwhile project. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 619-573-9777 should you have any questions or require any clarifications regarding this proposal.

We would welcome the opportunity to work partner with the Sweetwater Authority once again on this exciting and worthwhile initiative.

Yours sincerely,

Scott MacKay,
President,
Probe Research Inc.
1.0 PROPOSAL OVERVIEW

Company Profile

Probe Research Inc. was incorporated on Sept. 12, 1994 and celebrated its 25th anniversary in 2019. As a highly respected market research service provider to hundreds of private sector and public sector clients, our firm is fully non-partisan. Probe Research does not and will not provide professional services of any form to political parties. Furthermore, providing research services to the Sweetwater Authority would not result in any conflict of interest for our firm.

In late 2018, Probe Research entered a new and exciting era as two new principals joined with Scott MacKay to form a new partnership. Curtis Brown rejoined the company after gaining valuable experience with a national market research firm (Environics Research) in Toronto, where he built upon his previous eight years with Probe Research by partnering with a wide range of public sector clients throughout Canada. Mary Agnes Welch, meanwhile, joined Probe Research in early 2016 after a successful career as an award-winning journalist, with her focus and expertise related to assisting professional associations, unions and not-for-profit groups to better meet the needs of their members.

Our office is located at:

603-191 Lombard Ave.
Winnipeg, MB R3B 0X1
Toll Free: 1-877-538-5545
probe@probe-research.com

Our company is guided by the following vision, mission and principles:

Vision

We create knowledge by helping, citizens, consumers and stakeholders better understand one another and the world around them.

Mission

We ask the questions and find the answers. We use both proven and emerging market research techniques to gather data and distill stories to reveal what truly matters. We help our clients use this knowledge to make smarter, better decisions.

Guiding Principles

1. **We love this work:** Every day, we are genuinely excited to pose questions and seek answers for our clients. We’ve been doing this work for a long time, and we’ve built deep, long-lasting relationships. We treat our clients and one another with respect and good humor.

2. **We’re driven by curiosity:** We have inquiring minds. We ask smart, imaginative questions and help our clients to discover new and often unexpected facts. We always dig deeper to find out why things are the way they are.

3. **We’re empathetic:** Your problems become our problems. We take time to listen and understand what you really need, and we work collaboratively all the way through a project.

4. **We tell the truth:** We do research right without cutting corners. We always approach issues neutrally and make sure our work stands up to serious scrutiny. We’ll always tell you both the good news and the bad.
5. **We are storytellers:** We cut to the chase and tell you what you really need to know. We take raw material – what people tell us and what we observe – and sculpt this information into stories that are truthful, compelling, memorable and insightful. We’re always looking for clearer, more creative ways to share information.

**Corporate Performance Record**

i. Probe Research Inc. has never defaulted in its performance on a contract during the past five years which has led the other party to terminate the contract.

ii. There is no pending litigation, liens or claims involving Probe Research Inc.

iii. Probe Research Inc. has not filed for bankruptcy in the last 10 years.

iv. See i) above.

**Primary Contact Person**

Mr. Scott MacKay, the president of Probe Research, will serve as the primary contact for this study. He will be responsible for managing the project deliverables and administering the contract. His contact information is as follows:

603-191 Lombard Ave.
Winnipeg, MB  R3B 0X1
Toll Free: 1-877-538-5545
Email: scott@probe-research.com

Mr. MacKay will be available throughout the life of this contract and will attend any virtual meetings and/or presentations between the anticipated September 2020 kick-off meeting and the concluding presentation to the Governing Board on January 27, 2021. Other relevant team members may be accessed for virtual meetings on an as needed basis upon mutual agreement between our firm and the Sweetwater Authority.

**Focus on Water**

A key strength of our firm stems from our expansive inventory of national and regional norms on water-related issues. Probe Research would provide a range of possible attitudinal and behavioral variables that can be incorporated into this benchmark survey as required. This will provide a powerful comparative context for understanding the extent to which Sweetwater Authority customers’ attitudes and behaviors mirror or diverge from citizens of other regions on important water-related issues.

Probe Research has provided expert professional support in the overhaul and redesign of San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA)’s annual Public Opinion Survey and has established an innovative hybrid (online/telephone) data collection methodology that has delivered highly accurate and powerful attitudinal and behavioral insights to assist this organization to achieve specific goals as delineated in their five-year Business Plan. The results of this report were summarized by Probe Research President Scott MacKay to the SDCWA Board of Directors. This report is available on the SDCWA website at:

Link below is for the 2017 SDCWA Public Issues Survey


**Proposal Summary**

Our proposal begins with a step-by-step discussion of our recommended research methodology including a review of our approach to addressing all tasks listed in the RFP under “Scope of Work.” This section of our proposal includes important details on sample selection, data collection, quality control protocols, data analysis and reporting.
Next, we introduce the Authority to our professional team of researchers and Harmon Research Group – which is our trusted supplier of premium quality data collection services.

Relevant experience is detailed in Section 4.0. This includes examples of three highly relevant projects that we have recently completed on behalf of prestigious water-related clients and the contact information of clients – each of whom would be willing to attest to our skills at providing these professional social research services.

A schedule of events and itemization of all project deliverables follows before turning to a detailed breakdown of project costs.

Our proposal concludes with an affirmation of our willingness to accept and abide by the terms set forth in the sample AGREEMENT FOR SERVICES contract.
2.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Overall Approach. We understand Sweetwater Authority requires a research partner who will conduct two distinct activities as part of this overall project:

1. A survey of Sweetwater Authority customers. For the survey component of this project, we propose conducting the survey via telephone. We will survey approximately 400 residential account holders and 200 non-residential account holders, with each survey ranging from 12 to 15 minutes in length. We firmly believe that this is the most appropriate method to use to contact Sweetwater customers, as the results will yield indispensable and scientifically valid information.

2. Research with developer customers. In addition to this, we understand Sweetwater Authority wishes to engage its developer customers in some fashion. As we outline later in this section, we recommend conducting in-depth interviews (IDIs) that will provide deeper qualitative insights from these important stakeholders.

Below is a discussion of the proposed research methodology addressing all the tasks described under Section B "Scope of Work" on pages 2-4 of the RFP.

Project Kickoff and Design Meetings. Our team members will work in close collaboration with Sweetwater Authority throughout the entire life of the project. Our project lead, Scott MacKay, will be available to meet with Sweetwater Authority representatives and will participate in an initial meeting to discuss the objectives of this project and to review potential areas of enquiry that may be of interest to the board, staff and other stakeholders. A follow-up meeting will be scheduled to present the draft questionnaire proposed and another meeting may be held to approve the final questionnaire prior to launching the study.

We understand the research will examine residents’ attitudes and behaviors on a wide range of important water issues facing the community and will provide a detailed analysis of variations in awareness levels and behavior patterns across socio-demographic groups of customers. Potential areas of inquiry may include:

- Overall awareness of the Sweetwater Authority and its specific programs
- Customer access to and participation in specific programs and/or outreach initiatives (rebates, water audits etc.)
- Overall customer satisfaction with Sweetwater, including satisfaction with attributes such as level of service, water quality and specific programs
- Customer satisfaction with value for dollar and tolerance for future rate increases
- Incidence of and satisfaction with recent service interactions
- Incidence of selected household/commercial water-saving devices and water conservation practices
Assessment of current drought severity and support for intensified voluntary and mandatory water conservation measures

Customer demand for specific Sweetwater Authority information and preferred communications channels (including social media)

Visitation and satisfaction with the Sweetwater Authority website

**Customer Survey**

**Sample Design**

The survey will be conducted using a database of current Sweetwater Authority account holders, including both residential customers and developers. The RFP notes that the sample should include equal representation from all three of the Authority’s service areas, including Bonita, Chula Vista and National City, proportionate to the number of both residential and non-residential accounts in each area.

**Residential Customer Sample.** There are approximately 32,712 account holders, with around one-half of the customer base in Chula Vista (49%) and the balance fairly evenly split between National City (27%) and Bonita (24%). Of these, 29,490 are residential account holders.

A sample of 400 offers a margin of error of +/-4.90%, 19 times out of 20. The sample frame below presents a proportional sampling arrangement across three geographic areas within the larger region. Almost one-half of the interviews would be conducted in Chula Vista (49%) while the balance of interviews would be conducted in National City (27%) and Bonita (24%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographic Area</th>
<th>Representative Sample</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chula Vista</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National City</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonita</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total # of completed Residential surveys:</strong></td>
<td><strong>N=400</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Survey Pretesting**

Once the final questionnaire has been approved by the Authority’s project manager, we will program the survey and pretest it with no fewer than 20 randomly selected residential customers to ensure all items are clear and unambiguous. Any changes that are required will be made following a detailed written de-briefing of these pre-test results with relevant Sweetwater representatives. Relevant Sweetwater Authority staff will be invited to monitor pre-tests of the quantitative instrument.

The research instrument will also be translated into Spanish and research participants will have the option of responding to the questionnaire either in English or in Spanish.

**Respondent Selection, Data Collection & CATI**

The survey will be administered by our trusted data collection partner, Harmon Research. This data collection facility includes state-of-the-art telephone interviewing stations, each equipped with high-quality data collection tools and leading-edge computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) hardware and software. The CATI system provides for efficient and “respondent-friendly” data collection while ensuring an unmatched level of quality control, sample administration and overall accuracy.

Harmon Research is supported by an experienced team of bilingual telephone interviewers (English and Spanish) including executive level or “elite” interviewers who are experienced and comfortable interfacing with busy senior business executives and enterprise operators. At any given time between 8:30 am and 5:00 pm weekdays for non-residential account holders and 4:00 pm to 8:30 pm weekdays for residential respondents (3-8pm on weekends), Harmon Research will have between 6-10 active interviewers on this assignment.
Two supervisors will be present during the entire data collection window and interviews will be audio-recorded should they be required for post-interview quality review or for clarification purposes. Interviews will be continually monitored to ensure information is collected confidentially, efficiently, accurately and in full compliance with the highest industry standards. As noted above, Spanish-speaking interviewers will be available during the pre-test and formal data collection process.

**Online Data Collection.** Although we anticipate the bulk of both residential customer and service area developer surveys will be conducted via telephone, we suggest that residential customers should be offered the opportunity to complete the survey online, via a secure link sent to them via email. There are many advantages to this approach including, most importantly, the convenience this mode offers to respondents. Here residential customers will be encouraged to complete the survey at a time that is most convenient to them. After providing their email to the interviewer, they will be sent a unique link to the survey and invited to complete the survey in this mode. We have had considerable success with this data collection approach and our experience has repeatedly demonstrated that many respondents will choose this response mode over a conventional telephone interview.

**Non-Response Bias.** A very important, yet under-recognized source of bias in market surveys is non-response bias. A common practice among market research firms, when determining that a randomly selected respondent is unavailable at the moment to participate in the survey, is to simply remove the telephone number from the list and move on to another contact. This practice often systematically excludes a particular category of respondents and biases the sample. Probe Research does not follow the standard industry practice. Although it is more costly, our field procedures require interviewers to make up to four call-backs before a randomly selected respondent is excluded. This procedure dramatically reduces non-response bias since almost all respondents initially selected are captured using this protocol, with Sweetwater Authority obtaining the highest quality results.

**Data Processing & Data Analysis**

After the data set is produced, it is then subjected to a series of verification checks to ensure that it is clean and error-free. Only after the data has met this set of rigorous requirements will it be prepared as a systems file that can be used by Probe Research data analysts and staff at the Sweetwater Authority. The system file allows us to generate frequencies, means and column percentages.

Our team of highly experienced staff will code unaided or open-ended questions. These team members are deeply experienced at conceptualizing and categorizing responses in order to produce an accurate portrait of attitudes, reactions and sentiments after they have been articulated in respondents’ own words.

All data analysis is performed using state-of-the-art microcomputers and data analysis software (SPSS). Any statistical weighting required to align these results with known population characteristics (region, gender or age) based on Sweetwater Authority’s customer records and/or the U.S. Census will occur during this phase.

The end result of the data analysis procedure is an easy-to-read set of detailed tabular results (see Appendix B - Sample Detailed Tables). These results will show the responses to each survey question sorted by gender, age, income, education and other key variables.

**In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) with Service Area Developers**

The relationship between service area developers and Sweetwater Authority is necessarily complex and interdependent. Successful interactions between these two entities requires clear communication, mutual trust and respect and the application of reciprocally agreeable practices and protocols. Improving these relationships requires detailed information about the nature of these current
interactions, including pinpointing areas of ambiguity, disagreement or other tensions that may be causing these interactions to be less than optimal for both parties. Listening carefully to the experiences of these developers and eliciting suggestions for future improvements in these relationships is a critical objective of this phase of the research program.

Rather than conducting a survey of this small yet important population, we recommend gathering qualitative insights via 25 in-depth interviews (IDIs), which are confidential one-on-one discussions that follow a discussion guide. IDIs are the optimal approach for engaging Developer Customers for the following reasons:

1. Qualitative research, including IDIs, provides deeper illumination of critical issues than a survey, as the interviewer has time to ask probing questions that reveal underlying attitudes, viewpoints and concerns about an issue.

2. Because this is a relatively small and somewhat hard-to-reach population, the total number of developer customers who will respond to a survey will be quite low and will not allow for deeper analysis of the results.

3. IDIs are the best approach for an elite and hard-to-reach audience, as the one-on-one format provides intimacy and confidentiality, while also implicitly acknowledging that participants have underlying knowledge and expertise that requires a more thorough conversation.

4. Finally, IDIs provide scheduling flexibility, as the participant can conduct the interview at a time and in a format that is convenient to him/her.

