



COUNTY of VENTURA

MELISSA LIVINGSTON
Director

May 14, 2024

HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

855 Partridge Drive
Ventura, CA 93003
805-477-5100

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

JENNIE PITTMAN
Deputy Director
Administrative Services

VICTORIA JUMP
Deputy Director
Aging & Disability Services

Subject: Approval of, and Authorization for the Human Services Agency Director or Purchasing Agent to Sign, a Contract with Arbor E&T, LLC, dba Equus Workforce Solutions, Effective June 1, 2024, through March 31, 2026, in an Amount Not-to-Exceed \$600,500 for Sowing Seeds of Success, A Farmworker Advancement Program; Authorization for the Human Services Agency Director or Purchasing Agent to Approve and Sign Limited Contract Modifications Upon Certain Conditions; and Authorization for the Auditor Controller to Process Any Necessary Accounting Transactions. (Recommendation #3 Requires 4/5ths Vote.)

DAVID SWANSON HOLLINGER
Deputy Director
Children & Family Services

MARISSA MACH
Deputy Director
Community Access & Engagement

ELAINE MARTINEZ
Deputy Director
Community Services

Recommendations:

1. Approve, and authorize the Human Services Agency (HSA) Director, or Purchasing Agent, or designee, to sign, a contract with Arbor E&T, LLC, dba Equus Workforce Solutions (Equus), effective June 1, 2024, through March 31, 2026, in an amount not-to-exceed \$600,500 for the Sowing Seeds of Success, A Farmworker Advancement Program, to provide language and literacy training and skills development to 225 members of Ventura County's farmworker community who are 18 years of age or older (Exhibit 1.)
2. Authorize the HSA Director, Purchasing Agent, or designee, to approve and sign limited contract modifications to (a) increase the amount of the contract up to 10%, (b) decrease the amount of the contract by any amount, or cancel the contract due to funding limitations or other circumstances allowable per contract terms, (c) extend the time of performance up to six months, or to the length that matches the grantor's extension, and (d) make budget modifications, corrections, clarifications and technical changes, when the changes are consistent with the original purpose of the contract, subject to County Executive Office and County Counsel review and approval.

3. Authorize the Auditor Controller to process the accounting transactions necessary to establish increased appropriations and additional revenue as follows (requires 4/5ths vote):

Workforce Development – Division 3450

INCREASE 3450-3452	Services and Supplies	\$600,500
INCREASE 3450-3452	Intergovernmental Revenue	\$600,500

Fiscal/Mandates Impact:

Mandatory:	No
Source of Funding:	Federal (Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act)
Funding Match Required:	No
Impact on other Departments:	None

Summary of Revenue and Costs:

	<u>FY 2023-24</u>	<u>FY 2024-25</u>
Revenue:		
Direct	\$27,000	\$327,500
Total Revenue	\$27,000	\$327,500
Costs:		
Direct	\$27,000	\$327,500
Indirect	Minimal	Minimal
Total Costs	\$27,000	\$327,500
Net County Cost	\$0	\$0

There is no net County cost associated with this item. The Sowing Seeds of Success program is funded through a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) grant. In addition to the amounts shown above, it is estimated that \$246,000 in revenue and appropriations will be realized in FY 2025-26.

FY 2023-24 Budget for HSA Workforce Development – Div. 3450				
	Adopted Budget	Adjusted Budget	Projected Budget	Estimated Savings/(Deficit)
Appropriations	\$10,047,682	\$13,736,090	\$12,991,610	\$744,480
Revenue	\$10,047,682	\$11,347,682	\$12,991,610	\$1,643,928
Net Cost	\$0	\$2,388,408	\$0	\$2,388,408

Discussion:

California is a global leader in agriculture with 24 million acres in operation which generates over one-third of the nation's produce and almost three-quarters of the country's fruits and nuts. Ventura County is a \$2 billion-a-year agricultural industry, with approximately 41,600 farmworkers tending to 97,000 crop-producing acres of land. Despite the agricultural industry's scale and importance, some members of its workforce are not well positioned to

secure living-wage employment. In Ventura County, an estimated 88% of farmworkers do not have a high school diploma, and nearly half primarily speak Indigenous languages. This combination of limited educational attainment and limited proficiency in English (as well as Spanish in many cases) can hamper the ability of farmworkers to pursue career advancement. As stated in the Ventura County Civic Alliance's 2023 State of the Region Report, the average salary of a farmworker in Ventura County is \$39,828.

Sowing Seeds of Success, A Farmworker Advancement Program will help to build a more resilient workforce and prepare farmworkers for a brighter future within agriculture and beyond. Equus will work alongside the Workforce Development Board of Ventura County (WDBVC), HSA's Farmworker Resource Program, and the Center for Employment Training to provide language and literacy training and skills development to 225 members of Ventura County's farmworker community who are 18 years of age or older to help them either advance within the agricultural industry, or prepare for employment outside of the agricultural industry in other leading sectors that pay family-sustaining wages, provide benefits, and offer opportunities for career advancement. Equus will hire Employment Navigators who are fluent in English, Spanish, Mixteco and other languages for local coordination, case management and wrap-around services. The Navigators will: (a) conduct targeted outreach aimed at local, seasonal, migrant and Indigenous farmworkers; (b) provide personalized career counseling and guidance to help farmworkers identify their transferable skills, explore career pathways and develop career goals; (c) connect farmworkers to available and applicable training resources, including, but not limited to, development of language skills, knowledge of agricultural practices and new technologies, understanding of machinery and equipment operations, use of online learning tools, and development of soft-skills such as problem-solving, teamwork and adaptability; and (d) assist with navigating career transitions and advancements. Additionally, Equus is committed to establishing strong ties with community organizations to provide ongoing support, networking opportunities, and access to resources that can help address the needs of farmworkers to bolster long-term employment stability, retention and growth. Upskilling farmworkers in literacy, language and job skills can unlock a wealth of transferable skills that can be applied to advanced roles within the agriculture industry or adjacent sectors.

We ask your Board to approve, and authorize the HSA Director or Purchasing Agent to sign, the contract with Equus, and authorize the HSA Director or Purchasing Agent to approve and sign limited contract modifications as detailed in recommendation two. We also ask your Board to authorize the Auditor Controller to process the necessary accounting transactions detailed in recommendation three (requires 4/5ths vote.)

Strategic Plan:

The Sowing Seeds of Success program contributes to the Board of Supervisors' 2024-2027 Strategic Plan priority of 'Fiscal Responsibility and Economic Vitality', Goal (2) Foster a thriving business ecosystem to create jobs, increase wages, and strengthen the local economy.

This item has been reviewed by the County Executive Office, the Auditor-Controller's Office, the County Purchasing Agent and County Counsel. If you have any questions, please

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contact me at 805-477-5301, or Rebecca Evans, WDBVC Executive Director, at 805-477-5306.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melissa Livingston". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Melissa Livingston
Director

Attachment:
Exhibit 1 – Equus Sowing Seeds of Success Contract