Board of Administration

Agenda Item 8c

September 17, 2025

Item Name: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Board Consultant RFP – Selection of Finalists for Interviews

Program: DEI Office

Item Type: Action

Recommendation

Staff recommends the Board of Administration select the following firms to continue in the evaluation process and appear before the Board for interviews:

The Nova Collective
BCT Partners
Chanin Kelly-Rae Consulting
Ferdman Consulting
Kerry Mitchell Brown
Sage 71

Executive Summary

At the direction of the Board, CalPERS issued a request for proposal (RFP) to engage a DEI Consultant to assess gaps in existing policies and programs and identify opportunities for improvement. Staff have completed the initial scoring process and are presenting this agenda item to the Board to finalize the scoring and determine which firms shall continue in the evaluation process and appear for interviews.

Strategic Plan

This agenda item supports the CalPERS 2022-2027 Strategic Goal: “Cultivate a diverse, risk intelligent, and innovative culture through our team and processes.”

Background

CalPERS is committed to improving the financial and health security of our members and their families. An important part of this commitment is fostering an inclusive culture that values diverse perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds.

In 2021, CalPERS introduced a DEI Framework to support efforts aimed at fostering a more inclusive and equitable workplace. The Framework provides guidance for initiatives that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Framework is organized around five priority areas, each with a defined goal:

Culture

Goal: Bring DEI best practices into CalPERS' culture

Talent Management

Goal: A high performing, equitable, and diverse workforce

Health Equity

Goal: Equitable health outcomes for members and their families

Supplier Diversity

Goal: High Performing Supplier Diversity Program

Investments

Goal: Leverage the DEI Framework and Sustainable Investments Program to improve investment outcomes

Three years after the Framework's development is an appropriate time to evaluate progress, identify gaps, and highlight new opportunities. The evolving landscape around diversity, equity, and inclusion also provides an opportunity to review current trends and best practices.

Analysis

CalPERS issued the RFP on May 16, 2025. A total of 36 firms submitted proposals by the deadline of June 30, 2025. Of those, 10 firms were disqualified for not meeting minimum qualifications or being unresponsive to a CalPERS clarification request. The remaining 26 firms advanced to the technical evaluation phase, where they were provisionally scored on experience, demonstrated DEI expertise, and the quality of their proposals against the services outlined in Attachment 1.

A maximum of 500 points[1] was available across three categories:

- **Information Gathering** – Experience conducting assessments, engaging with boards and executive leadership, and producing reports and findings (120 points).
- **Advisory Services** – Expertise in advising on DEI best practices in procurement, hiring, health care equity, investment industry diversity, and compliance with federal and state law (220 points).
- **Strategy & Deliverables** – Experience in DEI education and training, best-practice research, development of action plans, and communication strategies (160 points).

The following firms received the most points during the evaluation team's scoring of the technical proposals:

[1] While a 500-point framework was used for purposes of ranking proposals, the technical evaluation phase is pass/fail. None of these points will be utilized in determining which Finalist is ultimately awarded a contract.

Firm	Total Points
The Nova Collective	439
BCT Partners	437
Chanin Kelly-Rae Consulting LLC	427
Ferdman Consulting	426
Kerry Mitchell Brown, LLC	414
Sage 71 LLC	409

Budget and Fiscal Impacts

If the Board approves moving these firms to the next phase, staff will open and score fee proposals and provide the results, including any applicable incentive points, at the time of interviews. The anticipated contract term is from January 1, 2026, through December 31, 2028, with an optional two-year extension.

Benefits and Risks

Interviewing the top-scoring firms supports the Board's objectives to advance the DEI Framework and reinforces CalPERS' ongoing commitment to an inclusive culture that values diversity of thought, experience, and background.

Choosing not to proceed with interviews could limit CalPERS' ability to remain aligned with DEI best practices, adapt to evolving trends, and achieve the Framework's goals.

Attachments

Attachment 1 – Services to be Provided

Attachment 2 – Proposed Technical Evaluation Scores

Attachment 3 – Technical Proposals

____

Brad W. Pacheco
Deputy Executive Officer
Communications & Stakeholder Relations

____

Doug Hoffner
Chief Operating Officer

____

Marcie Frost
Chief Executive Officer