



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF MEDICAL EXAMINER
1104 N. MISSION RD, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90033



Odey C. Ukpo, M.D., M.S.
Chief Medical Examiner

November 06, 2024

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisors:

**REQUEST TO AUTHORIZE THE ACQUISITION OF
ONE QUADRUPOLE TIME-OF-FLIGHT (QTOF) INSTRUMENT
(ALL SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICTS - 3 VOTES)**

SUBJECT

Authorize the Director of the Internal Services Department (ISD), as the Los Angeles County (LA County) Purchasing Agent, to proceed with the sole source acquisition of one AbSCIEX Quadrupole Time-Of-Flight (QTOF) instrument for the Department of Medical Examiner (DME), with an estimated cost of \$500,000.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THE BOARD:

Authorize the Director of ISD, as LA County's Purchasing Agent, to proceed with the sole source acquisition of one AbSCIEX QTOF instrument for the Department of Medical Examiner, with an estimated cost of \$500,000.

PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION

This acquisition of the one high-performance QTOF instrument will allow the DME Laboratories Toxicology section to improve forensic toxicological testing which is used to determine the cause and manner of death of decedents who are within the DME's jurisdiction.

The QTOF instrument is used to identify more novel substances in comparison to the methodologies currently utilized by the DME laboratory. Improvements in analytical testing will be enhanced accompanied by advances in the current technology used in the DME Toxicology Unit. Having the

advanced ability to identify compounds contributing to the death of a decedent may alert the Department of Public Health and other stakeholders to new novel drugs amplifying the current drug epidemic.

DME's current screening method uses immunoassay instrumentation which is fairly sensitive but not specific. A family of drugs may be identified in a sample: however, the specific analyte is not identifiable until the more labor-intensive and complicated GC (gas chromatography) or LC (liquid chromatography) confirmation assay is employed. Additionally, analytes that are not cross-reactive with the immunoassay kits risk not being identified altogether. This method works but can increase the time it takes to close out Toxicology reports that directly impact the turnaround time of case closure for Medical Examiners.

Purchasing the QTOF instrument will provide the DME with a more reliable, up-to-date system that will improve the quality of death investigations by more sensitive and specific methods of drug identification in addition to minimizing pathologist workload and reducing delays in determining the cause and manner of death. Most importantly, purchasing the QTOF instrument will help the DME maintain its National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME) Accreditation by reducing death investigation turnaround times.

The acquisition of the QTOF instrument qualifies as a sole source purchase due to the software system capabilities and compatibilities provided by our existing, in-use testing platform. If another vendor were to provide the instrument, the department would also need to factor in the cost of new system software and training on this new software to all Toxicology staff (which is very time-consuming and creates an increased risk of human error during data analysis) that would significantly increase the overall cost of purchase. System software is a separate and additional cost from the instrument itself. With QTOF instruments averaging \$450,000 and software costs averaging \$250,000 the cost of purchasing the QTOFs through a new instrument supplier would be ~\$700,000 not factoring in the time it would take to train all Toxicology staff on the new system software. In essence, purchasing the QTOF instrument through a new vendor would be much higher than purchasing the QTOF through an established vendor that uses the existing efficient testing software utilized by the Medical Examiners laboratories.

On June 8, 2024, in accordance with Board Policy 5.100, Sole Source Contracts and Amendments, the Department provided the Board with advance notification of its intent to enter into negotiations for a sole source contract.

The approval of the recommended action will allow the DME to modernize its existing laboratory with this state-of-the-art piece of equipment which will allow the department to continue effectively determining the cause and manner of death for all decedents whose deaths fall under DME jurisdiction.

On December 29, 2022, in accordance with Board Policy 5.100, Sole Source Contracts and Amendments, the Department provided the Board with advance notification of its intent to enter into negotiations for a sole source contract.

Implementation of Strategic Plan Goals

This recommendation supports Goal II.2 "Support the Wellness of Our Communities" and III.3, "Pursue Operational Effectiveness, Fiscal Responsibility and Accountability" of the LA County Strategic Plan.

FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING

The total estimated cost of the QTOF instrument is \$500,000. The estimated acquisition costs include the equipment, installation, accessories, a twelve-month service warranty, freight, and tax.

Operating Budget Impact

Funding for the QTOF instrument has been allocated within the Fiscal Year 2024-25 Budget. The instrument will be funded by the Department. DME will fund ongoing maintenance costs from its Operating Budget. No impact on Net County Cost is anticipated.

FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS

Pursuant to Government Code Section 27491, the DME is tasked with determining the circumstances, manner, and cause of all violent, sudden, unattended, or unusual deaths within the County of Los Angeles. The DME has the discretion to determine the extent of the inquiry into any death falling within its jurisdiction. The purchase of the QTOF instrument is critical to the DME's ability to perform a thoroughly expedited death investigation and make the final determination on the manner and cause of death.

On October 16, 2001, the Board approved the classification categories for fixed assets and new requirements for major fixed asset (now referred to as capital asset) acquisitions. This process now requires LA County departments to obtain Board approval to acquire or finance equipment with a unit cost of \$250,000 or greater prior to submitting their requisition to ISD.

CONTRACTING PROCESS

The acquisition of equipment falls under the statutory authority of the LA County Purchasing Agent and will be accomplished in accordance with LA County's purchasing policies and procedures for sole source purchases.

IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES (OR PROJECTS)

Approval of the recommendation will greatly enhance the DME's technological ability to expedite and accurately determine the manner and cause of death.

When approved, the Executive Office, Board of Supervisors is requested to return the signed and approved Board Letter to:

Procurement Unit
Department of Medical Examiner
1104 N. Mission Road
Los Angeles, CA 90033

The Honorable Board of Supervisors

11/6/2024

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Respectfully submitted,



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Chief Medical Examiner

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