We excel at conducting qualitative research, particularly in one-on-one or small group formats. Because two of our most senior researchers are former newspaper reporters, our approach to conducting in-depth interviews and similar types of discussions is rooted in a deeply journalistic approach. These elite interviewers know how to put participants at ease and to elicit perspectives on potentially delicate and/or complex issues. They know when and how to effectively ask probing, follow-up questions, as well as how to take advantage of organic opportunities to pursue unanticipated but potentially valuable areas of enquiry.

Below, we describe our approach to conducting these one-on-one IDIs.

**Service Area Developers Sample.** Selection of the 25 in-depth survey respondents from the Sweetwater supplied database of 200 to 400 service area developers will involve careful consideration. Here it will be important to include developers of various descriptions based upon variables such as their volume of developer business, their tenure of experience interacting with the SWA and whether or not they have reported formal or informal complaints or difficulties in these interactions. SWA officials will have an opportunity to review those selected for this research and to provide guidance and oversight throughout this selection process.

**Recruiting.** We understand that Sweetwater Authority will provide us with a list of potential participants from a directory of some 200-400 developers in the service area that the Authority interacts with in a typical year. This directory will include (if possible) their name, title and contact information. It is important that these have had recent interactions to ensure these experiences with the Sweetwater Authority are accurately recalled and that they are rooted in current policies and protocols defining these relationships.

We recommend SWA provide selected potential developers with an e-mail notice that outlines the purpose of the research, introduces Probe Research as the neutral third party that will be conducting the interviews and requests their participation. In our experience, this type of correspondence greatly enhances participation, as it underscores the legitimacy of the exercise and provides an opening for some participants to make an appointment to take part. This letter should also stress that the interviews
are confidential as well as provide contact information (at both SWA and Probe) to allow for further questions or clarifications about the project that may be sought by developers.

**Scheduling.** Once the introduction letters have been sent, our recruiter will begin contacting potential developers via email and telephone and scheduling these discussions. We will make every effort to enhance participation by accommodating the specific needs of individual interviewees. The interviews themselves will take place via a conference call line or web conferencing software, depending on the participants’ preference, with all sessions recorded.

**Interview Guide.** We will work with the Sweetwater Authority to design an interview guide that meets its information needs. These initial conversations will allow us to gain a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the relationship between the Authority and these service area developers. Some areas of inquiry will, no doubt, be developed to address issues and areas known to be problematic in terms of these relationships and interactions. We anticipate these in-depth interviews will last for approximate 30 minutes in duration.

The guide will include a mix of different types of questions, thus allowing us to provide both quantitative measures as well as context and insight regarding why developers are providing these responses. Some potential areas of inquiry may include that will not be limited to:

- Satisfaction and effectiveness of communications between the Authority and developers
- Understanding of new water service implementation procedures and new service accounts
- Developer complaint incidence and resolution
- Views on fees and deposits
- Familiarity and efficacy of key documentation and forms including Design Requirement Letters, Agreement to Approve Development and Standard Specifications for Construction of Water Facilities
- Developer satisfaction with post-construction service and outcomes
- Assessment of the appeal of potential new system innovations (process changes)
- General and specific suggestions for process improvements

Our project team is proud of its expertise and success in crafting interview guides. While applying structure to the discussion sessions is essential, our interviewers also encourage spontaneity and take advantage of opportunities to ask follow-up questions, including questions that may not be explicitly written into the guide. At the same time, we follow the parameters of the guide to ensure all areas of inquiry are covered and your information needs are met.

We will submit the guide as a draft, providing multiple opportunities to revise this instrument until it is finalized to the Sweetwater Authority’s specifications.

**Incentives and sharing back results.** For most in-depth interviews, we recommend sharing a summary of the results with participants. This type of summary document closes the feedback loop and makes participants feel more engaged in the outcome of the discussion. For many participants, this information is more valuable to them than a cash incentive. When preparing this summary, we ensure that the findings remain high level and do not betray any confidences that would identify a particular individual or their organization.

**Analysis.** Following each interview, our interviewers will prepare summary notes that include an analysis of each area of inquiry in the interview guide. This includes tallying any quantitative measures as well as identifying consistent themes within the qualitative findings. Participant comments are examined carefully in order to distill responses and general levels of agreement and disagreement that were voiced during each interview.
Once the interviews have been completed, we will provide a topline summary (3-4 pages) that includes the overarching themes and highlights of the interviews. This will be followed that includes a more comprehensive report that marries the findings of both the survey and the interviews. This is described in more detail below.

**Reporting and Presentation**

We pride ourselves on delivering high-quality analysis and reporting to our clients. For every project, we identify the most useful, actionable information and present it in a clear, straightforward manner. We are renowned for the quality of our reporting deliverables and will work with you before, during and after the analysis and reporting process to ensure that we provide you with the insights you require.

Taking the results from the customer survey and in-depth interviews with developer customers, we will prepare a comprehensive draft report that includes:

- An Executive Summary that includes an introduction, themes and highlights
- A section explaining the methodology and sampling approach for the survey/interviews
- A Conclusions and Recommendations section which highlights and reiterates key insights and provides strategic advice on actions to take from the research, as well as recommendations for potential future surveys or research options
- Detailed survey findings, including an overview of the responses to each question that show benchmarks to municipal norms (where applicable).
  - For each question, we will show statistically significant findings by relevant crosstabs including (for residential customers) gender, age, education, household income, zip code and water consumption levels and (for non-residential customers) the industry sector of the business or number of employees.
  - Non-residential customers’ results will be provided in a stand-alone chapter where their questions differ from the household survey.
- Detailed findings from the IDIs with developer customers, including a summary for each question highlighted by verbatim quotes and (where applicable) the results of more quantitative interview questions.
- A copy of the questionnaires in English and Spanish (as an Appendix)
- A copy of the discussion guide (in English)

We will provide this reporting information and a PowerPoint slide deck electronically, along with all data files, including the detailed tables and the SPSS data file. We will receive feedback from the project team in a consolidated document and we will work together to finalize the document.

After these reports have been submitted and finalized, Scott MacKay will present the findings from the survey to the Sweetwater Authority Governing Board. This Currently scheduled for January 27, 2021.

**Confidentiality & Security Provisions**

Probe Research is committed to maintaining meticulous legal, professional and ethical standards in order to protect any customer contact or organizational data provided to us. In addition to her role as Director of Operations, and as a member of our Project Team, Ms. Rosemary Fletcher is Probe Research’s Privacy Officer. This formal designation and its accompanying responsibilities ensure that our firm adheres to the highest standards of research industry practices and is in compliance with the spirit and letter of relevant privacy legislation. This includes monitoring the use of files pertaining to information on individual respondents, ensuring that materials are maintained in a secure location, destroying records and electronic materials pertaining to individual information, and ensuring that
unauthorized third parties do not have access to client and respondent-related information.

Probe Research Inc., adheres to the highest industry standards of professionalism and offers every assurance of the utmost confidentiality of all aspects of the research, including, but not limited to:

✓ The information collected from your customers is used exclusively for the purposes of the research project and is not shared with any other party. To this end, the research is not used to sell or to develop leads for marketing purposes.

✓ The amount and type of information collected is limited only to what is required to meet the research objectives.

✓ Confidentiality of respondent data is maintained. Individual respondents’ personal data is not provided to clients or other third parties without the permission of the respondent. Indeed, data files are stripped of any personally identifiable information to ensure respondent anonymity. The data is then aggregated before research results are disclosed to clients.

With regard to security of client-provided databases including those of your customers and developers, several complimentary mechanisms are in place to ensure internal data supplied by the client remains secure. These include:

✓ Signed and strictly enforced confidentiality agreements from all staff working on the project.

✓ The separation of non-required respondent details such as address and/or other sensitive details from interviewer-accessible fields.

✓ Electronic backup of all files including off-site storage of files in progress.

✓ Return to client of all sensitive electronic files and/or the complete deletion of all records no longer requiring our attention.

✓ State-of-the-art encryption and “firewall” protection of computerized networks to prevent external efforts to access client related records.
3.0 RESEARCH TEAM

For this research program, Probe Research Inc. would assemble a team of highly-qualified research professionals with the requisite skills and experience needed to ensure the timely and consistent collection of all data, a rigorous analysis of the research results and high-quality reporting of key research findings. The research team would consist of the following individuals: Mr. Scott MacKay (Project Director), Mr. Curtis Brown, (Principal), Ms. Rosemary Fletcher (Operations Coordinator and Privacy Officer) and Ms. Jennifer Brandt (Research Associate).

In this section, we outline the credentials and experience of our research team in providing similar research services to companies, municipalities, utilities and government departments across the United States and Canada. Biographical descriptions of each project team member with examples of relevant project experience are included in Appendix A.

The project management structure for the Sweetwater Authority Water Issues Public Opinion Survey led by Mr. Scott MacKay is presented below.

**Contact Person and Project Leader**

The project leader and main client liaison for this project would be Scott MacKay, Probe Research’s president. We firmly believe in the importance of assigning our firm’s senior researchers to important client studies and, unlike some firms, we ensure that our senior personnel are directly responsible for managing the research process.

Since 1994, Scott has overseen the growth and expansion of his organization from a small research boutique into one of Canada’s most respected public opinion and consumer research practices, serving more than 450 clients throughout North America.

Probe Research is well regarded for accuracy, integrity and independence. Scott is actively focused on all aspects of Probe’s work, including client relations, questionnaire design, sampling and methodology, reporting, syndicated research and new product development.

In the early 1990’s, Scott served as Research Director at the Angus Reid Group where he helped to create, administer and market a range of syndicated studies including the Urban Canada Report, Canadians and Canada’s Aboriginal Peoples and Canadians and the Environment. He has pioneered...
many different syndicated studies during his quarter-century with Probe Research, including studies focusing specifically on low-incidence and hard-to-reach populations (Indigenous citizens and newcomers) as well as studies focused on specific topics, including drinking water and municipal services.

Scott holds a graduate degree in Political Studies from the University of Manitoba where he has also taught undergraduate courses in the area of Canadian politics. In 2004, he was honored to receive formal designation as a Certified Marketing Research Professional (CMRP) - a distinction offered to only an elite group of Canadian marketing research professionals.

**Additional Project Team Members**

For this project, Scott MacKay would be supported by an elite team of research professionals - all of whom are university trained and have significant experience in directing complex social and consumer research projects:

- Curtis Brown, Principal
- Mary Agnes Welch, Principal
- Rosemary Fletcher, B.A., Vice President & Privacy Officer
- Jennifer Brandt, Research Associate
- Terry Barna, B.Sc., Advanced Analytics Specialist
- Joey Harmon, Harmon Research Group

**Curtis Brown, M.A. Principal**

Curtis Brown has a deep background in public policy research, first as a journalist and for the past decade as a research consultant. Prior to returning to Probe Research in 2018, Curtis worked with Environics Research’s Corporate & Public Affairs practice for three years in Toronto. He works closely with clients to help them better understand their communications and stakeholder environments. He works closely with them to identify the information they require and then develops customized, innovative research approaches that yield insights and helps solve their main business challenges.

Curtis is involved in all aspects of the research process, including scoping projects, questionnaire design and project management. He is particularly adept at interpreting results and drawing on his journalism background to identify the main research “story” within the data. He has a great deal of experience presenting findings to a wide range of audiences, including senior leadership teams, elected officials, employee groups and the general public.

Curtis is also a highly-experienced and respected qualitative researcher, as he has moderated hundreds of focus groups throughout Canada on a wide range of topics. His work has been primarily in public policy, with an emphasis on serving clients in the health care, education, financial services and municipal sectors.

Curtis holds a Master’s degree in Political Studies from the University of Manitoba and a Bachelor’s degree in Journalism from the University of Regina. Prior to entering the market research industry, Curtis worked as a reporter and later as a columnist with the Brandon Sun and Winnipeg Free Press.
Mary Agnes Welch joined Probe Research in 2016 following a career as an award-winning journalist in Ontario and Manitoba, covering city hall, the Manitoba legislature and public policy. She specialized in using data, documents and advanced research methods to tackle some of the most complex policy issues, including child welfare, housing and energy.

At Probe Research, Mary Agnes is responsible for client liaison, project design and management, data analysis as well as analysis and reporting. She utilizes her journalistic background to develop written and graphical reports and infographics that provide a compelling and overarching narrative, focusing on the most relevant and actionable insights for her clients. Mary Agnes also plays a key role conducting Probe’s qualitative research by moderating focus groups and conducting in-depth interviews with key stakeholders.

Mary Agnes works with a variety of non-profit, labour and government clients and specializes in public opinion surveys on policy issues. She is also involved in the development of new research products, including the annual Indigenous Voices omnibus survey of Manitoba’s First Nations and Métis residents.

Before moving to the Winnipeg Free Press in 2002, she worked at the Windsor Star and the Odessa American, a small daily newspaper in West Texas. Mary Agnes earned an honours undergraduate history degree from the University of Alberta and a master's degree from Columbia University's journalism school.

Rosemary Fletcher oversees the financial and operational functions of Probe Research. She has a wealth of experience in the design of research approaches and has been a key player in the management and execution of many complex research programs, ensuring they are completed on budget and on time.

Rosemary is Probe’s longest serving professional employee, having begun her career with this firm in 1996. During these two decades, she has had a front-row seat in the design and implementation and oversight of nearly all of Probe’s quantitative and qualitative research projects.

Rosemary has a great deal of experience conducting quantitative research and fulfils a key project management role for many studies, including questionnaire design/scripting, field management and analysis and reporting. She has worked closely with a variety of clients, specializing in research related to financial services, membership satisfaction and public policy issues.

Rosemary holds a B.A. from the University of Winnipeg with a double major in psychology and administrative studies as well as a communications certificate specializing in public relations from the University of Winnipeg, Continuing Education branch. Her academic interest in organizational behaviour and professional development are especially valuable in numerous research endeavours, including the retail and employee relations sectors.

