



OFFICE OF MAYOR & CITY MANAGER

**DATE:** March 20, 2025

**TO:** GEORGEANNE A. WHITE, City Manager  
City Manager's Office

**FROM:** JOHN ELLIS, Government Affairs Manager

**SUBJECT: UNIQUELY QUALIFIED CONSULTANT CONTRACT FOR PROFESSIONAL LOBBYING AND LEGISLATIVE SERVICES IN WASHINGTON D.C. BY COVINO SMITH & SIMON, INC.**

The purpose of this memorandum is to request authorization to dispense with the City's standard Request for Proposal (RFP) process for consultants, set forth in Administrative Order 6-10, so that the Office of the Mayor and City Manager (Departments) may ask Council to award a consulting contract to Covino Smith & Simon, Inc., as a uniquely qualified consultant to provide assistance in legislative affairs, intergovernmental relations, grants and program development, and other lobbying services at the federal level in Washington D.C.

The existing contract with Covino Smith & Simon will expire on April 20, 2025, and no additional extensions remain. In January 2024, Covino Smith & Simon rebranded itself, but in ownership and staffing remains Simon and Company, the firm that has represented the City of Fresno (City) at the federal level for more than two decades.

For multiple reasons, this long-standing relationship has proven extremely beneficial. First and foremost, the firm's work with several City departments across multiple mayoral administrations and through numerous council changes that have reflected an array of policy and priority changes have given it a deep understanding of the City's various needs and challenges. Intrinsically knowing this diverse and challenging city is vital when needs arise that require quick pivots and strategy adjustments that can make or break a hastily scheduled federal meeting or a grant application worth potentially millions of dollars.

Understanding internal City operations in the various City departments is key to our success on the federal level, because it allows Covino Smith & Simon to make appropriate recommendations, provide customized grants guidance, and know which federal official in which federal department would be best to advance a City priority. This knowledge repository is akin to long-time City employees working together and is more important than ever during these fast-changing and uncertain times in the nation's capital, where both priorities and players can change on a moment's notice. Additionally, Covino Smith & Simon represent other California municipalities and agencies – including here in the Central Valley, where federal-level priorities oftentimes align due to the unique challenges and opportunities of this region. It also represents other cities nationwide and has developed a close working relationship with key nongovernmental organizations such as the U.S. Conference of Mayors, which gives Fresno an additional avenue of insight as well as a national platform to highlight the City. The firm's

close relationship with the leadership of such organizations has given the City incalculable benefits over the years and will continue to do so moving forward.

Taken together, this long deep knowledge of Fresno's unique needs, combined with federal government connections across various agencies and with both major political parties, as well as outside non-governmental entities, has been an ongoing recipe for the City's success at the federal level.

It has meant successfully assisting the City in securing millions in federal appropriations, keeping various City officials informed of funding opportunities through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, ARPA, and other federal government initiatives, and helping advance critical discussions involving major transportation upgrades such as the Veterans Boulevard-State Route 99 interchange, public safety needs such as police and fire staffing, and badly needed Fresno Yosemite International Airport improvements. Also – as it has during past administration changes – Covino Smith & Simon's guidance is proving invaluable as we adjust to a new presidential administration with new priorities and initiatives. A recent example includes Covino Smith & Simon overhearing a member of the Intergovernmental Affairs Office at the White House state that they were not pleased with the position Fresno had taken on immigration. The representative, without missing a beat, was able to explain that the firm represents the City of Fresno and promptly addressed the matter at hand, demonstrating a first-hand knowledge of complicated Department of Justice matters and compliance, and being able to firmly state the policy position that Fresno has had for over a decade. This level of institutional knowledge is invaluable.

Doubtless other firms perform similar services, but none could match Covino Smith & Simon's knowledge base of the City and its needs, as well as long-established working relationships with leaders and rank-and-file staffers across multiple departments in California's fifth-largest city.

As such, the Departments find Covino Smith & Simon uniquely qualified for professional lobbying and legislative services and seek to forego the RFP process set forth in Administrative Order 6-19.

If you have any additional questions, or require additional information and data, please do not hesitate to contact me at 559-621-7902.

 ☒ Approved ☐ Denied

  
Georgeanne A. White, City Manager