Proposal for Town of Casco, ME

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Executive Summary

Polco is a trusted leader in civic engagement and data-driven governance solutions, offering tools to help communities like the Town of Casco understand their residents better, make informed decisions, and improve public trust. Our platform provides robust data visualizations that give you a full picture of your community while centralizing and streamlining community input efforts. These visualizations are fed by hundreds of data points from both constituent input and a multitude of publicly-available sources. All this data is curated through advanced weighting, benchmarking and analytics. The visualizations and analytics are extensive and our AI-driven tool, Polly, lets you easily explore your community's data and garner insights on specific topics.

This proposal outlines how Polco will empower the Town of Casco to address its engagement challenges and enhance decision-making with the help of our **National Community Survey** (NCS), and **Prioritize** tools.

Polco Overview

Our Story

Polco was founded in 2015 by former public servants who, after working at top tech companies (Google and Amazon), returned to the public sector with a mission to improve government performance through better civic engagement (crowdsourcing collective intelligence) and better use of civic input data, data in general, and analytics via artificial intelligence (AI).

In 2019 Polco acquired the **National Research Center** (NRC), the largest provider of standardized scientific local government surveys in the country who had amassed a local government performance data set of thousands of communities over 20 years. NRC's founders and key leaders are still with Polco doing advanced data science and survey science. Polco, now together with NRC, is working with more communities and growing faster than either was previously.

In 2021, Polco co-founded **GPAL** along with University of Wisconsin Madison and Stanford. GPAL is a government performance data and analytics consortium that brings together not only Polco and NRC historical survey data but also virtually every other public sector data relevant set into a cleaned, appended, monthly refreshed, cloud-based data warehouse. The breadth and depth of that data can make more confident predictions of community trajectories earlier, and, for the first time ever, begin to isolate the impacts of a variety of policies, programs, and other factors on government performance in order to answer seminal questions that have been elusive to the sector for decades, and in some cases centuries. This data is made available to jurisdictions through Polco's **Track**.

In 2022 Polco acquired **Balancing Act**, the developer of simulation based engagement technology. Beyond traditional surveys and polls, Balancing Act simulations present constituents the actual tradeoffs their governments face when developing balanced budgets, housing plans, carbon plans, and more. BA also uses budget data to provide taxpayers their taxpayer receipts.

In 2023, Polco began development of **Polly**, a secure LLM-agnostic multi-agent RAG AI infrastructure to accelerate the breadth, depth, speed, and ease with which Polco could deliver data, analytics, reports, and other critical government workflow elements to public employees.

Polco's mission remains the same: bring communities together around their most important issues through informative transparent engaging communications, use that and other data together in concert to help leaders make great data informed decisions, and thereby demonstrate great outcomes, accountable governance, build trust, re-energize civic agency, and improve constituent quality of life. The Polco team feels extremely fortunate to have made good progress on this mission, but also feels there's a lot of work ahead left to do. The team is honored to do it.

Polco's Credibility and Reach

Polco's engagement tools have been widely adopted by communities across the United States, including partnerships with **ICMA**, **NLC**. We have successfully supported hundreds of communities in their public engagement efforts. Our case studies demonstrate the impact Polco has had on cities both large and small.

- **How Elk Grove Improves Services With a Data-Driven Mindset**
  Elk Grove places high value on data-driven decision-making. With that mindset, the City launched a Performance Indicator Program, supported by **Track**, to collect data points across departments that paint a picture of Elk Grove's operations and how they impact the community.

- **How Cape Coral's Incentive Program Helped Boost It's Local Economy:** **Cape Coral, FL**—By using Polco's **National Community Survey** Cape Coral identified their Economy as the most important priority. By launching the Cape Competes Grant and Incentive program, NCS results showed an economic health increase of 14% between 2019-2021.

- **How Scottsdale City Council Collaborates using Community Survey Data:** Collaboration between city councilmembers creates better ideas, a more efficient system, and an improved plan for the city's future. But driving cooperation and consensus within any group can be difficult. Scottsdale, Arizona's City Council uses resident survey data from **The National Community Survey (The NCS)** to guide their conversations and bring their differing perspectives together behind common goals and priorities for their city.

