

CITY OF PALM DESERT STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: August 24, 2023

PREPARED BY: Thomas Soule, Public Affairs Manager

REQUEST: APPROVE OUT-OF-STATE TRAVEL FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS MANAGER
FOR STRATEGIC MARKETING PLANNING IN AUSTIN, TX

RECOMMENDATION:

Authorize out-of-state travel for the Public Affairs Manager to travel to Austin, TX, for an in-depth strategic planning session with the City's creative agency, Idea Peddler.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

Each year, the Public Affairs Manager meets for several days with the City's creative agency to strategically plan the City's tourism ad campaign and marketing approach for the fiscal year. In the past, one or two team members from the agency have traveled to Palm Desert for these meetings.

The team working on the City's account has now grown much larger to accommodate an expanded scope of work. The agency's contract with the City includes funds for travel, but it seemed imprudent to use those funds to bring five or more people to Palm Desert to meet with one staff member. Instead, staff seeks authorization to send the Public Affairs Manager to Austin to meet with the entire Idea Peddler team. The cost of sending one staff member to Austin is approximately \$1,300, versus the cost of bringing five Idea Peddler team members to Palm Desert, which would be more than \$6,000.

We understand that virtual meetings have advantages such as convenience, cost savings, and the ability to connect remote team members. This works well in our weekly meetings throughout the year as we monitor the status of the many projects that go into the City's marketing program.

And because collaborative brainstorming sessions often thrive in a physical setting, we've found that our initial planning meetings are much more successful and efficient face-to-face. Whiteboard sessions, sticky notes, and visual aids are more effective in person, enabling the team to map out complex strategies visually. In-person meetings also offer opportunities for team building beyond just the task at hand, which helps lay a solid foundation for working well together remotely for the rest of the year.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Travel costs have been budgeted as part of the Idea Peddler contract as outlined above.