She is a professional member of the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association of Canada and has held executive positions on the board of the local chapter. Rosemary also serves as the company’s privacy officer and ensures that all elements of relevant privacy legislation are followed.
Jennifer Brandt  
Research Associate

Jennifer’s responsibilities touch nearly every aspect of Probe Research’s day-to-day operation, including marketing, client liaison, research support and graphic design. Jennifer is responsible for creating Probe’s marketing materials as well as designing reporting deliverables for clients upon completion of field work. She applies her eye for detail and her creative abilities to develop clear and colourful reports, infographics and presentation decks that highlight the key insights from our studies. Jennifer also assists with all other components of the research process and offers organizational support for focus groups and other qualitative projects and provides valuable clerical and administrative trouble-shooting for staff members.

Jennifer is also responsible for updating Probe’s website, managing the company’s client and project databases and coordinating and distributing Probe’s quarterly electronic newsletter (The Sounding).

Terry Barna, B.Sc.  
Advanced Analytics Specialist

Terry Barna has worked as an advanced analytics specialist for more than 25 years. Terry began his career with the Angus Reid Group, where he was responsible for designing, building, training and managing the company's national data analysis team, and consulting on large advanced analyses for many clients, including the City of Calgary, City of Edmonton, Ontario Tourism, Alberta Tourism, Yukon Tourism, the Region of Waterloo, and York Region, among others.

Terry worked as a client-side researcher with Investors Group and Clarica Life Insurance before returning to his own practice as an advanced analytics specialist. He has worked with Probe Research since 2001 as our data analytics partner, providing cross-tabular analysis as well as other advanced analytics approaches, including segmentation, regression/driver analysis, factor analysis and predictive modeling. Probe’s clients benefit a great deal from his insightful and creative approach to data analysis.

Harmon Research Group Inc. is a boutique data collection specialist, a “high value” alternative to the larger firms. HRGI provides research services for market research consultancies around the world across a broad range of industries. Services Probe Research regularly accesses through this sub-supplier include web survey programming and hosting, CATI/multimode and various qualitative services. HRGI’s size and focus is highly compatible and symbiotic with our firm and its values, and their nimble and flexible structure allows for rapid turnaround data-delivery at highly economical rates.

HRGI’s industry experience is broad, ranging from the financial industry to the fast food industry and most industries in between. Harmon’s team has represented the top research firms of the world for more 15 years. HRGI currently works with 17 of the top 50 global research firms and more than 35 smaller boutique companies. Last year HRGI conducted more than 415,000 surveys with half of those tracking research, including 85,000 CSAT/NPS surveys.

Our trusted sub-service data collection facility includes state-of-the-art telephone interviewing stations, each equipped with high-quality data collection tools and leading-edge computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) hardware and software. The CATI system provides for efficient and “respondent-friendly” data collection while ensuring an unmatched level of quality control, sample administration and overall accuracy. Spanish-speaking interviewers will be available during all phases of the data collection process.
4.0 RELEVANT FIRM EXPERIENCE & QUALIFICATIONS OF PROJECT TEAM

Our team of professionals at Probe Research Inc. possesses a wealth of experience and expertise in conducting quantitative and qualitative research studies similar to the current project proposed by the Sweetwater Authority. In this section, we provide examples of three specific projects that our firm has conducted in the last five years that are relevant and comparable to the proposed research initiative.

**San Diego County Water Authority (2014 - 2017):** Our firm engaged in a long-term consulting contract with the San Diego County Water Authority (SDCWA) to conduct a three-year tracking survey (2014, 2015, 2017) among 1,000 citizens of the county (including those from low incidence populations). Probe Research provided expert professional support in the redesign of SDCWA’s annual Water Issues Public Opinion Poll. The design of this research plan involved developing an innovative hybrid (online/telephone) data collection methodology. Questions from previous years were tracked to determine shifts in behaviors and attitudes, while new and emerging areas of inquiry were included. The results of this research delivered highly accurate and powerful attitudinal and behavioral insights used to assist this organization in achieving goals laid out in its five-year business plan. The results of this report were summarized by Probe Research President Scott MacKay to the SDCWA Board of Directors on several occasions.

These reports are available on the SDCWA website at:


**Contact:**
Mike Lee
Public Affairs Manager
San Diego County Water Authority
4677 Overland Ave.
San Diego, CA 92123
Telephone: (858) 522-6726
Email: MLee@sdcwa.org

**Helix Water District (2017):** Probe Research was retained by the Helix Water District to conduct an online survey of its residential customers to measure their overall level of satisfaction with the organization, with the delivery of water and with selected service offerings. Other key topics included the Water Conservation Garden at Lake Jennings, communications and suggested improvements for the district. All customers with valid email contact information were invited to complete the survey via a secure, unique link. The survey was open for completion in November 2017, with more than 2,300 Helix Water District residential customers surveyed during that time.

Based on the results of the survey, Probe Research identified the following actionable items:

1. Share survey results with customers in March-April newsletter
2. Focus communications on topics customers said they want to know more about
3. Conduct a 12-month water quality campaign
4. Provide tools for customers to create an affordable water efficient landscape

This report can be viewed on the Helix Water District website at:
A Clear Perspective U.S.A. (Canada) drinking water study among 2,000 American and a similar number of Canadian adults (US: 2004, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2012 and 2014 and Canada 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2012) examines consumers’ evolving attitudes and behaviors regarding their tap water supplies, water pricing, water quality, consumption, water conservation, source water protection, public/private partnerships, infrastructure and more. The research provides government departments, companies and utilities involved in the water industry with valuable feedback from their customers. Managers are able to set benchmarks for evaluating the effectiveness of their programs and policies and receive comparative data for the rest of the country. The research helps decision-makers to assess customers’ awareness and concerns and enables them to track changes in residents’ attitudes and behaviors over time. Finally, the study provides those involved in public relations and outreach programs with accurate and timely data for targeted communications strategies and effective educational outreach initiatives.

This syndicated research approach offers study participants an economical means to receive the most current and accurate data regarding the American drinking water marketplace. The size of the sample is robust to permit a detailed examination of the results among different sub-populations while the costs per participant are relatively low because they are shared among several research partners.

Key Clear Perspectives clients include:

- General Electric
- American Water Services
- National Groundwater Association
- 3M Cuno Corp.
- Culligan Water
- Nestle Water of North America
- Pepsi Cola
- National Testing Labs

The Canadian and American drinking water research programs were directed by Mr. Scott MacKay. Mr. MacKay developed the research plan, designed the questionnaire in consultation with research partners and analyzed the data. The report was prepared by these individuals with assistance from Rosemary Fletcher, and Curtis Brown, all employees of Probe Research Inc. Mr. MacKay and Ms. Mendro provided an in-house presentation of the research results to several companies and government departments including the Ontario Drinking Water Management Division.

A Clear Perspective of Canadians and their Drinking Water contact person:
Ms. Selina Young, Senior Advisor  
Project Planning and Reporting  
Drinking Water Programs Branch  
Ontario Ministry of the Environment  
T: (416) 212-4846  
Selina.young@ontario.ca

A Clear Perspective of Americans and their Drinking Water contact person:

Ms. Kathleen E. Carney, Vice President  
Corporate Business Development  
American Water  
1025 Laurel Oak Road  
Voorhees, NJ 08043  
Telephone: 856-309-4530, C:856-912-4268  
Email: kathleen.carney@amwater.com
5.0 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

We have carefully examined the RFP and its Scope of Work and attendant project deliverables and are confident that we can meet all of the target dates without difficulty. Key dates and deliverables are itemized below:

It is anticipated that many of the tasks associated with the collection of information from developers via our in-depth interviewing methodology will occur simultaneously with the residential customer survey. While some of the details and methodological approaches surrounding the developer survey will be determined after initial consultation with representatives of SWA, many of these tasks will be coincidental including discussion of this research phase at the project kickoff meeting through to data collection and ultimately on to the reporting deliverables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TASK/DELIVERABLE</th>
<th>TARGET DATE</th>
<th>RESPONSIBILITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project kick-off meeting</td>
<td>Sept. 2020</td>
<td>SWA &amp; Probe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft a Letter of Engagement detailing methodology, sample frame, timeframe, invoicing structure and any other information discussed in kick-off meeting</td>
<td>Sept. 2020</td>
<td>Probe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special board meeting regarding survey instrument</td>
<td>Oct. 2020</td>
<td>SWA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey and sample design</td>
<td>Nov. 2020</td>
<td>SWA &amp; Probe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test survey instrument</td>
<td>Nov. 2020</td>
<td>Probe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide report on pre-tests, including any recommendations for change or improvements</td>
<td>Nov. 2020</td>
<td>Probe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection of residential customers</td>
<td>Dec. 2020</td>
<td>Probe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process and ensure quality of data</td>
<td>Dec. 2020</td>
<td>Probe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliver draft report for review</td>
<td>Jan. 2021</td>
<td>Probe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliver final report and presentation to Governing Board</td>
<td>Jan. 27, 2021</td>
<td>Probe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Regular update meetings and invoicing intervals to be determined upon mutual consent
6.0 PRICE PROPOSAL AND FEE SCHEDULE

This comprehensive research program can commence in September 2020 and the associated costs of conducting the research including the number of hours and associated cost for all staff and contract employees as they relate to tasks identified in the Statement of Requirements are presented below. All project-related costs such as materials and reproduction costs are also included.

The deliverables for this study can be summarized as follows:

- Client consultation services
- Design of survey questionnaire in consultation with Sweetwater Authority representatives
- Survey design, translation services, survey pre-testing (20 residential/10 non-residential), interviewer training, CATI scriptwriting, data collection, coding open-ended questions and data analysis
- Draft report with copies of the data files in SPSS format and a set of data tables summarizing the research results.
- Additional support will be provided as needed to interpret the data and research results
- Final report - A final draft report would be submitted for the Sweetwater Authority’s review. Once the final draft report has been finalized, an electronic copy (in MS Word and PDF formats) would be forwarded. This would include the analysis of data as well as a summary report of the research findings. In addition, an electronic copy of the statistical tables will be provided along with an overall Call Disposition report itemizing the outcome of all calls made during the course of the research.
- PowerPoint Presentation - A PowerPoint presentation deck would be provided to the Sweetwater Authority and the senior director of the Probe Research team (Scott MacKay) would be available to a virtual presentation (Zoom, Teams or other group-conferencing software) of the final report findings.
**PROJECT BUDGET**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scott MacKay</th>
<th>Curtis Brown</th>
<th>Rosemary Fletcher</th>
<th>Mary Agnes Welch</th>
<th>Jennifer Brandt</th>
<th>Harmon Research*</th>
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<td><strong>Per Diem Rate</strong></td>
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**RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER SURVEY**

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<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Scott MacKay</th>
<th>Curtis Brown</th>
<th>Rosemary Fletcher</th>
<th>Mary Agnes Welch</th>
<th>Jennifer Brandt</th>
<th>Harmon Research*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task 1 – Orientation, Client Liaison and Meetings</td>
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<td>Task 4 – Data Collection</td>
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<td>Task 5 – Data Processing and Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Task 6 – Final Report</td>
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<tr>
<td>Task 7 – On-site Presentation &amp; Prep</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Days</strong></td>
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<td>1.5</td>
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<td>3</td>
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**TOTAL COMPONENT COST**

- Residential Customer Survey: $27,975

**TOTAL PROJECT TOTAL**

- Over all Project Total: $38,691.50

*This includes additional Probe staff and contract staff.*
The cost for conducting this study with all the deliverables for the residential customer and service area Developers research studies as outlined in this submission would be $38,691.50. This lump sum fee is all-inclusive and includes the costs of conducting the research plus labor and all incidentals.

We propose the billing schedule be as follows, but remain open to discussing:

- One-third of total project price due upon approval of final questionnaire.
- One-third due upon completion of data collection (n=400 residential and 10-12 Developer interviews).
- One-third upon satisfactory delivery of all project components, pending approval from the Water Authority contract manager.

7.0 NO EXCEPTIONS

We have carefully reviewed this RFP including the Attachment B “Standard Agreement for Services” and take no exceptions to any portion described therein.

8.0 ADDENDA RECEIVED

We have not received any addenda issued by the Sweetwater Authority as of August 27, 2020.

9.0 NON DISCLOSURE

We have reviewed and are prepared to sign a NON-DISCLOSURE/CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT in the event that Probe Research Inc. is selected to conduct this Public Opinion Survey.
APPENDIX A:

Curriculum Vitae
Scott MacKay, B.A., M.A., CMRP
President

Scott MacKay is the president of Probe Research Inc., a national public opinion and marketing research organization. Since 1994, Scott has overseen the growth and expansion of his organization from a small research boutique into one of Canada’s most respected public opinion and consumer research practices, serving more than 450 clients throughout North America.

Probe Research is well regarded for accuracy, integrity and independence. Scott is actively focused on all aspects of Probe’s work, including client relations, questionnaire design, sampling and methodology, reporting, syndicated research and new product development.

In the early 1990’s, Scott served as Research Director at the Angus Reid Group where he helped to create, administer and market a range of syndicated studies including the Urban Canada Report, Canadians and Canada’s Aboriginal Peoples and Canadians and the Environment. He has pioneered many different syndicated studies during his quarter-century with Probe Research, including studies focusing specifically on low-incidence and hard-to-reach populations (Indigenous citizens and newcomers) as well as studies focused on specific topics, including drinking water and municipal services.

Scott holds a graduate degree in Political Studies from the University of Manitoba where he has also taught undergraduate courses in the area of Canadian politics. In 2004, he was honored to receive formal designation as a Certified Marketing Research Professional (CMRP) - a distinction offered to only an elite group of Canadian marketing research professionals.

