

CITY OF PALM DESERT STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: November 13, 2025

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SUBJECT: REJECT ALL PROPOSALS SUBMITTED UNDER REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL 2024-RFP-149, PALM DESERT AQUATIC CENTER MARKETING SERVICES.

RECOMMENDATION:

Reject all proposals submitted under Request for Proposal 2024-RFP-149 for Palm Desert Aquatic Center Marketing Services.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

The Palm Desert Aquatic Center (PDAC), owned by the City and operated in partnership with The Family YMCA of the Desert (YMCA), serves residents and visitors year-round as a regional hub for aquatic programming and recreation. Effective marketing is essential to maintain and grow engagement at the facility, promote programs, communicate seasonal changes, and support revenue-generating services.

The City of Palm Desert has traditionally relied on professional marketing firms to manage marketing functions rather than expanding City staff. With the current marketing contract set to expire on June 30, 2025, the City, in partnership with the YMCA issued Request for Proposal (RFP) No. 2024-RFP-149 on May 7, 2025, seeking a qualified firm to provide comprehensive marketing services for PDAC. The RFP outlined a broad scope of work, including branding, advertising, content creation, and digital strategy.

By the June 11, 2025, submission deadline, the City received 27 proposals. Due to the high volume of responses, the evaluation process extended beyond the original schedule. To ensure continuity of service during peak season, the City Council previously authorized a temporary three-month contract extension with the incumbent firm, FG Creative, in the amount of \$36,600.

A selection committee comprised of staff from the YMCA, Public Works, and Public Affairs evaluated the proposals based on standard criteria including clarity and completeness, qualifications and experience, references, cost, and staffing plans. Following interviews with four finalist firms, staff identified an opportunity to realign marketing responsibilities in a manner that better integrates with the facility's daily operations. Based on this evaluation, staff determined that a modified approach, assigning primary marketing responsibility to the YMCA as facility operator, would better support coordination, responsiveness, and long-term program success.

As PDAC’s operator, the YMCA is deeply familiar with the facility’s programming, customer base, and role in the community. Shifting marketing responsibilities to the YMCA is expected to yield the following benefits:

- Greater operational efficiency
- Elimination of duplicative agency and production costs
- Alignment with the YMCA’s in-house marketing capabilities and community relationships
- Shared strategic goals and local market expertise
- A streamlined, cost-effective approach that upholds the City’s commitment to fiscal responsibility

The City will continue to support and monitor the YMCA’s marketing efforts to ensure consistent quality, messaging, and performance.

Legal Review:

This report has been reviewed by the City Attorney’s Office.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Funding for marketing services at the Palm Desert Aquatic Center is included in the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 operating budget. Of the \$100,000 originally budgeted for PDAC marketing in FY 2025/2026, \$63,400 remains unencumbered. Of that amount, the City would allocate \$40,000 to support media buys coordinated by The Family YMCA of the Desert as part of their marketing efforts on behalf of the facility. This approach preserves public investment in outreach while leveraging the YMCA’s in-house capabilities to reduce production and agency costs. No additional appropriation is required.