- **How Hanford, California Collaborated with Residents to Revitalize Downtown**
  The City of Hanford, California, used Prioritize so residents could help choose and rank different restaurants and stores. **Prioritize** is an online simulation tool by Balancing Act from Polco that allows residents to allocate a one-time or fixed budget among different projects and rank their choices by priority. Hanford's two Prioritize simulations were for "Food and Services" and "Clothing and Accessories." The City received nearly 5,000 combined submissions from both tools.

Our Team

A veteran led GovTech company, Polco provides advanced engagement and analytics solutions that unite governments and constituents for stronger, better trusted communities. Our industry-leading surveys, government performance data, analytics, and interactive simulations engage residents and provide government leaders with clear insights that inform, help prioritize decisions, and build trust in their communities. Our team has deep roots in data science, public opinion research and AI. We create analytics, dashboards, models of community livability and metrics for government performance. Below are a few of the people key to our organization and our engagement with you.

Nick Mastronardi, PhD, CEO: Nick has over 20 years of experience in AI, starting as a research physicist developing classification algorithms for missile guidance systems in the Air Force. He later joined Amazon, where he worked on key business initiatives, including internal budgeting and prioritization, and built AI-based automatic repricing algorithms for 17,000 strategic products. Additionally, Nick served as a Senior Economist on the President's Council of Economic Advisors at the White House, contributing his expertise in economic policy and analysis.

Brandon Barnett (Senior Survey Associate) Brandon has managed dozens of customer-facing projects. He regularly consults with Cities and Counties to implement assessment to understand the needs of their communities, employees and other stakeholders. He has created custom surveys, led benchmark projects and was the project manager for Virginia's state-wide implementation of the Community Assessment Survey of Older Adults. He enjoys working closely with clients to understand their data needs and give them the tools to ensure they can make data-driven decisions. Internally, he works with colleagues across teams to bring the voice of customers to product development..

Grace Arneson (Senior Survey Associate) Grace has assisted dozens of Cities and Counties in meeting their research needs. She is an expert in implementing our benchmark surveys to help our clients assess needs, get input for strategic decision making, and measure/track performance. She takes pride in working with clients to amplify the voice of the resident in the policy lifecycle and help connect government leaders with their community members. Grace's skill is such that she is also relied on to coordinate training for her colleagues to ensure quality and to develop onboarding processes to optimize client outcomes.

Customer Proposal

Solution Details:

Polco's Engagement Suite: Polco will implement its **NCS**, and **Prioritize** tools to enable the Town of Casco to collect resident feedback, analyze sentiment, and track performance on key livability indicators.

Your unique solution includes:

- **The NCS**: The National Community Survey is a comprehensive, scientifically validated survey capturing the Town of Casco's residents' opinions on various aspects of the Town's services, safety, and overall livability.

- **Prioritize Simulation:** Prioritize enables governments to gather and analyze resident feedback by allowing them to rank and prioritize community projects or initiatives, ensuring that decision-making aligns with public preferences. Prioritize brings a unique dual approach that allows users to make selections and then rank order them. The resulting data provides deeper insight to support decision-making within a fixed budget or one-time expense such as stimulus funds. With a user-friendly design, a Prioritize simulation can be created in an hour or less.

Why Polco is the Best Fit:

Our long-standing partnerships with national organizations and our experience working with cities similar to the Town of Casco guarantee results. Polco's tools ensure that the Town of Casco can increase resident participation, use reliable data for planning, and boost public trust through transparent communication.

Three Options:

- **Contract Term**: 12 months with an optional renewal.

Option 1:

- **Cost**: $14,500 for access to the following components of Polco's platform:

  - Unlimited use of Prioritize Simulation

    - One-time Concierge setup service for first Prioritize Simulation

  - The National Community Survey (Digital-only)

    - Outreach will be solely led by the Town of Casco.

Option 2:

- **Cost**: $22,500 for access to the following components of Polco's platform:

  - Unlimited use of Prioritize Simulation

    - One-time Concierge setup service for first Prioritize Simulation

  - The National Community Survey (Led by Polco team)

    - Postcard-Postcard Outreach (1,000 household sample size)

Option 3:

- **Cost**: $27,500 for access to the following components of Polco's platform:

  - Unlimited use of Prioritize Simulation

    - One-time Concierge setup service for first Prioritize Simulation

  - The National Community Survey (Led by Polco team)

    - Half Page of Custom Questions

    - Custom Benchmarks

    - Postcard-Postcard Outreach (1,000 household sample size)

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