Education

Master of Arts (Political Studies), University of Manitoba (1990)
Bachelor of Arts (Political Studies), University of Manitoba (1986)
Certified Marketing Research Professional, (CMRP)

Professional Experience

1994 – Present    President, Probe Research Inc.
1990 – 1994       Research Director, Angus Reid Group
1989 – 1990       Research Director, Probe Research Inc
1978 – 1981       Opinion Place

Relevant Project Experience

- **A Clear Perspective Canada and A Clear Perspective U.S. (2002-present)**: For nearly two decades, Scott has played a lead role in the design and execution of our bi-national tracking telephone surveys of North American consumers that explore attitudes, preferences and behaviors related to drinking water and water conservation initiatives.

- **San Diego County Water Authority (2014-2017)**: Scott led our team’s efforts to conduct an annual tracking survey of 1,000 San Diego County residents regarding their attitudes, perceptions and behaviors related to drinking water and water conservation. Scott played a key role in all aspects of the project, including study/questionnaire design, analysis and reporting, as well as presenting survey highlights to the SDCWA’s board of directors.
• **Confidential Canadian Municipality – Algae Bloom/Water Treatment Survey (2019):** Scott contributed to analysis and reporting for our survey of 400 residents of a Canadian city regarding their perceptions of what is causing algae blooms in a nearby lake and their attitudes regarding the impact of a nearby wastewater treatment plant on water quality in the area.

• **Helix Water District – Residential Customer Survey (2017):** Scott worked closely with the Helix Water District to design and provide results from an online survey of residential customers measuring their satisfaction with the organization and its services, as well as other communications initiatives.

• **City of Calgary – Residential Customer Survey (2017):** Scott provided advisory services for this survey of n=400 Calgary residents regarding awareness and usage of program offered by the Water Resources Division.

• **Sweetwater Authority – Residential and Commercial Customer Focus Groups (2015):** Scott worked with the Sweetwater Authority to design a qualitative research study exploring attitudes, perceptions and behaviors related to water conservation, pricing and communications issues. Scott also presented the key insights from this study to the Sweetwater Authority board.

• **Sweetwater Authority – Residential Customer Survey (2015):** Scott worked with the Sweetwater Authority to design and conduct a telephone survey of n=400 residential customers regarding satisfaction with various service and quality dimensions, as well as views regarding water conservation initiatives.
Curtis Brown, M.A. Principal

Curtis Brown has a deep background in public policy research, first as a journalist and for the past decade as a research consultant. Prior to returning to Probe Research in 2018, Curtis worked with Environics Research’s Corporate & Public Affairs practice for three years in Toronto. He works closely with clients to help them better understand their communications and stakeholder environments. He works closely with them to identify the information they require and then develops customized, innovative research approaches that yield insights and helps solve their main business challenges.

Curtis is involved in all aspects of the research process, including scoping projects, questionnaire design and project management. He is particularly adept at interpreting results and drawing on his journalism background to identify the main research “story” within the data. He has a great deal of experience presenting findings to a wide range of audiences, including senior leadership teams, elected officials, employee groups and the general public.

Curtis is also a highly-experienced and respected qualitative researcher, as he has moderated hundreds of focus groups throughout Canada on a wide range of topics. His work has been primarily in public policy, with an emphasis on serving clients in the health care, education, financial services and municipal sectors.

Curtis holds a Master’s degree in Political Studies from the University of Manitoba and a Bachelor’s degree in Journalism from the University of Regina. Prior to entering the market research industry, Curtis worked as a reporter and later as a columnist with the Brandon Sun and Winnipeg Free Press.

Education

Master of Arts (Political Studies), University of Manitoba (2010)
Bachelor of Arts (Journalism), University of Regina (2002)

Professional Experience

2018 – Current Principal, Probe Research
2016-2018 Senior Research Associate, Environics Research
2008-2015 Senior Research Associate/Vice-President, Probe Research
2002-2007 Reporter/Editorial Page Editor, Brandon Sun

Relevant Project Experience

- **A Clear Perspective Canada and A Clear Perspective U.S. (2002-present):** Curtis helped design and contributed to client reports for our bi-national telephone surveys of consumers that explored attitudes, preferences and behaviors related to drinking water and water conservation initiatives.
- **Confidential Canadian Municipality – Algae Bloom/Water Treatment Survey (2019):** Curtis conducted a survey of 400 residents of a Canadian city regarding their perceptions of what is causing algae blooms in a nearby lake and attitudes regarding the impact of a nearby wastewater treatment plant on water quality in the area.
• **City of Calgary – Capacity Buy-Back Program Study (2018):** While with another research firm, Curtis conducted a qualitative study that involved interviewing 50 representatives of high- and medium-volume water users regarding their conservation practices and their perceptions of a proposed incentive program that would provide rebates on water-saving technology.

• **San Diego County Water Authority (2014-2017):** Curtis contributed to analysis and reporting on Probe Research’s annual survey of 1,000 San Diego County residents regarding their attitudes, perceptions and behaviors related to drinking water and water conservation.

• **Sweetwater Authority – Residential and Commercial Customer Focus Groups (2015):** Curtis conducted focus groups on behalf of the Sweetwater Authority with its residential and commercial customers regarding a wide range of issues, including water conservation practices, perceptions of billing and water rates and customer service/communications issues.
Mary Agnes Welch, B.A. Hons., M.Sc. Principal

Mary Agnes Welch joined Probe Research in 2016 following a career as an award-winning journalist in Ontario and Manitoba, covering city hall, the Manitoba legislature and public policy. She specialized in using data, documents and advanced research methods to tackle some of the most complex policy issues, including child welfare, housing and energy.

At Probe Research, Mary Agnes is responsible for client liaison, project design and management, data analysis as well as analysis and reporting. She utilizes her journalistic background to develop written and graphical reports and infographics that provide a compelling and overarching narrative, focusing on the most relevant and actionable insights for her clients. Mary Agnes also plays a key role conducting Probe’s qualitative research by moderating focus groups and conducting in-depth interviews with key stakeholders.

Mary Agnes works with a variety of non-profit, labour and government clients and specializes in public opinion surveys on policy issues. She is also involved in the development of new research products, including the annual Indigenous Voices omnibus survey of Manitoba’s First Nations and Métis residents.

Before moving to the Winnipeg Free Press in 2002, she worked at the Windsor Star and the Odessa American, a small daily newspaper in West Texas. Mary Agnes earned an honours undergraduate history degree from the University of Alberta and a master's degree from Columbia University's journalism school.

Education
Southam Journalism Fellow, Massey College, University of Toronto (2012-13)
Master of Science (Journalism), Columbia University (1997)
Bachelor of Arts (History, Hons), University of Alberta (1996)

Professional Experience
2016 – Current Principal/Senior Researcher, Probe Research Inc.
1999 – 2002 Journalist, Windsor Star

Relevant Project Experience
- A Clear Perspective Canada and A Clear Perspective U.S. (2002-present): Mary Agnes served as a fresh set of eyes on all questionnaires and reporting deliverables, offering advice, analysis and quality control, particularly on the most recent Canadian report.
- Confidential Canadian Municipality – Algae Bloom/Water Treatment Survey (2019): Mary Agnes contributed to analysis and reporting advice for our survey of 400 residents of a Canadian city regarding their perceptions of what is causing algae blooms in a nearby lake and their attitudes regarding the impact of a nearby wastewater treatment plant on water quality in the area.
Rosemary Fletcher, B.A.
Vice-President of Operations and Privacy Officer

Rosemary Fletcher oversees the financial and operational functions of Probe Research. She has a wealth of experience in the design of research approaches and has been a key player in the management and execution of many complex research programs, ensuring they are completed on budget and on time.

Rosemary is Probe’s longest serving professional employee, having begun her career with this firm in 1996. During these two decades, she has had a front-row seat in the design and implementation and oversight of nearly all of Probe’s quantitative and qualitative research projects.

Rosemary has a great deal of experience conducting quantitative research and fulfills a key project management role for many studies, including questionnaire design/scripting, field management and analysis and reporting. She has worked closely with a variety of clients, specializing in research related to financial services, membership satisfaction and public policy issues.

Rosemary holds a B.A. from the University of Winnipeg with a double major in psychology and administrative studies as well as a communications certificate specializing in public relations from the University of Winnipeg, Continuing Education branch. Her academic interest in organizational behaviour and professional development are especially valuable in numerous research endeavours, including the retail and employee relations sectors.

She is a professional member of the Marketing Research and Intelligence Association of Canada and has held executive positions on the board of the local chapter. Rosemary also serves as the company’s privacy officer and ensures that all elements of relevant privacy legislation are followed.

Education

Bachelor of Arts (Administrative Studies and Psychology), University of Winnipeg (2001)
Communications Certificate (Public Relations Specialization), University of Winnipeg (2000)

Professional Experience

2001 – Present Vice-President of Operations, Probe Research Inc.

Relevant Project Experience

- **A Clear Perspective Canada and A Clear Perspective U.S. (2002-present):** For nearly two decades, Rosemary has helped execute our bi-national telephone surveys of North American consumers that explores attitudes, preferences and behaviors related to drinking water and water conservation initiatives by assisting with project operations and reporting.
- **San Diego County Water Authority (2014-2017):** Rosemary served as operations manager and contributed to reporting for our annual survey of 1,000 San Diego County residents regarding their attitudes, perceptions and behaviors related to drinking water and water conservation.
- **Helix Water District – Residential Customer Survey (2017):** Rosemary served as operations manager and online programmer for our online survey of Helix Water District residential customers measuring their satisfaction with the organization and its services, as well as other communications initiatives.
- **City of Calgary – Residential Customer Survey (2017):** Rosemary served as operations manager for this survey of n=400 Calgary residents regarding awareness and usage of program offerings of the Water Resources Division.

- **Sweetwater Authority – Residential and Commercial Customer Focus Groups (2015):** Rosemary served as operations manager and client liaison for a qualitative research study exploring attitudes, perceptions and behaviors related to water conservation, pricing and communications issues.

- **Sweetwater Authority – Residential Customer Survey (2015):** Rosemary served as operations manager for this telephone survey of n=400 residential customers regarding satisfaction with various service and quality dimensions, as well as views regarding water conservation initiatives.
Jennifer Brandt  
Research Associate

Jennifer’s responsibilities touch nearly every aspect of Probe Research’s day-to-day operation, including marketing, client liaison, research support and graphic design.

Jennifer is responsible for creating Probe’s marketing materials as well as designing reporting deliverables for clients upon completion of field work. She applies her eye for detail and her creative abilities to develop clear and colourful reports, infographics and presentation decks that highlight the key insights from our studies. Jennifer also assists with all other components of the research process and offers organizational support for focus groups and other qualitative projects and provides valuable clerical and administrative trouble-shooting for staff members.

Jennifer is also responsible for updating Probe’s website, managing the company’s client and project databases and coordinating and distributing Probe’s quarterly electronic newsletter (*The Sounding)*.

**Education**

Media Productions Diploma, Assiniboine Community College (2002)  
Business Administration, Assiniboine Community College (1996)

**Professional Experience**

2013 – present  
Research Associate, Probe Research Inc.

2011 – 2013  
Executive Assistant, MJ Roofing

2009 – 2011  
Office Assistant, Testlabs International Ltd.

2003 – 2009  
Reporter & News Director, Golden West Radio

**Relevant Project Experience**

- **A Clear Perspective Canada and A Clear Perspective U.S. (2002-present)**: Jennifer contributed to analysis and played a key role in designing the final reporting deliverables for this project, ensuring they were clear, colourful and consistent.

- **Confidential Canadian Municipality – Algae Bloom/Water Treatment Survey (2019)**: Jennifer contributed to analysis and played a key role in designing the final reporting deliverables for this project.

- **San Diego County Water Authority (2014-2017)**: Jennifer contributed to analysis and played a key role in designing the final reporting deliverables for this project.

- **Helix Water District – Residential Customer Survey (2017)**: Jennifer contributed to analysis and played a key role in designing the final reporting deliverables for this project.

- **City of Calgary – Residential Customer Study (2017)**: Jennifer contributed to analysis and played a key role in designing the final reporting deliverables for this project.

- **Sweetwater Authority – Residential Customer Survey (2015)**: Jennifer contributed to analysis and played a key role in designing the final reporting deliverables for this project.
Terry Barna, B.Sc.
Advanced Analytics Specialist

Terry Barna has worked as an advanced analytics specialist for more than 25 years. Terry began his career with the Angus Reid Group, where he was responsible for designing, building, training and managing the company's national data analysis team, and consulting on large advanced analyses for many clients, including the City of Calgary, City of Edmonton, Ontario Tourism, Alberta Tourism, Yukon Tourism, the Region of Waterloo, and York Region, among others.

Terry worked as a client-side researcher with Investors Group and Clarica Life Insurance before returning to his own practice as an advanced analytics specialist. He has worked with Probe Research since 2001 as our data analytics partner, providing cross-tabular analysis as well as other advanced analytics approaches, including segmentation, regression/driver analysis, factor analysis and predictive modeling. Probe’s clients benefit a great deal from his insightful and creative approach to data analysis.

