

STATE BOARD FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION

September 8, 2021

TOPIC: Spending Authority Approval for Media Planning and Buying Contract

PRESENTED BY: Andrew R. Dorsey, President

RELATIONSHIP TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN: Goal 4: Refine our value proposition through accessibility, affordability, quality, accountability, resource development, and operational excellence.

TOPIC: Approval of spending authority for media planning and buying services, Front Range Community College

EXPLANATION:

Front Range Community College seeks spending authority approval of \$2.4 million to enter into up to three annual contracts for up to \$800,000 each with Thayer Media, a media planning/buying agency, for FY22, FY23, and FY24 enrollment marketing campaigns. The contracts will cover the cost for general media and paid search planning, media buying, placement, reporting and performance evaluation, and vendor billing and payment.

In June 2021, Front Range Community College released a request for proposal (#FRCC-21-15-W) for the media planning/buying function and all it entails. We looked for an agency with expertise in the higher education market and a strong skill set in dealing with both general media, social media, and paid search (Pay-Per-Click). Following the proper procurement and bid procedures, Thayer Media won the bid. The RFP was structured to provide for up to five annual contracts. (We are seeking approval for just three years at this point because the media landscape continues to change enough that we will likely re-evaluate our strategies no later than three years from now.)

Front Range Community College uses a combination of in-house design staff and external contractors to produce audio and visual advertising. We then use a media planner/buyer to help us determine where to advertise and to purchase and place the ads. (The media planner/buyer is also involved up front in the design of our advertising campaigns.)

In FY21, we spent approximately \$690,000 for all media and agency fees from our annual, SBCCOE-approved operating budget, including media planning and buying fees. We don't anticipate spending much more than this in FY22, but have asked for some additional spending authority in case we have some particular programs we choose to promote and to allow for inflation into FY24. We anticipate that all the future expenditures would also come from the annual operating budget.

The media planning/buying function involves strategic media planning and buying for FRCC's three campuses and one center including Westminster Campus, Boulder County Campus, Larimer Campus, Campus and Brighton Center. While we generally have one media plan that covers the entire college, we do sometimes have specific campaigns to promote an academic program or a campus.

FRCC has been steadily increasing its advertising budget for several years to address a more competitive enrollment environment and escalating media costs. With the help of Thayer (who won a previous competition for media services), we have evolved from more traditional media (print, cable TV and billboards) to targeted digital media (including social media), streaming audio and video, and geo-demographically placed emails.

Currently our single biggest focus of advertising is paid search on Google, which is about 27% of our budget. We also use targeted emails, streaming video on YouTube and similar sites, streaming audio on music services like Spotify and Pandora, and digital display ads on a variety of websites and social media targeted to audience behavior/usage. We also continue to use some traditional radio advertising.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the Board approve the media planning/buying spending authority for Front Range Community College with a do not exceed amount of \$2.4 million over the next three fiscal years and delegate the signature authority of the Board to the FRCC President on the condition that all State and Board required processes are met.