

Toronto Zoo Creative and Media Buying Services - Award

Date: April 14, 2026
To: Board of Management of the Toronto Zoo
From: Chief Operations Officer
Wards: All

SUMMARY

This report recommends that Toronto Zoo enters into an agreement for creative and media buying services with BlackJet Inc. and TrueMedia to deliver integrated marketing strategy, creative development, production support, and media planning and buying services in support of the Toronto Zoo's 2026 marketing and communications priorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chief Operations Officer recommends that:

1. The Toronto Zoo Board of Management authorize the Chief Operations Officer, or designate, to negotiate and execute an agreement with BlackJet Inc. and TrueMedia for the provision of creative and media buying services for the Toronto Zoo, in an amount not to exceed \$650,000.00 excluding HST, for a term commencing upon award to January 31, 2027, with the option to extend for up to two (2) additional one-year terms, on terms satisfactory to the Chief Transformation Officer and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The total value of the agreement is not to exceed \$650,000.00 excluding HST.

The funding for these services is included within the Toronto Zoo's approved 2026 Operating Budget for marketing and communications.

All media buying and production costs will be managed as part of the approved budget and are subject to prior written approval in accordance with the agreement.

DECISION HISTORY

In 2026, the Toronto Zoo issued a Request for Proposal (RFP 09.2026.01) through the Bids and Tenders bidding website for creative and media buying services to support the Zoo's strategic marketing and communications objectives.

A total of nineteen (19) submissions were received through the Bids and Tenders process. Upon review of mandatory requirements, eighteen (18) proponents met the mandatory technical specifications and proceeded to the technical evaluation stage.

Proposals were evaluated in accordance with the RFP evaluation framework, including criteria such as strategic approach, creative capability, relevant experience, team qualifications, and overall value. Each compliant submission was scored out of a total of 100 points during the technical evaluation stage.

Based on the technical evaluation results, the highest ranked proponents were shortlisted to proceed to the presentation and interview stage. Four (4) proponents were invited to participate in final evaluation: BlackJet Inc., King Ursa, Mackie Biernacki, and Mission Products and Media Inc.

The final stage included presentations and interviews, with scoring conducted out of a total of 150 points. This stage assessed strategic alignment, creativity, team expertise, and ability to deliver integrated campaigns.

Following completion of all evaluation stages, BlackJet Inc. achieved the highest overall score and was identified as the top ranked proponent.

The recommended award reflects a fair, open, and transparent procurement process conducted in accordance with Toronto Zoo procurement policies and aligns with the Toronto Zoo's 2025–2027 Strategic Plan.

COMMENTS

The Toronto Zoo requires a full-service agency partner to support the planning and execution of integrated marketing campaigns promoting exhibits, animal experiences, events, and seasonal programming.

BlackJet Inc. will act as the lead agency responsible for strategy, creative development, production oversight, and account management, while TrueMedia will provide media strategy, planning, buying, and performance reporting services.

The scope of services includes the development of integrated advertising and communications strategies, creative concept development, production of multi channel marketing assets, media planning and buying, and campaign performance monitoring and optimization.

The service provider will support year-round campaigns and provide a structured reporting framework, including monthly business and campaign review reports outlining media spend, campaign performance, key metrics, and optimization recommendations. All campaign data and analytics will remain the property of the Toronto Zoo.

This agreement will support the Toronto Zoo's objectives of increasing attendance and revenue, strengthening brand positioning, and enhancing audience engagement through coordinated, high-quality marketing and media execution.

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SIGNATURE

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