Education
Bachelor of Science, University of Waterloo (1983)

Professional Experience
2001 – Present Advanced Analytics Specialist, Probe Research Inc.
1997 – 1999 Director – Marketing Research, Investors Group
1985 – 1999 Research Director/Data Analyst, Angus Reid Group

Relevant Project Experience

- **A Clear Perspective Canada and A Clear Perspective U.S. (2002-present):** Terry conducted data analytics, including cross-tabulations, for this study.
- **Confidential Canadian Municipality – Algae Bloom/Water Treatment Survey (2019):** Terry conducted data analytics, including cross-tabulations, for this study.
- **San Diego County Water Authority (2014-2017):** Terry conducted data analytics, including cross-tabulations, for this study.
- **Helix Water District – Residential Customer Survey (2017):** Terry conducted data analytics, including cross-tabulations, for this study.
- **City of Calgary – Residential Customer Study (2017):** Terry conducted data analytics, including cross-tabulations, for this study.
- **Sweetwater Authority – Residential Customer Survey (2015):** Terry conducted data analytics, including cross-tabulations, for this study.
Agenda Item No. 4.B.
Attachment 3
Proposal 4 of 4
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Cover Letter

True North Research, Inc. (True North) is pleased to present this proposal to the Sweetwater Authority (Authority) to design and conduct statistically reliable surveys of its residential and Developer customers, respectively. Based on the RFP, as well as our experience conducting hundreds of similar studies for public agencies and utilities, True North understands that the Authority is interested in measuring customer awareness, perceptions, opinions, and satisfaction as they relate to the Authority, the services and programs it provides, as well as water-related issues including quality, reliability, and conservation. In addition to profiling customers’ water-related opinions and behaviors, the survey also presents an opportunity to better understand customers’ communications practices and preferences, including the methods they feel would be the most effective for future Authority communications.

By analyzing the results of the proposed surveys in conjunction with past research results (where applicable) and other secondary data, the proposed study will provide the Authority with information that can be used to make sound, strategic decisions in a variety of areas—including planning, program development/evaluation, policymaking, communications, and community engagement.

WHAT SETS TRUE NORTH APART? True North has the expertise, experience, resources, and dedication needed to successfully overcome the challenges of the proposed study. Although we provide more details in the body of this proposal, we thought it would be helpful to highlight at the outset what distinguishes True North from other research firms.

Unmatched Experience & Expertise Conducting Customer Surveys True North’s President (Dr. Timothy McLarney) and Principal Researcher (Richard Sarles) have personally designed and conducted more surveys to assist California public agencies in meeting their performance and communication goals than any other researchers in the State. To date, our team has conducted over 1,000 surveys for public agencies, including more than 400 surveys to help agencies identify customers’ needs, measure their performance, develop programs/services, and create effective marketing/communication strategies. The advantage of working with True North is that our experience will not only allow us to be a very active, insightful collaborator with the Sweetwater Authority when designing the surveys, it will also enable us to provide reliable benchmarking information and meaningfully interpret (and provide context to) the results of the Authority’s survey.

Deep Utility Experience One of the key advantages of selecting the True North team is that we don’t just bring sophisticated research tools—we also bring to the table extensive experience working with public utilities on a wide range of research topics including pricing and rate plan studies, program design/evaluation, product design/evaluation, branding and customer perceptions, customer satisfaction/performance measurement, marketing, and building customer support for various initiatives. In the past five years alone, True North has led more than 30 research projects for public utilities in the potable water, sewer/wastewater, electricity, and gas industries—including studies in the past year for the San Diego County Water Authority, Otay Water District, and Mesa Water District.
A Well-Earned Reputation for Neutral, Scientific Surveys  When commissioning a public opinion survey and selecting a consultant, the bar should be set very high in terms of neutrality, objectivity, independence, and methodological rigor. In all aspects and appearances the study must be above reproach if customers and stakeholders are expected to accept it as a fair, unbiased, scientific assessment of customers’ needs and opinions as they relate to the Authority and water-related issues.

The firm the Authority selects to conduct the study and the methodologies they employ are a big part of establishing that foundation of credibility. Hiring a firm that is known for conducting candidate election surveys, partisan polling, and/or issue-advocacy research, for example, will naturally lead customers and/or stakeholders to question whether the survey was done right, or for the right reasons.

At True North Research, we have spent more than 19 years conducting objective, non-partisan, scientific surveys on behalf of public agencies. We have a well-earned reputation as an independent expert research firm that provides neutral, balanced, and accurate research to government clients. Equally important, we have purposely avoided getting involved in local politics, candidate elections and donations, partisan polling, and political commentary so that our reputation/track record never becomes a liability for our public-sector clients.

How We Manage Your Study  Most research firms (and all of the larger firms) rely heavily on delegation to manage their work flow. Although they may send the Principals to the interview, the unfortunate reality is that once they ‘win’ a project the actual research tasks—design, data processing, data analysis, report writing, presentation building—are promptly delegated to junior-level staff.

At True North, we follow a very different model for managing your project. We believe the best approach to conducting your study is to have the person in our organization with the most expertise and experience roll-up his sleeves and actually do the work. At True North, who you see is who you get. True North’s President (Dr. McLarney) will personally perform more than 75% of the research tasks for the proposed study.

The research team at True North is eager to partner with the Sweetwater Authority on this important study. We think that you will find our qualifications, our attention to client service, and our interest in this study to be exceptional. Should you have any questions about this proposal, please do not hesitate to contact me by email at mclarney@tn-research.com or by phone at 760.632.9900. I will serve as the Authority’s point of contact during the selection process and as the Project Manager for the duration of the study, if selected.

Sincerely,

Timothy McLarney, Ph.D.
President
True North Research, Inc.
1592 N. Coast Highway 101, Encinitas CA 92024
p: 760.632.9900
mclarney@tn-research.com
C O N S U L T A N T I N F O R M A T I O N

The following sections provide the consultant information requested by the Authority according to the numbering system established in the RFP.

1. Legal Name/Address  True North Research, Inc. 1592 N Coast Highway 101, Encinitas, CA 92024.

2. Legal Form  True North is a California-based S-Corporation and is in good standing with the California Secretary of State.

3. Subsidiary Status  True North is privately owned in its entirety by Dr. McLarney andFraun-tene McLarney (spouse). True North is not a subsidiary of another company.

4. Address of Office(s) Working on Project  All research tasks will be performed at True North's Encinitas office: 1592 N Coast Highway 101, Encinitas, CA 92024.

5. Contact Person  The Project Manager and person to contact for this proposal is Dr. McLarney:

   Timothy McLarney, Ph.D.
   President, True North Research
   1592 N Coast Highway 101, Encinitas, CA 92024
   mclarney@tn-research.com
   ph: 760.632.9900
PROJECT APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

PROJECT UNDERSTANDING IN BRIEF True North understands that the Authority is interested in measuring customer awareness, perceptions, opinions, and satisfaction as they relate to the Authority, the services and programs it provides, as well as water-related issues including quality, reliability, and conservation. In addition to profiling customers' water-related opinions and behaviors, the survey also presents an opportunity to better understand customers' communications practices and preferences, including the methods they feel would be the most effective for future Authority communications.

By analyzing the results of the proposed residential customer and developer customer surveys in conjunction with past research results (where applicable) and other secondary data, the proposed study will provide the Authority with information that can be used to make sound, strategic decisions in a variety of areas—including planning, program development/evaluation, policymaking, communications, and community engagement.

INNOVATIVE METHODS FOR A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT If the ultimate goal of this study is to enable the Sweetwater Authority to make sound, strategic decisions based upon the data that is collected, it is critical that the data be collected according to rigorous methodological standards. Indeed, although it may be easy to conduct a 'survey', it is quite challenging to design and implement a survey that A) produces valid and reliable measures of the opinions and behaviors of interest, and B) produces data that is representative of the population of individuals that is the focus of a study. Only by satisfying each of these conditions will the proposed study produce data that is trustworthy and thus a sound basis for making decisions.

Meeting the aforementioned conditions has become more difficult in recent years. Much has changed in terms of how the public receives information, the accessibility of residents through traditional recruiting methods, and their willingness to participate in customer surveys. Whereas conventional RDD (random digit dial) telephone surveys worked well for surveying residents in the past, they are no longer nearly as effective at producing reliable samples due to factors such as call-screening and the increasing percentage of households that rely solely on cell phones. Nor do they provide the flexibility to respondents in terms of how they participate that is required to achieve acceptable participation rates. The bottom line is that in order to continue producing statistically reliable measures of their customers' opinions, priorities and behaviors, the research methodologies that public agencies employ for customer surveys must adapt to these new challenges.

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1. Validity refers to the degree to which a question actually measures the underlying attitude or construct that it was designed to measure. For example, asking people whether they own “stock” to measure their financial savings behavior is sufficiently ambiguous such that it has low validity. Research has shown that people in farming communities are more likely to interpret “stock” to mean livestock—not financial stocks.

2. Reliability refers to the degree to which the observed results for a survey question are free of measurement errors and thus accurately measure the true value among the survey participants.

3. In this context, representative refers to the degree to which the results found among the survey participants match what would have been found if all customers in the Sweetwater Authority’s service area participated in the survey. A probability-based sample free from the many possible sources of selection bias is the key to obtaining representative results.
OUR APPROACH: OVERVIEW  The methodology that we recommend in this section is designed to do just that—adapt to these challenges by employing innovative techniques that will ensure statistically reliable results. As discussed in greater detail later in this section, we propose to use a stratified sampling methodology that ensures a representative sample of Sweetwater Authority’s customers regardless of whether they use land lines, cell phones, both, or neither. We also recommend using a dual recruiting strategy of telephone calls and email invitations to recruit participation in the survey and a mixed-method data collection methodology that allows sampled respondents the flexibility of participating by telephone or online at a password protected web site. Designed, tested and refined by True North over the past eight years, our recommended mixed-method survey approach has proven to increase participation rates, reduce response bias, and increase the overall accuracy and reliability of customer survey results when compared to relying on a single recruiting/data collection method (e.g., telephone only).

Having reviewed the 2015 Survey of Sweetwater Authority Customers prepared by Probe Research for the Authority, as well as the 2017 Water Issues Public Opinion Poll Probe Research prepared for the San Diego County Water Authority (prior to True North being selected by the San Diego County Water Authority for the 2019 study), it’s important to note that our recommended approach is not the same as their ‘hybrid’ approach. Probe Research appears to have relied exclusively on telephone recruiting/interviewing for the Sweetwater Authority in 2015, but later switched to ‘hybrid’ approach that included a separate non-random panel sample from a third-party vendor to collect online interviews for the San Diego County Water Authority survey in 2017. This hybrid approach is not consistent with statistically reliable sampling methods, which Probe effectively acknowledges when they describe the sampling approach as one of “convenience—rather than a probability sample” and state that “no margin-of-error can be ascribed to the overall combined survey results” (see page 1 of the San Diego County Water Authority report).

By selecting customers at random using stratified sampling methods and appending contact information (rather than relying on a third-party panel), True North’s approach will produce a truly representative sample of Sweetwater Authority customers that can be used to produce statistically reliable estimates.

The following sections describe the main elements of the proposed methodology, which includes several value-added methodological and project management features likely not found in the proposals submitted by other firms. We have integrated a discussion of our research approach with a detailed scope of work in this section (rather than locate the scope of work in a separate appendix) to improve the overall flow of the proposal and eliminate unnecessary redundancy.

TASK 1: MEET WITH AUTHORITY & PROJECT COMMUNICATION  At the outset of this study, True North recommends having a kick-off meeting with all individuals who will be actively involved in the study (or will be an important stakeholder) in attendance. The kick-off meeting is a great forum for talking about past research conducted and the Authority’s needs, expectations, and concerns for the upcoming study and deliverables. The kick-off meeting will also provide an opportunity for Dr. McLarney to clarify any questions about the proposed methodology, ask questions of Authority staff, and identify changes to the methodology (as proposed) that may better serve the Authority’s interests. In short, the purpose of the kick-off meeting...
meeting is to make sure that everyone is in agreement about the details of the study, identify areas that need further clarification, share materials, and establish a more detailed work plan for the project. After the kick-off meeting, Dr. McLarney will keep in regular contact with the Project Manager identified by the Authority through telephone, email, and Zoom meetings.

**Deliverable:** Project Plan, Schedule, and Quality Control Measures

**TASK 2: SAMPLE DESIGN** The sampling design for this study is in many respects the most important stage of the survey research project. Only through carefully designing the sample to meet the many theoretical and logistical challenges associated with conducting a survey will the results of the interviews be representative of Sweetwater Authority customers.

As noted previously, telephone-based sampling techniques (such as RDD) that in past years worked well for generating representative samples of customers are no longer effective on their own. Note only do they often fail to account for the growing number of households—especially younger households—that have given up their land lines in favor of cell phones, the prevalence of caller ID and other similar technologies has led to a substantial rise in call screening behaviors. In combination, these factors create a situation in which a significant percentage of customers are simply unreachable if one relies solely on telephone-based sampling and recruiting techniques.

Rather than choose *phone numbers* at random, our recommended solution is to utilize a comprehensive database of customers (listed by physical address/location) and stratified sampling methods to select a random sample of customers within Sweetwater Authority’s service area. The sample will be stratified by geography to ensure the proper representation across geographic subareas (Bonita, Chula Vista, and National City), as well as by other characteristics that are often related to customer opinions (e.g., recent contact with the Authority/customer service call, average monthly bill amount, date of account origination). Our sampling approach will ensure that all customers in the Authority’s service area have an equal probability of being selected for the survey—not just those that have land lines or published cell phone numbers. It also enables True North to append additional contact information and recruit households using an effective combination of telephone calls *and* email, as discussed in more detail in *Task 6: Conduct Surveys* on page 9, to reduce response bias and improve the overall reliability of the research.

**Sample Size** By using the aforementioned stratified random sampling design with adjustments as needed, True North will ensure that the sample is representative of Sweetwater Authority customers. The results of the survey can then be used to estimate the opinions of *all* customers. Because not all customers will participate in the survey, however, the results will have what is known as a statistical margin of error due to sampling. The margin of error refers to the difference between what is found from the sample of respondents and what would have been found had *all* Sweetwater Authority customers been surveyed.

