San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission
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TO: Commissioners and Alternates

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SUBJECT: **Staff Recommendation to Enter into a Contract with Catalyst to Provide Strategic Planning Services**
(For Commission consideration on November 5, 2026)

Summary and Recommendation

BCDC's current Strategic Plan was developed in 2023 and established the goals and objectives of BCDC through 2026. A new strategic plan is needed to guide the agency through the end of the decade. Staff recommend that the Commission authorize its Executive Director to enter into a contract for up to $100,000 with The Catalyst Group to create a new BCDC Strategic Plan establishing the goals and objectives of BCDC through 2030 and associated workplan. The staff further recommends that the Commission authorize the Executive Director to amend the contract as necessary, including revising the amount or duration of the agreement, so long as the amendment does not change the amount by more than ten percent or involve substantial changes to the services provided.

Staff Report

Background

Established in 1965, the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) is an independent state commission within the California Natural Resources Agency. BCDC's mission is to protect and enhance San Francisco Bay and advance its responsible, productive, and equitable use for current and future generations. BCDC's regulatory and planning responsibilities extend across the Bay and the nine-county shoreline, guided by the McAteer-Petris Act, the Suisun Marsh Preservation Act, the San Francisco Bay Plan, and other BCDC laws and policies. BCDC also administers its federally recognized Coastal Management Program within San Francisco Bay pursuant to the Coastal Zone Management Act.

As development pressures and climate risks have grown, BCDC continues to ensure that regulatory, planning, and enforcement responsibilities respond to new challenges. In 2011, BCDC established the nation's first regulatory requirement for project applicants to assess sea-level-rise impacts through 2100. A few years later, BCDC created its first Enforcement Program, which now also includes a compliance team intended to support permitholders in complying with their permit responsibilities. In 2023, Senate Bill 272 was signed into law, requiring local governments within BCDC's jurisdiction to develop a sea level rise plan in compliance with the guidelines set forth in BCDC's Regional Shoreline Adaptation Plan (RSAP) for BCDC approval by January 1, 2034. These initiatives build on more than a decade of regional leadership in sea-level-rise adaptation.

BCDC's responsibilities and workload have grown substantially, with staffing reaching approximately 65 employees—an increase of about 33 percent over six years—without a comparable increase in Operations and Technology capacity. Concurrently, stakeholders are calling for more effective and efficient implementation of BCDC's policies. Although the agency has made progress through the creation and implementation of its regulatory roadmap and process improvements, implementing SB 272 and the RSAP will require new and sustained coordination across Planning, Regulatory, Legal, and Operations and Technology teams, as well as collaboration with local governments, regional partners, and frontline communities, while BCDC's permitting and enforcement responsibilities will continue to grow, as well.

BCDC adopted its current Strategic Plan in 2023, which has guided the agency's work through 2026. Given its expanding responsibilities, evolving organizational needs, and the need for more transformative policy decisions given the increasing threats of climate change overall and rising sea levels in particular, the Commission has determined that a new Strategic Plan—not simply an update—is needed to establish clear goals, priorities, and implementation strategies through 2030.

Purpose

The purpose of this contract is to create a new three- to four-year BCDC Strategic Plan based upon both what the Commission has learned during the past few years as its responsibilities and workload have grown, and how the Commission foresees the need for policy changes based upon an uncertain future.

The selected consultant, Catalyst, will organize the project around seven tasks completed over six months. The process is structured around three decision-focused Commissioner Working Group meetings, three Senior Staff workshops, one public workshop, regular Client Team coordination meetings, targeted staff working sessions, and stakeholder engagement.

Each Commissioner Working Group meeting will be designed around a specific strategic decision, allowing Commissioners to focus on key policy choices while staff and the consultant team develop and refine recommendations between meetings. Senior Staff workshops provide opportunities to review findings, test implementation strategies, and ensure that the Strategic Plan reflects the realities of day-to-day operations.

Summary of Tasks

TASK 1 - **PROJECT INITIATION AND SHARED UNDERSTANDING:** Launch the project by establishing a common understanding of the project objectives, reviewing implementation of the current Strategic Plan, and confirming how lessons learned will inform development of the next Strategic Plan.

TASK 2 - SITUATION ASSESSMENT AND LESSONS LEARNED: Develop a concise Situation Assessment that builds upon the current Strategic Plan by understanding what has worked well, what has changed, and what should evolve during the next planning period.

TASK 3 - STRATEGIC DIRECTION: Develop a strategic framework that reflects BCDC's evolving role, establishes clear priorities, and guides future decision-making.

TASK 4 - GOALS, PRIORITIES, AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES: Translate the strategic framework into measurable goals, objectives, priority actions, and practical implementation approaches.

TASK 5 - IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK AND PERFORMANCE TOOLS: Develop a practical framework that helps integrate the Strategic Plan into day-to-day work and provides meaningful tools for measuring progress and communicating results.

TASK 6 - **STRATEGIC PLAN REFINEMENT:** Prepare and refine the Strategic Plan and implementation framework through iterative review by staff and Commissioners.

TASK 7 - **COMMISSION ADOPTION** Finalize the Strategic Plan and implementation framework and support Commission adoption.

Selection Process

BCDC issued an RFP solicitation on April 24, 2026, with a deadline of May 8, 2026. BCDC received twelve complete proposals and conducted an initial review. BCDC issued a revised RFP on June 10, 2026, with a deadline of July 3, 2026. BCDC received eleven complete proposals, and five consultant teams were selected for interviews on September 28, 2026. All proposals were scored and the highest scoring proposal was selected. The Notice of Intent to Award was posted October 19, 2026, and finalized October 26, 2026, after a five-day public notice. Funding for this amended scope of work is provided through BCDC's General Fund. The contract period is December 1, 2026, through December 31, 2027, and is contingent on approval by the Department of General Services.

About Catalyst

The Catalyst Group is a consulting firm that focuses on regional and statewide initiatives involving climate adaptation, shoreline resilience, watershed management, environmental restoration, infrastructure planning, and collaborative governance throughout California. Founded in 2010 and based in San Rafael, CA, Catalyst is a California-certified Small (Micro) Business (#1568900). It specializes in projects that require alignment among multiple jurisdictions, diverse interests, and complex technical issues to support effective decision-making and long-term implementation. Its approach combines strategic planning, facilitation, stakeholder engagement, governance, communications, and performance management into an integrated process that builds ownership, supports informed decision-making, and strengthens accountability. Catalyst will also be serving as BCDC's consultant for developing a Bay Adapt Strategy and Implementation Coordination Group facilitator. Staff believe that this combination will serve the agency well in developing a cohesive and coordinated approach.

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Commission authorize its Executive Director to enter into a contract for up to $100,000 with The Catalyst Group to create a new BCDC Strategic Plan and associated workplan. The staff further recommends that the Commission authorize the Executive Director to amend the contract as necessary, including revising the amount or duration of the agreement, so long as the amendment does not change the amount by more than ten percent or involve substantial changes to the services provided.