



Official Memorandum

PO Box 2157
Los Banos, CA 93635
sldmwa.org

To: SLDMWA Water Resources Committee Members and Alternates
SLDMWA Board of Directors and Alternates

From: Scott Petersen, Chief Strategic and Administrative Officer

Date: July 6, 2026

RE: Recommendation to Authorize Execution of Agreement with Invariant and Related Expenditure of Up to \$175,000 from the Fiscal Year 2027 Legislative Operations Budget

Background

The San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority's ("Water Authority") adopted a 2023 Strategic Plan with a Mission¹ statement that is reliant on the successful advancement of federal policy objectives. During its December 2025 meeting, the Water Authority Board adopted a Policy Framework² and Policy Action Plan³. The Water Authority has historically engaged a federal affairs consultant to engage in federal government affairs work and has contracted with former Congressman Dennis Cardoza as our primary consultant since 2013, under various firms in which he has been employed, most recently with Foley & Lardner.

In April, we were informed that former Representative Cardoza was departing from Foley & Lardner, resulting in an analysis of Foley & Lardner's capacity to continue to meet the needs of the Water Authority and its member agencies. In response to this analysis and in coordination with the Federal Affairs working group, Water Authority staff recommended a transition away from Foley & Lardner and prepared and released a Request for Proposals ("RFP") for Federal Affairs and Coalition Coordination Services.

Authority staff received two responses to the RFP, reviewed the responses in coordination with the Federal Affairs Workgroup and reached a recommendation.

Issue for Decision

Whether the Water Resources Committee should recommend to the Board that staff execute an agreement with Invariant in the amount of \$175,000 to provide Federal Affairs and Coalition Coordination Services for the Water Authority.

¹ To operate and maintain the Delta-Mendota Canal and related facilities reliably and cost-effectively, and to support member agencies in restoring and protecting adequate, affordable water supplies to benefit people, wildlife, and the economy

² The Policy Framework tiers from the Strategic Plan and sets the framework for policy issues the Water Authority will work on to implement the Strategic Plan. Request from Water Authority staff.

³ The Policy Action Plan tiers from the Policy Framework and sets the annual workplan for policy issues the Water Authority will work on to implement the Strategic Plan. Request from Water Authority staff.



Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Committee recommend, and the Board authorize, execution of a Professional Services Agreement with Invariant and related expenditures.

Analysis

The Water Authority has long operated in the federal affairs space as a traditional water agency, with our own federal affairs consultant seeking to support legislation and funding levels of relevance to Water Authority projects and to support programs of interest to member agencies. However, the power of the Water Authority is in its combined membership and increased coordination of its member agencies and their existing resources on items of common interest to Water Authority members. In response to this, Water Authority staff is seeking coalition coordination support, in addition to federal affairs expertise, to enhance and support coordinated advocacy efforts with the combined federal affairs resources of our member agencies.

As a result of this foundational restructuring of the Water Authority’s federal affairs function, Water Authority staff intend to contract with two firms: one as a primary coordinator of member agency federal affairs teams, and one to provide strategic advisory services.

Invariant is qualified and has the experience and resources needed to perform coalition coordination services for the Water Authority. Specifically, Invariant has provided coalition coordination support services for other coalitions, and has staff expertise related to priority issues, including Reclamation, of interest to the Water Authority and its members.

Dennis Cardoza Consulting Services is qualified and has the experience and resources needed to perform strategic advisory services for the Water Authority.

Budget Implications

The Water Authority’s Fiscal Year 2027 budget included \$480,000 in Fund 05 (Leg Ops) for Federal Representation. The Water Authority has spent \$90,000 through May, leaving \$390,000 available through the remainder of the fiscal year. There are sufficient funds to execute an agreement with the primary federal affairs consultant and the strategic advisory agreement for the remainder of the fiscal year without requiring budget adjustment, with an estimated termination of the contract with the existing consultant on August 1, 2026.

Firm Name	Monthly Retainer	Current Expenditures	Projected Expenditures	Available Budget
Foley & Lardner (current consultant)	\$30,000	\$90,000	\$150,000	
Dennis Cardoza Consulting Services	\$10,000	\$0	\$60,000	
Invariant	\$25,000	\$0	\$175,000	
			\$385,000	\$480,000