To provide the Authority with a sense for how the statistical margin of error is related to sample size, Figure 1 on the next page plots the relationship between sample size and the *maximum* statistical margin of error for the proposed survey. As illustrated in the figure, a sample of 600
respondents will generate survey estimates with a margin of error due to sampling of +/- 3.96% at the 95% level of confidence.

**FIGURE 1  MAXIMUM STATISTICAL MARGIN OF ERROR DUE TO SAMPLING IN STUDY AREA**

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**TASK 3: CREATE SURVEY INSTRUMENT**  
Dr. McLarney will work closely with the Sweetwater Authority in designing and revising the questionnaire. The questionnaire design and revision process will begin at the kick-off meeting and is expected to take about three weeks to complete. Dr. McLarney will take the lead in creating an initial draft after the kick-off meeting and receiving input that may be submitted by staff. Authority staff will have the opportunity to then review and comment on the draft questionnaire. It usually works best if the Authority assigns a single person to gather the comments of staff and then discuss them with Dr. McLarney, who will make changes based on the comments. This process is repeated, as needed, until all parties are satisfied with the questionnaire. Once staff are happy with the instrument, it will be shared with the Authority’s governing board for additional input and feedback before being finalized.

Throughout the design process, Dr. McLarney will work closely with the Authority to develop a questionnaire that covers the topics of interest and avoids the many possible sources of systematic measurement error, including position-order effects, wording effects, response-category effects, scaling effects and priming. We anticipate that the Authority will likely want to track key questions/performance metrics from the 2015 study, and we look forward to advising on how to incorporate these questions into the survey along with new topics/questions in a way that allows the results of the proposed survey to be compared to those of prior customer surveys.

**Deliverable:** Survey Questionnaire

4. The margin of error will vary depending on the distribution of responses to the question. The maximum margin of error occurs when the results are evenly split (50-50) between two response options.
TASK 4: SURVEYORS AND DATA EDITORS  We recognize that good interviewing starts with good interviewers, which is why we have partnered with Dynata for telephone interviewing and data collection for nearly 20 years. Each interviewer is carefully screened and trained before they start interviewing. The training process provides us with an articulate, skilled and diverse pool of employees who are capable of overcoming respondent objections, converting refusals, and handling complex questionnaires.

Initially, we screen all prospective interviewers by administering written tests to identify skills such as knowledge of current affairs, grammar, spelling and work habits. We then train our interviewers in a formal classroom environment. The training covers a basic orientation to the industry, specific interviewing mechanics (skip patterns, probing, etc.), and interviewing etiquette.

Following the classroom training, each interviewer participates in practice interviews, playing the role of both the interviewer and the respondent. Supervisors tape these interviews and the roles of both the interviewer and the respondent are evaluated during a re-training and diagnostic session. Separate exercises in probing are also conducted. After completing their training, the interviewers enter a two-week probationary period where they conduct live interviews under the close supervision of training personnel. Supervisor personnel continue to monitor each interviewer's progress on a regular basis. If an interviewer fails to meet the interviewing standards, he or she is removed from the project and re-trained.

Interviewers are thoroughly briefed before beginning a new study. The briefing is designed to familiarize the interviewers with the study objectives, the questionnaire and program, the sample and the respondent type, as well as any special considerations or instructions related to the project (e.g., alert supervisor if respondent insists on knowing the sponsor of a survey at the outset of the interview, which can affect the integrity of the interview). Briefings cover the following points:

- Background of the study
- Any unique problems that may arise
- The importance of precisely following the sample design
- A question-by-question review of the questionnaire and appropriate ways to complete certain questions
- Working with the questionnaire and CATI/web system
- Handling the specific nuances of the questionnaire (including asking questions to obtain potentially sensitive information)
- Following prescribed, specific survey protocols and procedures
- Working with difficult to handle respondents

While reviewing the specifics of the study, the supervisor encourages the interviewers to ask pertinent questions. Our clients are also welcome to participate in the briefings remotely or in person.
A high supervisor-to-interviewer ratio is maintained in all of our interviewing centers to ensure that the lessons learned in training are applied correctly in the field. Supervisors unobtrusively monitor at least 15 percent of all live interviews via telephone and computer links. Interviewers are evaluated on several areas, including the following:

- Reading verbatim
- Correct pronunciation
- Appropriate speed
- Avoiding bias
- Telephone etiquette
- Accurate and thorough probing
- Controlling the conversation
- Correct and complete data entry

**TASK 5: PRE-TEST, PROGRAMMING & LANGUAGE TRANSLATION** Once the draft survey instrument has been approved by the Authority, it will be pre-tested internally and with at least 20 customers prior to actually fielding the survey to ensure that respondents can easily understand the point of each question, the response options match what respondents want to answer, the skip patterns and CATI logic are correct, etc. After any final adjustments are made in consultation with the Authority, the instrument will be programmed for both telephone (CATI) and online versions, and professionally translated into Spanish.

**Deliverables:** Pre-Test Report, Spanish translation of questionnaire

**TASK 6: CONDUCT SURVEYS** Once customers have been selected for the sample, we will use two methods to recruit participation in the survey: email invitations and telephone calls. The email invitations will include a hyperlink with an embedded PIN that is unique to each recipient to ensure that only individuals invited are able to take the survey and limit the number of completed interviews per customer to one. Customers that do not respond to the initial email by participating in the survey will receive telephone calls for the purposes of soliciting their participation and conducting the interviews. Using a combination of email and telephone calls for recruiting allows us to reach a substantially higher percentage of customers when compared to using only one recruiting method (i.e., just telephone).

More specifically, using email invitations allows us to reach individuals who are habitual call-screeners, meaning that they do not answer their phone unless they recognize the incoming number. In an age when one-third or more of potential respondents are habitual call-screeners, using multiple recruiting methods is critical to meeting the requirements of a random sample (that every unit have an equal probability of selection) and effectively increases the response rate, reduces response bias, and improves the overall reliability of the survey results.

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5. Once a PIN has been used, it can’t be used again. However, if a respondent should be interrupted before completing the survey, they can use the link to access the survey site again and it will pick up where they left off.
As noted previously, we recommend using a mixed-method approach for data collection that allows respondents the option to participate in the survey by telephone or online through a secure, password protected web-based application designed and hosted by True North. Respondents can access the online survey from a computer, tablet or smart phone, and the screen will scale accordingly. By providing respondents with flexibility as to when and how they participate in the survey, a mixed-method approach (especially in combination with a dual recruiting method) will deliver higher participation rates, minimize response bias, and ultimately deliver more reliable results than using telephone-only based data collection methodologies. During the data collection period, True North will actively monitor the sample to ensure that it matches the composition of Sweetwater Authority customers on key characteristics (e.g., geographic location and demographics) and has the proper representation of hard to reach subgroups.

**Telephone Interviewing** Quality telephone interviewing will be an important element of the proposed survey. Using a ‘bargain’ phone facility is rarely a bargain, as the integrity of the data and the accuracy of the results depends on the knowledge, experience and professionalism of the interviewers and supervisors. In the end, it is critical that the research team and the Authority can trust the data that were collected. For this reason, True North will team with Dynata, a professional interviewing company that has partnered with Dr. McLarney and Mr. Sarles on more than 500 survey projects in the past and has a proven track-record of professional interviewers, quality data collection, and competitive pricing. Dynata maintains a diverse team of bilingual interviewers (English & Spanish), with over 4000 trained interviewers, 2500 CATI stations, and a high supervisor to interviewer ratio (1:10). It is worth noting that True North partnered with Dynata for the customer surveys we recently conducted for the San Diego County Water Authority, Otay Water District, and Mesa Water District.

Interviewing for a residential customer survey is typically conducted in the evenings (5:30PM to 9:00PM PST) during weekdays, and 10:00AM to 6:00PM on weekends. True North works closely with Dynata to manage quality control procedures during data collection, which will include a training session with interviewers and supervisors to ensure that telephone interviewers understand the purpose of all of the questions in the survey, thoroughly testing the CATI and web programs prior to fielding, active and remote supervisor monitoring of interviews, quality control checks on a random selection of interviews to identify any discrepancies that may occur (and need adjusting), and daily monitoring of the sample characteristics to ensure that data collection is adhering to the sampling plan and the profile of Sweetwater’s customer population. For a more detailed description of how we train quality interviewers, see Task 4: Surveyors and Data Editors on page 8.

**TASK 7: DATA PROCESSING & QUALITY CONTROL** Once the interviewing is complete, True North will process the data. This consists of checking the data for errors or inconsistencies, coding and recoding responses, categorizing open-end responses, and preparing frequency analyses and cross-tabulations. A statistical procedure known as weighting is also employed, as needed, to adjust for strategic oversampling or minor discrepancies in response rates among demographic subgroups. For a detailed discussion of our quality control procedures, please see Quality Control on page 12.
TASK 8: PREPARE DRAFT AND FINAL REPORTS  Once the data processing is complete, True North will analyze the results and prepare an initial topline report for the Authority’s review. The topline report consists of the aggregate percentage responses for each question asked in the survey. The topline provides the Authority with a quick, high-level summary of the survey findings while we are preparing the more detailed, full report.

The full report prepared by True North Research for the Authority will include a thorough question-by-question analysis of the survey findings, an executive summary of the key findings and recommendations, a detailed discussion of the methodology used to complete the study, a copy of the questionnaires (English & Spanish), a disposition summary for all calls made during the study, full-color graphics of the overall results and those of among specific subgroups (e.g., by geographic area, home type, demographics, etc.), and a complete set of crosstabulations for reference that display the results broken down by various subgroups of respondents. True North believes that the quality of the final report and presentation reflects directly upon the quality of the study as a whole as well as True North Research, so Dr. McLarney and Mr. Sarles take great care in developing a report which is thorough, insightful, free of mistakes, and presents the information in an eye-catching, full-color display.

True North’s reports are, without question, the most thorough and insightful in the industry. We don’t just report the results—we put the findings into context and explain their meaning based upon related questions in the survey, the Authority’s goals, relevant secondary information, the results of prior surveys, as well as our experience working with public agencies and utilities on hundreds of similar studies. The draft report will be provided for the Authority’s review and comments and revised (as appropriate) before being finalized.

Benchmarking & Statistical Significance Testing  Because the proposed survey may include questions that were asked in previous surveys administered by the Authority, there is an obvious interest in benchmarking against prior surveys and analyzing how the responses to these questions may have changed over time. It is important to recognize, however, that survey results can change over time for a number of reasons—only some of which are meaningful from a planning or performance measurement perspective. The goal is thus to isolate those changes that likely reflect actual changes in public opinion or behavior from those that are due to methodological artifacts such as measurement error, sample design effects, and chance associated with independently selected random samples. The former two methodological sources must be addressed in the design stages of the study to ensure an apples-to-apples comparison between the respective studies. The latter source—chance associated with independently selected random samples—is addressed through conducting statistical significance tests.

One advantage in partnering with True North is that we recognize that the appropriate statistical tests vary depending on the parameter being estimated (mean, total or percentage), the relationship of the respective sampling procedures (related or independent), as well as the distribution of the data on the selected question. As part of the survey report, we propose to not only incorporate prior survey findings into the graphics, where applicable, but also conduct the appropriate tests of statistical significance so that it is clear which changes in the survey results over time are meaningful from a performance management perspective.
**Powerpoint Summary & Presentations**  Once the final report has been completed, True North will prepare a PowerPoint summary of the survey results and deliver the presentation to the Sweetwater Authority’s governing board. Moreover, after the study is complete, we will continue to be a good partner for the Authority. As issues or questions arise for which the survey may provide some guidance, we will be happy to consult with and advise the Authority at no additional charge.

**Deliverables:** Topline Report, Draft Full Report, Final Full Report, Crosstabulations, Powerpoint Summary, and Data File.6

**DEVELOPER CUSTOMER RESEARCH**  True North understands that the Sweetwater Authority has between 250 and 400 developer projects active each year, ranging from smaller projects like home additions to large scale new developments. In addition to the survey of residential customers described in detail in this proposal, the Authority is also interested in surveying its developer customers to help improve its outreach and communications to this important segment of customers.

True North has extensive experience conducting surveys with professionals in the development community through our work with the City of San Diego’s Development Services Department, City of San Jose’s Development Services Partners, as well as research for the City of Irvine’s, Mission Viejo’s, and Laguna Niguel’s building and planning departments. Based on our experience and the limited number of development customers served by the Sweetwater Authority annually, we recommend reaching out to all of the Authority’s developer customers and inviting them to participate in the survey either online or by telephone. The design, recruiting, data collection, data processing, and reporting stages of the developer survey will follow the same basic procedures outlined in this proposal for the residential customer survey. To avoid redundancy, we do not repeat the procedures here. That said, there are a few differences in our approach to the developer customer survey that are worth noting:

- Telephone interviewing should be focused during normal business hours on weekdays, rather than in the evening, as many of these customers will represent businesses.
- The invitations will be tailored to this group and make clear that time taking the survey is time well spent, as it will help the Authority better serve their needs on future projects (incentive).
- Given the small number of developer customers and the budget limitations for this project, we recommend completing surveys with 50 developer customers. If the participation rate is higher than anticipated, we will deliver additional completed interviews at no extra cost to the Authority.

**QUALITY CONTROL**  Although we have commented on various aspects of our quality control procedures throughout this proposal, in this section we elaborate on the quality control procedures we employ to ensure that the Authority receives accurate, high quality research results, analyses and deliverables in a timely manner.

