



Office of the City Manager

CONSENT CALENDAR
September 29, 2026

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Paul Buddenhagen, City Manager

Submitted by: Jennifer Louis, Chief of Police

Subject: Contract No. 32400003 Amendment for Cooke & Associates Background Investigations

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution authorizing the City Manager to execute a contract amendment with Cooke & Associates, a background investigation services provider for public safety personnel, to increase the contract amount by \$350,000 to a total contract of \$930,000 expiring on July 31, 2028.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Funds for this contract in FY 2027 & FY2028 are allocated in the following budget codes:

- Berkeley Police Department special fund:126-71-702-805-0000-000-421-612990-
- Berkeley Fire Department: Measure FF 164-72-742-831-0000-000-422-612990-

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The ability to conduct background investigations quickly and thoroughly is critical for filling vacancies in public safety positions. Delays in hiring lead to extended vacancies, increased workload on current staff, and reduced service capacity. Cooke & Associates has consistently delivered high-quality, efficient investigations that support timely hiring decisions.

Both BPD and BFD continue to experience staffing shortages and face a competitive hiring landscape. The existing contract with Cooke & Associates has enabled both departments to process more applicants, particularly for urgent roles such as police officers, dispatchers, and firefighter/paramedics. This ensures we can identify and select the most qualified candidates.

As the expiration of this contract will mark five years from the original contract award, staff will conduct a competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process for background investigation services before contract expiration to ensure compliance with the City's procurement process.

This amendment will allow the Berkeley Police Department (BPD) and Berkeley Fire Department (BFD) to continue utilizing Cooke & Associates for timely, thorough, and high-quality background investigations of candidates, and will provide the City Manager with the authority to spend funds as needed under the amended contract to support ongoing public safety hiring needs.

BACKGROUND

Cooke & Associates has been a trusted vendor for the City of Berkeley, providing detailed, timely, and POST-compliant background investigations. They have demonstrated strong communication, flexibility, and responsiveness to department needs, especially during high-volume recruitment periods.

Their services have helped both BPD and BFD avoid delays in academy enrollments and onboarding processes. The proposed amendment will ensure continued support as the Berkeley Police and Fire Departments continue to address ongoing staffing needs and recruit qualified public safety personnel.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

No identifiable environmental effects or opportunities are associated with this report's subject.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Cooke & Associates has a proven track record with the City of Berkeley. Their investigative work supports effective public safety hiring by ensuring thorough candidate vetting. The additional funding will support ongoing hiring efforts and help the City meet current and future staffing demands.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

Relying solely on internal staff for all background investigations would extend hiring timelines and reduce capacity during peak hiring periods. Additionally, current staffing levels would require much of this internal work to be performed on overtime, making outsourcing this work the more fiscally responsible approach.

CONTACT PERSON

Administrative Lieutenant, Berkeley Police Department, 510-981-5970

Attachments:

1. Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. ##,### N.S.

**CONTRACT NO. 32400003 AMENDMENT: FOR BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION
SERVICES FOR PUBLIC SAFETY PERSONNEL**

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley continues to face critical public safety staffing needs;
and

WHEREAS, timely and comprehensive background investigations are essential to hiring
qualified personnel in law enforcement and fire services; and

WHEREAS, Cooke & Associates has provided the City of Berkeley with professional
and reliable background investigation services that meet POST standards; and

WHEREAS, the City's existing contract and authorized pursuant to Resolution Number.
71,776-N.S. with Cooke & Associates needs to be amended to provide additional
funding to support continued services for the Berkeley Police Department and Berkeley
Fire Department; and

WHEREAS, funds for this contract amendment have been allocated in the following
budget codes:

- Berkeley Police Department special fund: 126-71-702-805-0000-000-421-612990
- Berkeley Fire Department: Measure FF 164-72-742-831-0000-000-422-612990

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that the
City Manager is hereby authorized to execute an amendment to the existing contract
with Cooke & Associates for background investigation services, increasing the contract
by \$350,000, for a total not-to-exceed amount of \$930,000 through the previously
adopted expiration date of July 31, 2028.

