

**REQUEST FOR ACTION BY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

Approval of Engagement of Call Center Vendor for RentReliefRI

1. Summary of Request

This Request for Action (“RFA”) seeks authorization for Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation (“RIHousing”) to engage Witt O’Brien’s LLC (“Witt O’Brien’s”) to provide it with call center services in connection with the RentReliefRI Program, an emergency rental assistance (“ERA”) program funded by the U.S. Department of the Treasury (“Treasury”).

2. Discussion

The State of Rhode Island (the “State”) has designated RIHousing as the subrecipient of approximately \$200 million in ERA funds that were appropriated to the State by Treasury. Through RentReliefRI, RIHousing will assist families who need temporary help paying rent, rent arrearages, utility arrearages, utility payments, and other expenses related to housing. To operate RentReliefRI effectively, RIHousing must have the ability to deliver rapid and streamlined assistance to applicants. The engagement of a call center vendor will allow RIHousing to accomplish this objective.

RIHousing issued an RFP for call center support services in February 2021. The RFP was posted on RIHousing’s website and the website maintained by the State of Rhode Island Department of Administration, Division of Purchases. Sixteen (16) firms submitted proposals in response to the RFP.

A selection committee comprised of RIHousing staff (the “Committee”) reviewed the proposals in accordance with the criteria set forth in the RFP and employed a weighted average scoring model to evaluate and compare them. Overall, weighted scores ranged from a low of 2.17 to 8.85. Witt O’Brien’s received the highest weighted score and was the unanimous choice of the Committee. Attachment B sets forth an evaluation summary of the proposals.

Witt O’Brien’s is currently working with the Kansas Housing Resource Corporation, the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, and a number of municipalities as they administer their ERA programs. The services that they offer, which include customized scripting, agent training, quality assurance, reporting, and application assistance and processing, will enable RIHousing to comply with the ERA program requirements of the State and Treasury.

In addition, it is crucial that the call center operate as efficiently as possible in order to manage the anticipated demand and influx of applications. Witt O’Brien’s has experience with the software application that RIHousing will use to administer RentReliefRI, which will allow a streamlined and seamless integration between the two systems, maximize efficiency, and avoid the duplication of efforts.

For this engagement, Witt O'Brien's has proposed a pricing structure of a per hour rate based on employee title/role and number of hours worked. The pricing structures that were proposed by respondents varied greatly, with some proposing large initial setup fees and others proposing monthly set fees. Overall pricing also varied greatly, from \$20,000 to \$3,095,000 for nine (9) months of service. The Committee evaluated Witt O'Brien's proposal using an assumption of hours, employee title/role, and coverage. Actual cost of the engagement will be determined based on hours worked and will continually be adjusted based on metrics with cost efficiency in mind. Staffing of the call center can be increased or decreased without the incurrence of a penalty or fee.

3. Recommendation

The attached resolution to engage Witt O'Brien's as the call center vendor for the RentReliefRI Program is recommended for approval.

4. Attachment

- A. Resolution of the Board of Commissioners of RI Housing
- B. Scoring Matrix

Attachment A

**Resolution of the Board of
Commissioners of
Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation**

- Whereas,** the Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation (“RIHousing”) enabling act provides it with all of the power to make and execute contracts for the exercise of the powers and functions provided to it under the act (R.I. Gen. Laws §42-55-5(6)); and
- Whereas,** the State of Rhode Island (the “State”) has designated RIHousing as its subrecipient to receive approximately \$200 million in emergency rental assistance (“ERA”) funds that were appropriated to the State by the United States Department of the Treasury; and
- Whereas,** RIHousing has developed the RentReliefRI Program to administer the ERA funds to applicants statewide; and
- Whereas,** to administer RentReliefRI Program efficiently and effectively, RIHousing requires the services of a call center and, in February 2021, issued a Request for Proposals (“RFP”) for such services; and
- Whereas,** a selection committee comprised of RIHousing staff reviewed the proposals and evaluated them in accordance with criteria outlined in the RFP.

NOW THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY:

- Resolved,** that RIHousing be, and hereby is, authorized to engage Witt O’Brien’s, LLC and to award a contract in an amount not to exceed \$2,500,000 to provide it with call center support services to enable RIHousing to manage the RentReliefRI Program; and
- Resolved,** that the Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director, Assistant Deputy Director of External Affairs, Policy & Research, and the Director of Leased Housing and Rental Services, each acting singly be, and hereby is, authorized and empowered to take any and all actions necessary or desirable to carry out the foregoing resolution, including without limitation the authority to negotiate such terms of the engagement as he or she may determine are in the best interests of RIHousing, and to execute any and all agreements or documents as he or she deems necessary to carry out the foregoing.

Attachment B
Scoring Matrix