6. To protect respondent confidentiality and to be consistent with assurances provided to respondents that their individual answers will not be linked to them personally, the survey data file will be stripped of any personally identifying information (PII) prior to delivery.
True North ensures the integrity of its data through a series of steps that begins with the questionnaire design process. As noted previously, we work closely with our clients during the design and revision process to ensure that the questionnaire covers the topics they are interested in while avoiding the many possible sources of measurement error, including position-order effects, wording effects, response-category effects, scaling effects and priming. The questionnaire will be designed and thoroughly reviewed internally by Dr. McLarney and Mr. Sarles before being shared with Authority staff. It will then be jointly reviewed by Dr. McLarney and staff, content revisions identified, and a new paper/electronic draft will be created and proofed internally again by Dr. McLarney prior to being distributed to staff for review. This process is repeated, as needed, until all parties are satisfied with the questionnaire/guide. To avoid version-control issues, we do not share the Master File but rather have Authority staff review and comment on a pdf version. This ensures that small, unintentional changes or mistakes are not made during the review process that find their way into the final questionnaire.

Once the Authority has approved a questionnaire, it will be programmed by True North into a proprietary CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system that guides interviewing staff when conducting phone interviews, and a customized web interface to allow online participation. Both systems automatically navigate skip patterns in the survey, randomize question items as desired, and prevent most types of keypunching mistakes made by an interviewer or customer. And in studies that allow respondents the option of participating by telephone or online, the CATI and online systems are linked so that the responses are recorded to the same data file. This feature eliminates errors that may arise when merging data from separate files with separate layouts.

Once developed, the CATI and web programs are thoroughly tested by Mr. Sarles and Mr. Travis to ensure they are free of errors, limit input to valid data ranges for each question, verify certain responses with the interviewer or the respondent in real-time and, when appropriate, accurately cross reference data gathered earlier in the survey or previously collected from the customer data on file. This hands-on testing process is conducted by repeatedly working through the CATI and web interview, entering combinations of data, testing skip patterns, etc.

Once hands-on testing of the CATI and online systems is complete, True North employs separate testing software (also proprietary) that generates a mock data file based on acceptable types and ranges of data as permitted by the CATI and online programs. This resulting test data, outputted in SPSS format, allows True North to review and test a data file that matches the eventual final study data file with respect to its column layout, data structure, data labels, variable names, and valid data ranges. In studies where there may be an interest in tracking the results of prior surveys, it is at this point of the testing where special consideration is made to accommodate the particulars of those past data files so the layouts are consistent, the variable and label names identical, and the data types and ranges an exact match. This test file can also be provided to Authority staff for review and possible revisions, if desired.

Once we are fully satisfied that the CATI and web programs are perfect, we will also provide the Authority with the opportunity to review the programs online (if desired). This involves giving staff a link to access to our CATI and online web system in test mode. Authority staff can then review the programs in a live environment, answering questions and working through the interview. In our experience, this stage of the review rarely uncovers programming errors—but it
occasionally produces additional content changes as our clients have an opportunity to experience the interview first-hand and often come away with an idea or two that we incorporate into the questionnaire using the same process described above.

Once True North and the Authority are satisfied with the CATI and the data file structure, the study will be pre-tested with at least 20 customers. The objective of the pre-test is to ensure that respondents can easily understand the point of each question, the response options match what respondents want to answer, the skip patterns and CATI logic are correct, etc. Again, we will review the results of the pre-test with staff and make recommended changes, if warranted. At this point, language translation is performed by professional translation a firm that specializes in Spanish translations to ensure that the meaning of each question is correctly captured, which may differ from a literal translation.

Managing the sample in the field is made easy using Dynata’s sophisticated CATI and online systems. All respondent records are flagged with their appropriate strata, and quotas are programmed into the system for strata as well as relevant demographic characteristics. Once the number of interviews in a particular subgroup has been met, that group will be automatically “closed” and the dialing/interviewing will continue for strata and subgroups that have yet to be filled. The sample is also reviewed nightly as data collection proceeds to ensure that is within certain tolerances and meets the desired demographic distributions.

At True North, we take additional steps to ensure that the sample is representative beyond simply managing the sample on strata and quotas. For resident surveys, we recommend conducting interviews only during certain time windows (5:30 PM to 9:00 PM midweek; 10:00 AM to 5:00 PM weekends) when a balanced mix of residents are most likely to be home. If we are unable to reach a respondent on our initial attempt, callbacks are automatically scheduled at different times of the day and on subsequent days to ensure that we maximize our chances of reaching the respondent. Only after eight attempts are made to reach the respondent (twice the four-call standard used by most polling firms) will we consider that resident unreachable and replace them with another resident with a similar profile.

Once the interviews are collected, we process the data and once again review the data file to confirm that it is a clean file, free of mistakes, and has the proper variable names, labels and assignment. Additional variables may be added to the file at this point as we code open-ended responses, create derived variables, and merge additional secondary information on the file for analysis. For this reason, we thoroughly test the data file again at the conclusion of data collection and pay special attention to any new variables that are added to the file. Before submitting the final data file to a client, we conduct a variable-by-variable analysis of data frequencies and distributions, and test the logical relationships between variables, to ensure that the data makes sense and there are no odd patterns.

True North’s management model is also a key factor in maintaining quality control throughout a project—and especially when producing analyses, reports and recommendations (see Project Team on page 16). Whereas most firms manage projects by division of labor and delegating most of the work to junior-level staff, at True North we firmly believe that the best way to conduct your study is to have the people in our organization with the most expertise and experience roll-up their sleeves and actually do the work. Rather than rely on division of labor, our entire
management model is designed to **integrate** project management, design, implementation, analysis, and reporting. A key advantage of selecting True North is that who you see is who you get. Dr. McLarney will be the project manager for all studies under the contract, and will personally perform 75% of the key research tasks.

True North’s management approach has obvious advantages when it comes to developing the final deliverables for a project, including the report and presentation. Because Dr. McLarney and Mr. Sarles collaborate throughout a project on all aspects of the study, they have a first-hand understanding of the client’s research objectives, the data, and the study findings, and are thus in a great position to develop a report that A) captures the motivation for the study, B) avoids unnecessary clutter and instead focuses on study findings that speak to the important research issues/questions of interest, and C) provides insightful strategic recommendations and actionable takeaways for the client.

Our process for developing the **report and presentation** for the study will begin with a conversation with the Authority to identify any special needs or desires, as well as identify the appropriate audiences for the report. Dr. McLarney and Mr. Sarles will then jointly discuss the general layout and content. Graphics will be produced and reviewed by Mr. Sarles for inclusion in the report based on direction from Dr. McLarney. Once the graphics are developed, they will be reviewed for accuracy based on comparison with SPSS output and other related documents including topline results and crosstabs. Once we are satisfied that the numbers are all correct, the graphics will then be formatted to ensure consistency in layout, look and feel, narrative will be added to the report, and additional animation if desired for the PowerPoint. Dr. McLarney will take the lead in developing the narrative, and both Mr. Sarles and Dr. McLarney will proof the report and PowerPoint separately before providing the files to Authority staff for review and discussion. After follow-up discussions, any changes that are requested will be made in accordance with the same process identified above until the report and PowerPoint are given the final stamp of approval by the Authority.
Most research firms manage projects through division of labor and a lot of delegation. Although the Principals may appear for the interview and for client meetings, their involvement beyond that point is generally negligible. The Project Manager’s role is to be the point of contact and help design the study, but even they only handle about 20% of the workload. The unfortunate reality is that most of the important research tasks—data processing, data analysis, report writing, presentation building—are delegated to junior-level staff.

We do things differently at True North. In fact, one of the main reasons we founded True North 19 years ago was because we recognized that there is a much better model for managing a research project—have the person with the most experience and expertise in the firm roll up his/her sleeves and actually do the work! At True North, who you see is who you get. Dr. McLarney will not only serve as the Project Manager and the day-to-day contact for the Authority, he will personally perform 75% of the research tasks on the study including all design, analysis, report writing, and presentations. We have purposely kept True North as a single office, two-person consulting firm because of our commitment to this project management model and the many benefits it provides to our clients.

**Figure 2 Project Organization**

Figure 2 presents the organizational chart for the proposed study, as well as the role and tasks assigned to each individual member of our team. True North Research will serve as prime contractor at the direction of the Sweetwater Authority. Dr. Timothy McLarney (President of True North) will be the Project Manager for the study and will be assisted by Richard Sarles (Principal Researcher at True North). The telephone interviews will be conducted by the same high quality, professional data collection firm that True North has teamed with to complete more than 500 customer and community surveys—Dynata. Dameon Travis (Director of Account Management at Dynata) will manage the day-to-day interviewing schedule and quality control procedures in close consultation with Mr. Sarles and Dr. McLarney.
RESUMES AND ROLES  For the Authority’s reference, the following paragraphs provide additional information about Dr. McLarney’s, Mr. Sarles’ and Mr. Travis’ respective roles on the proposed studies, as well as their education and research backgrounds. Please note that all research projects referenced in this proposal were led by Dr. McLarney with assistance from Mr. Sarles and Mr. Travis.

**Project Manager**  
Timothy McLarney, Ph.D., will serve as the Project Manager for the proposed study and the Authority’s point of contact on all matters related to a study. Dr. McLarney will lead all design, analysis, reporting and presentation tasks. Approximately 75% of the research tasks will be performed directly by Dr. McLarney.

Dr. McLarney has more than 20 years of experience in survey methodology, statistics, public opinion analysis, and providing data-driven strategic advice to public agencies. During his career, Dr. McLarney has occupied a lead role in over 1,000 research studies, including more than 500 surveys for California cities, counties, special districts, and utilities.

Dr. McLarney is a nationally recognized expert in survey research methodology, sampling theory, weighting and the use of statistical methods to generalize survey results. His research has been recognized at numerous national and state conferences, has been published in academic journals, and has earned him honors including the title of Visiting Scholar at the Institute of Governmental Studies at UC Berkeley. He has also served as an independent expert witness in survey research methodology for California legal cases.

Prior to co-founding True North Research in 2002, Dr. McLarney was the Director of Research at another west coast research firm and a consultant for Quest, which provides organizational development training and consulting. Dr. McLarney earned a Ph.D. and M.A. in Government from Cornell University with an emphasis in survey methodology, sampling, and public opinion analysis, as well as a Bachelor’s degree in Politics from the University of California, Santa Cruz.

**Principal Researcher**  
Richard Sarles, M.S., will assist Dr. McLarney with managing data collection, data processing, and graphics production for the reports. Mr. Sarles will manage approximately 25% of the research tasks. As Principal Researcher and co-founder of True North Research, Mr. Sarles applies his expertise in statistics, sampling, weighting and analysis to a wide variety of research studies. A veteran of over 1,000 research studies, public and
private clients throughout the country rely on Mr. Sarles’ research to help them meet their performance and planning goals.

Prior to co-founding True North Research, Mr. Sarles was employed as the Associate Research Director at another west coast research firm. One testimony to Mr. Sarles’ expertise is he authored a primer on survey research methodology and customer satisfaction studies for the California Library Association that was published to all institutional members in the state. Mr. Sarles received his M.S. in Experimental Psychology from Illinois State University with magna cum laude honors. He also received his B.S. in Psychology from Illinois State University, graduating with summa cum laude honors.

Data Collection Manager Dameon Travis, B.S., is the Director of Account Management at Dynata and will serve as the Data Collection Manager for this study. As he has for more than 500 of True North’s survey projects, Mr. Travis will manage the data collection process and interviewing team and will report directly to Dr. McLarney and Mr. Sarles. Mr. Travis has extensive experience in managing all aspects of telephone interviewing, including sampling designs, CATI stations and programming, interviewer training, daily reporting procedures, and quality control processes. With a B.S. in Communications and Economics and more than 12 years experience at Dynata working closely with Dr. McLarney and Mr. Sarles on similar studies, Mr. Travis will be an invaluable asset to the project.

LOCAL PRESENCE & EXPERIENCE In addition to True North’s office being located in San Diego County, both Dr. McLarney and Mr. Sarles have lived in San Diego County for more than 20 years. We are very familiar with the different and diverse communities in the region, and our proximity to Sweetwater Authority’s offices means that we will be available to meet on short notice throughout the project period, as needed.

Because we live here, work here, and care about San Diego County’s future, we have actively sought opportunities to design and conduct research studies on important topics that affect the quality of life in San Diego County. To date, our experience includes conducting more than 100 studies for public agencies in San Diego County including SANDAG, the County of San Diego, Port of San Diego, MTS, NCTD, cities of Chula Vista, Del Mar, El Cajon, Encinitas, Escondido, La Mesa, Lemon Grove, Oceanside, San Diego, and San Marcos, as well as educational clients including Carlsbad USD, Del Mar SD, Escondido Union SD, Fallbrook UHSD, Grossmont UHSD, Grossmont-Cuyamaca CCD, La Mesa-Spring Valley SD, MiraCosta CCD, Mountain Empire USD, Palomar CCD, Poway USD, San Dieguito UHSD, San Marcos USD, Solana Beach SD, Sweetwater USD, and Vista USD.

In 2019, True North was also selected by the San Diego County Water Authority and Otay Water District to design and conduct their respective customer surveys. In addition to updating the research methodologies previously utilized by the agencies to provide greater statistical reliability, we were able to deliver several hundred additional completed interviews above and beyond the contracted sample size (at no additional cost to the client) for both studies.
Experience & References

True North is a full-service research firm that is dedicated to providing California municipalities, utilities, and special districts with a clear understanding of the opinions, perceptions, priorities and behaviors of their residents, customers, and constituents. Through designing and implementing scientific surveys, focus groups and one-on-one interviews, as well as expert interpretation of the findings, True North helps its clients to move with confidence when making strategic decisions in a variety of areas—such as planning, policy evaluation, performance management, program design/evaluation, and developing effective public outreach campaigns.

