
Setting the Standard in Health Care Excellence

May 21, 2024

Board of Supervisors
County of Ventura
800 South Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

Subject: Presentation of the County of Ventura Ambulance Request for Proposal for an Exclusive Emergency Ground Ambulance Transport and Related Medical Services Provider and Approval of Proposed Evaluation Committee Composition for Request for Proposal Rating and Scoring.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that your Board:

1. Receive a presentation of the County of Ventura Ambulance Request for Proposal for an exclusive emergency ground ambulance transport and related medical services provider for review, comment, and direction.
2. Approve the proposed Evaluation Committee composition for Request for Proposal rating and scoring.

Fiscal/Mandates Impact:**Mandatory:** Yes**Authority:** Health and Safety Code Sections 1797 et seq.**Source of Funding:** Medi-Cal, Medicare, Private Insurance, Self-Pay**Funding Match Required:** None**Impact on Other Departments:** None**Summary of Revenues and Costs:**

	<u>FY 2023-24*</u>	<u>FY 2024-25*</u>
Revenue:	\$ -0-	\$ -0-
Costs:		
Direct	\$ -0-	\$ -0-
Indirect-Dept.	\$ -0-	\$ -0-
Total Costs	\$ -0-	\$ -0-
Net Costs	\$ -0-	\$ -0-

*Expenditures and Revenue associated with these contracts are incurred directly by the ambulance providers and will not impact the Ventura County Emergency Medical Services Agency (Ventura County EMS).

FY2023-24 Budget:

FY 2023-24 Current Budget for HCA Division 3090 HCA Emergency Medical Services				
	Adopted Budget	Adjusted Budget	Projected Actuals	Estimated Savings/(Deficit)
Appropriations	\$5,952,292	\$6,861,306	\$6,767,492	\$93,814
Revenue	\$4,859,228	\$5,487,872	\$5,445,584	(\$42,288)
Net Cost	\$1,093,064	\$1,373,434	\$1,321,908	\$51,526

Strategic Plan Priority:

The item presented in this Board letter aligns with the Healthy, Safe, and Resilient Communities strategic priority of the County Strategic Plan as it is designed to meet the goal of providing equitable and timely access to quality public health services.

Discussion:

The Ventura County Emergency Medical Services Agency (Ventura County EMS), a division of the Health Care Agency (HCA) and Public Health Department, oversees the provision of ambulance services for the entire County. While Ventura County EMS has maintained successful partnerships with our local private ambulance providers for over four decades, the ambulance industry has changed rapidly in recent years. On July 26, 2022, your Board was presented a comprehensive review of the ambulance system and your Board supported the recommendation to discontinue the perpetual renewal of the existing contracted providers and directed the department to develop a competitive procurement process for all future contract awards for emergency ground ambulance transport services.

To assist in developing a competitive procurement process, an industry consultant was secured, Healthcare Strategists, Inc. and an Ambulance Contract Steering Committee consisting of representatives from the County Executive Office, Sheriff's OES, Medical Director EMS, Hospital Association of Southern California, Medical Examiner's Office, Behavioral Health Department, and Public Health Department was created to provide feedback and policy level guidance. Healthcare Strategists, Inc. has worked with numerous government agencies across the nation to evaluate and enhance ambulance service delivery systems. The resulting product from Healthcare Strategists, Inc. and the Steering Committee was the development of a Request for Proposal (RFP) that offers a fair and competitive process to solicit vendor(s) for the County's ambulance transport system. The newly developed RFP provides for a clearly defined scope of work with

measurable goals and promotes transparency and accountability by maintaining good governance and promoting quality patient care, aligning with the County's mission of serving our community equitably.

The analysis and the development of the RFP was performed over a seven (7) month period engaging with various stakeholders and the Ambulance Contract Steering Committee. The resulting product modernizes the ambulance system's operating structure and practices consistent with current industry practices. The newly developed RFP and ambulance system design was provided to the California Emergency Medical Services Authority (EMSA) for approval as required under State law. Some key components of the RFP and ambulance system design include:

- Consolidating the current model of seven (7) exclusive operating areas to one (1) countywide exclusive operating area;
- Creates ten (10) subzones to ensure equitable ambulance coverage across communities;
- Contract term of five (5) years with an option for one (1) additional five (5) year period based on performance;
- Requires 90% compliance for the entire Exclusive Operating Area (EOA), and requires 85% compliance for each of the subzones, on a monthly basis;
- Maintains response time standards and defines outlier calls in all zones;
- Include Advanced Life Support (ALS) inter-facility transports;
- Update liquidated damages for non-compliance of contract provisions;
- Remove subsidy for low-population areas due to consolidation to one exclusive operating area;
- Remove helicopter subsidy;
- Require use of standardized Patient Care Reports to maintain compliance;
- Transition response time incentives to clinical incentives (clinical care benchmarks are proven to impact patient care);
- Reduced use of response time exemptions;
- Update vehicle mileage cap to maximize efficient use of fleet vehicles;
- Implement recurring audit of financials at local agency level and parent organization level (to ensure financial health of system);
- Incorporates fees to provide sustainability and cost recovery for LEMSA oversight, ambulance dispatch and first responder advanced life support (ALS) services;
- Require workload policies to prevent workforce fatigue;
- Require field-based supervision with 24-hour and additional peak time coverage 7 days per week;
- Update management of medical supplies and medications to ensure adequate inventory is available.

The RFP evaluation process proposes a scoring criterion that weights scores based on contract provisions such as commitment to clinical quality and innovation, response times, equipment maintenance, billing, data management, etc. An Evaluation Committee of raters will be formed to rate and score the RFP. We are recommending to your Board

that this committee be comprised of six (6) raters: four (4) which may include representatives from diverse stakeholders including the County Executive Office, Auditor-Controller, an emergency medicine physician, a representative from a hospital association; and two (2) emergency medical services industry experts.

The overall ambulance system design and performance requirements strive to ensure and result in equitable ambulance coverage across all communities within Ventura County. The RFP will prioritize high-quality clinical care to improve health outcomes, provide consistent and cost-effective ambulance coverage, and ensure continued compliance with contractually required response times. The RFP continues the highly successful regional ambulance dispatching model through the Ventura County Fire Department's Fire Communications Center and continues and encourages expansion of first responder agency coordination, including first responder advanced life support agreements.

The final RFP recommendations from Healthcare Strategists, Inc. were reviewed by HCA and the Ambulance Contract Steering Committee prior to State review. In accordance with California Health and Safety Code Section 1797.224 the RFP was submitted for approval to EMSA and approved on April 15, 2024. State EMSA has ultimate oversight over the design and RFP requirements and as a result, any additional changes or input to the RFP would require a resubmission for State approval. Minor modifications, such as dates and clarification may not require a complete resubmission.

Public Health – EMS as the sponsor of the RFP will work with General Services Agency's Procurement team to launch the procurement in early June with the anticipation of proposal reviews being conducted in September. It is anticipated that an award could be announced by January 2025 allowing for a transition period of 6-months with a commencement date of July 1, 2025.

This letter has been reviewed by County Counsel, the Auditor-Controller's Office, General Services Agency Procurement and County Executive Office. If you have any questions regarding this item, please call Steve Carroll at (805) 981-5305.


RIGOBERTO VARGAS
Public Health Director


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Health Care Agency Director

Exhibit 1 – Ambulance Services Request for Proposal