Designing and implementing custom survey research studies that adhere to rigorous methodological standards is both the purpose and the passion of True North Research. In addition to being nationally recognized experts in survey research methodology, Dr. McLarney and Mr. Sarles have also personally designed and conducted more research studies to assist California public agencies than any other individual researchers in the State—over 1,000 to date. We also have deep experience working with public utilities in the potable water, electricity, gas, and sewer/wastewater sectors. The advantage of working with True North is that this experience is particularly helpful not only in the design of the research, it also enables our team to provide reliable benchmarking information and meaningfully interpret (and provide context to) the results of the surveys.

Company Specifics   True North Research was co-founded in 2002 as a two-person consulting firm by Dr. McLarney and Mr. Sarles and is an S-Corporation in good standing with the State of California. Although we have had many opportunities to expand our business during the past 19 years, we have chosen to maintain True North as a two-person firm. Dr. McLarney and Mr. Sarles still manage every aspect of every True North project. We are an extremely efficient, well-oiled, collaborative team of two—and we have chosen to keep it that way so that our clients continue to receive exceptionally high quality customer service and research insights.

The experience discussed throughout this proposal (and the projects referenced below) are the personal experience of the individuals who will be working on all aspects of the study for the Sweetwater Authority: Dr. McLarney and Mr. Sarles. Moreover, Dr. McLarney and Mr. Sarles are committed to working with the Sweetwater Authority for the duration of this project—there will be no staff turnover or changes.

UTILITY EXPERIENCE   As noted in the Cover Letter, one of the advantages of selecting True North is that we have extensive experience working with public utilities on a wide range of research topics including customer needs assessments, customer satisfaction/performance measurement, pricing and rate plan studies, program design/evaluation, product design/evaluation, branding and customer perceptions, marketing, and building customer support for various initiatives. In the past five years alone, True North has led more than 30 research projects for public utilities in the potable water, sewer/wastewater, electricity, and gas industries. In addition to the municipalities shown below that may manage one or more utility services, our clients include

7. For example, Dr. McLarney has served as an expert witness in survey research methodology for legal cases, has published research methodologies in peer-reviewed academic journals, and on the basis of his research has been honored as a Visiting Scholar at U.C. Berkeley’s Institute for Governmental Studies.
the Casitas Municipal Water District, Cucamonga Valley Water District, Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District, Monte Vista Water District, Otay Water District, San Diego County Water Authority, West Valley Water District, West Basin Water District, Nipomo Community Services District, Goleta West Sanitary District, Los Angeles Bureau of Street Lighting, Santa Margarita Water District, and the Sacramento Municipal Utility District. True North has also conducted research for some of the largest private utilities in the world, including Veolia Water.

MUNICIPAL COMMUNITY SURVEYS  Below is a sampling of the municipalities for which Dr. McLarney and Mr. Sarles have personally designed and conducted community and customer surveys, some of which provide one or more utilities to their residents.

REFERENCE PROJECTS  The following are references for studies designed and conducted by True North’s team of Dr. McLarney (lead) and Mr. Sarles (support). We encourage the Authority to contact our references and ask about the quality of our work and customer service. Please note that we chose a mix of references to highlight our experience with research for utilities, program design/evaluation, marketing/communications, and developer customer research. The value of the individual projects referenced below varied from $25,000 to $180,000.

San Diego County Water Authority  In 2019, True North was selected by the Authority through a competitive RFP process to design and conduct the Authority’s bi-annual customer survey, which is similar to the survey proposed by the Sweetwater Authority. In addition to updating the study methodology to improve question validity, reduce measurement error, and improve the overall statistical reliability of the survey, we were able to deliver 263 additional completed interviews above and beyond the contracted sample size (800) at no additional cost to the Authority. Contact: Craig Balben, Public Affairs Representative. 4677 Overland Ave., San Diego CA 92123: 858.522.6726; CBalben@sdcwa.org.

Agoura Hills  Eastvale  Lemon Grove  San Anselmo
Alhambra  El Cajon  Lompoc  San Carlos
Aliso Viejo  Encinitas  Long Beach  San Clemente
Anaheim  Escondido  Los Angeles  San Diego
Apple Valley  Folsom  Los Gatos  San Gabriel
Arroyo Grande  Fontana  Madera  San Jose
Atascadero  Fremont  Malibu  San Luis Obispo
Atherton  Gilroy  Manhattan Beach  San Marcos
Azusa  Glendora  Menifee  San Marino
Banning  Glendora  Mission Viejo  San Mateo
Barstow  Goleta  Moorpark  Santa Barbara
Beverly Hills  Grand Terrace  Murrieta  Santa Clarita
Brea  Half Moon Bay  Norwalk  Santa Monica
Burbank  Hesperia  Oceanside  Signal Hill
Campbell  Huntington Beach  Oxnard  South Lake Tahoe
Cerritos  Indian Wells  Palmdale  South Pasadena
Chino  Irvine  Petaluma  Temecula
Chula Vista  Kerman  Pico Rivera  Thousand Oaks
Claremont  La Canada-Flintridge  Placentia  Truckee
Clayton  La Palma  Port Hueneme  Upland
Costa Mesa  Laguna Beach  Rancho Cucamonga  Ventura
Cudahy  Laguna Niguel  Rancho Palos Verdes  Watsonville
Cypress  Lake Elsinore  Rancho Santa Margarita  West Hollywood
Dana Point  Lake Forest  Redlands  Westlake Village
Del Mar  La Mesa  Redondo Beach  Whittier
Diamond Bar  Lathrop  Riverside  Yorba Linda
East Palo Alto  La Verne  Rocklin  Yucca Valley
Otay Water District  In 2019, True North was selected by the Otay Water District to design and conduct the District’s periodic customer surveys. By updating the survey methodology to a mixed-mode design and combining two surveys that were previously conducted separately, True North was able to increase the statistical reliability of the research and conduct the studies in a more cost-effective manner. We also delivered 800 completed interviews, which was 200 more than the contract goal. Contact: Tenille Otero, Communications Officer. 2554 Sweetwater Springs Blvd, Spring Valley, CA 91978: 619.670.2256; totero@otaywater.gov.

Sacramento Municipal Utility District  On an ongoing basis for the past 11 years, True North has served as the Sacramento Municipal Utility District’s primary research consultant for market research. We have designed and conducted dozens of studies for the purposes of measuring customers’ product and service needs, program design/evaluation, profiling customers’ media habits, developing advertising campaigns, and measuring the effectiveness of SMUD’s outreach and communications. Our work for SMUD includes multiple studies each year between 2009-2020, including two active studies (2020). Contact: Anya Suneson, Principal Researcher, 6201 S Street, Sacramento CA 95817: 916.732.6341; Anya.Suneson@smud.org.

Mesa Water District  In 2019, Mesa Water District selected True North through a competitive RFP process to design and conduct the District’s annual customer awareness, brand tracking, and satisfaction surveys. We updated the District’s research to a mixed-method design to improve the overall response rate, reduce response bias, and improve the overall statistical reliability of the study. Contact: Brittany Erdman, Public Affairs Specialist. 1965 Placentia Ave., Costa Mesa CA 92627: 949.207.5436; brittanye@mesawater.org.

Santa Margarita Water District  In 2017, True North assisted the Santa Margarita Water District with research to profile customers’ awareness of water reliability issues facing the District, as well as their support for various programs and initiatives designed to reduce the District’s reliance on imported water and improve the long-term reliability of water services in the area. Contact: Jim Leach, Director of External Affairs. 26111 Antonio Parkway, Rancho Santa Margarita CA 92688: 949.459.6601; jiml@smwd.com.

Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District  In 2017, True North assisted the Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District in designing and conducting a baseline survey of customers who receive water and sewer services, focusing on customer satisfaction with various aspects of the services they receive, the effectiveness of District communications, and how customers prioritize among several strategic opportunities and programs being considered by the District to improve water reliability. Contact: Bonnie Woodrome, Community Affairs Supervisor. 31315 Chaney Street, Lake Elsinore CA 92530: 951.674.3146 xt 8274; bwoodrome@evmwd.net.

City of San Jose—Development Services  True North has assisted the City of San Jose’s Development Services Partners with customer needs/satisfaction research for more than a decade. Each year, the surveys measure and track the Partners’ performance on more than 70 aspects of customer service. Approximately 1,000 customers participate in the survey annually, most of which are developers, architects, contractors, and construction specialists. This survey is administered using multiple recruiting methods (email, telephone and mail) and multiple data collection modes (online and telephone). Contact: Page Benway, Senior Analyst. 200 E. Santa Clara St., San Jose CA 95113: 408.535.7887; page.benway@sanjoseca.gov.
**PROJECT SCHEDULE**

True North will work with the Sweetwater Authority to establish a project schedule that meets the Authority’s needs. Below we present a proposed time line for the project, showing the number of days that we recommend devoting to each stage, as well as the key research tasks that are completed in each stage. We have the availability and resources needed to meet this time line, as well as the flexibility to adjust this schedule, as needed, to best meet the needs of the Authority. Assuming that the study is initiated by September 15, the time line below allows the study to be completed in December—a full month ahead of the schedule listed in the RFP—which means all deliverables will be ready well in advance of the target dates.

**FIGURE 3 PROPOSED PROJECT SCHEDULE**
Cost Proposal

Table 1 presents True North’s **flat-fee, lump sum cost** to design and conduct the residential customer and developer customer surveys as described in this proposal. The costs shown are inclusive—there will be no additional charges for travel, incidentals, meetings, post-project advising, or any other matter. If selected as the Authority’s research partner for this study, our payment terms are simple: we request full payment at the **conclusion** of the study. No interim or up-front payments are needed.

When comparing our costs to those of other bidders, please note that our costs include value-added services that may not be provided by other firms. Our value-added services include:

- Using a **dual recruiting strategy** of telephone calls and email to recruit participation in the surveys to increase the response rate and reduce response bias.
- Using a **mixed-method data collection methodology** that allows sampled respondents the flexibility of participating by telephone or online at a password protected web site according to their preference.
- Guaranteeing a minimum of 600 completed interviews for the residential customer survey and 50 developer customers, but we will likely exceed that amount. Any additional interviews will be provided to the Authority at no additional cost.
- Conducting **statistical significance tests** to identify how customers’ opinions may have changed since the 2015 study, and which changes meet the threshold of statistical significance.
- Providing the **most thorough and insightful report in the industry**. We don’t just report the results—we put the findings into context and explain their meaning based upon related questions in the survey, the Authority’s goals, relevant secondary information, the results of prior surveys, as well as our experience working with other utilities and public agencies on similar studies.

Although some of these services may not be included in the proposals submitted by other bidders (and we could similarly follow suit and offer a lower cost), our experience is that these services are necessary to ensure that the Authority receives statistically reliable survey results and the maximum value for its investment in this study.

**Table 1  Proposed Costs for Recommended Survey Approach**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Labor</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. McLarney</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>$184</td>
<td>$15,272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Sarles</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>$147</td>
<td>$7,056</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct Costs</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Preparation &amp; Matching</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Translation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CATI &amp; Web Programming/Hosting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$39,928</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sweetwater Authority
RATE TABLE  Per the RFP instructions, below we provide a table that lists the rates typically charged by labor classification/task associated with a survey project. Please note that these rates have already been factored into the proposed project costs shown in Table 1 on the prior page.

**Table 2  Rate Table**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Labor</th>
<th>Hourly Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Management</td>
<td></td>
<td>$184</td>
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<tr>
<td>Survey Design</td>
<td></td>
<td>$184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample Design</td>
<td></td>
<td>$184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Processing</td>
<td></td>
<td>$147</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graphics Production</td>
<td></td>
<td>$147</td>
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<tr>
<td>Report Writing</td>
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<td>$184</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td></td>
<td>$184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting/Advising</td>
<td></td>
<td>$184</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXCEPTIONS & ADDENDA

EXCEPTIONS TO RFP & AGREEMENT  True North has carefully reviewed the RFP and the Authority’s Standard Agreement for Services and takes no exceptions to either document. It is worth noting that we carry each of the insurance coverages identified in the RFP with limits that meet or exceed those requested. Although we are not a technology vendor and thus not required to carry Cyber Liability Insurance, we nevertheless carry a $1,000,000 Cyber Liability Insurance policy as well.

ADDENDA  True North contacted Leslie Payne on August 18 to inquire about potential addenda to the RFP. At that time, we were informed that the Authority had yet to receive any questions that required an addendum to the RFP. At the point we submitted this proposal, no addenda had been issued by the Authority.

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT  True North has carefully reviewed the Non-Disclosure/Confidentiality Agreement provided in the RFP and takes no exceptions to the document.
## SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL RANKINGS BY STAFF

2020 Public Opinion Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TOTAL SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>POSSIBLE SCORE</strong></td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive Edge</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeGrave</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probe</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True North</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL RANKINGS BY STAFF

2020 Public Opinion Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualification and Experience of Assigned Personnel (includes all subs)</th>
<th>Experience relevant to the type of work being considered</th>
<th>Proposed Method to Accomplish the Requested Services</th>
<th>References</th>
<th>Ability to complete project within specified schedule</th>
<th>SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>POSSIBLE INDIVIDUAL SCORE</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>POSSIBLE CUMULATIVE SCORE</strong></td>
<td><strong>75</strong></td>
<td><strong>90</strong></td>
<td><strong>75</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>300</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Competitive Edge</td>
<td><strong>Total</strong> 60</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>43</td>
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<tr>
<td>DeGrave</td>
<td><strong>Total</strong> 60</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>41</td>
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<tr>
<td>Probe</td>
<td><strong>Total</strong> 75</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True North</td>
<td><strong>Total</strong> 75</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2020 Public Opinion Survey