

Request for Action
by
Board of Commissioners

Approval of Renewal and Amendment of Engagement of Witt O'Brien's LLC

1. Summary of Request

This Request for Action (“RFA”) seeks authorization for Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation (“RIHousing”) to renew and amend its engagement of Witt O'Brien's LLC (“Witt O'Brien's”) for the provision of 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

In February 2021, the State of Rhode Island (the “State”) designated RIHousing as the subrecipient of approximately \$352 million in ERA funds that were appropriated to the State by Treasury. To administer the subaward, RIHousing developed the RentReliefRI Program (the “Program”) and, through it, utilizes ERA funds to assist Rhode Islanders with their rent, utility, and other housing-related expenses.

As it developed the Program, RIHousing recognized that it needed to engage a vendor to provide applicants with call center services so that Program objectives would be accomplished in a timely, efficient, and effective manner. In turn, a Request for Proposals (“RFP”) for call center services was issued in February 2021. Sixteen (16) firms, including Witt O'Brien's, submitted responses to the RFP. In March 2021, RIHousing's Board of Commissioners authorized RIHousing to award Witt O'Brien's with a contract in an amount not to exceed \$2,500,000 for a nine-month period.

Pursuant to the Board's authorization, RIHousing initially agreed to compensate Witt O'Brien's at an hourly rate based on employee title/role and number of hours worked. Both the call center services that Witt O'Brien's provides under the Program and the pricing structure have been adjusted to reflect the evolution of the Program since its initial rollout, importantly the higher-than-expected volume of applications approved. Currently, a hybrid pricing structure is in effect: call center agent services continue to be billed on a per role/title and number of hours worked basis but set fees have been established for application processing services. The total cost of the engagement will be approximately \$5,000,000, which includes \$750,000 for call center services rendered in calendar year 2021 and a budget of \$4,250,000 for services for twelve months in 2022.

Since the Program's inception, Witt O'Brien's has proven to be an integral component to its success. Their customized scripting, agent training program, quality assurance, reporting capabilities, and Program application assistance and processing services have been critical in enabling RIHousing to both administer the Program and comply with the ERA program requirements of the State and Treasury. As RIHousing continues to administer the Program, their continued engagement will allow RIHousing to continue to accomplish these objectives.

3. Recommendation

The attached resolution to renew and amend the engagement of Witt O'Brien's as the call center vendor for the RentReliefRI Program is recommended for approval.

4. Attachment

A. Resolution

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”) designated RIHousing as its subrecipient to receive approximately \$352 million in emergency rental assistance (“ERA”) funds that were appropriated to the State by the United States Department of the Treasury; and
- Whereas,** RIHousing developed the RentReliefRI Program to administer the ERA funds to applicants statewide and, in March 2021, engaged Witt O’Brien’s LLC to provide the RentReliefRI Program with call center services; and
- Whereas,** to continue to administer RentReliefRI Program efficiently and effectively, RIHousing seeks the Board of Commissioner’s approval to continue to engage Witt O’Brien’s LLC as said vendor.

NOW THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY:

- Resolved,** that RIHousing be, and hereby is, authorized to renew and amend its engagement of Witt O’Brien’s, LLC for call center support services in an amount not to exceed \$5,000,000 for call center support services occurring in 2021 and 2022 to enable RIHousing to manage the RentReliefRI Program; and
- Resolved,** that the Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director and Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer, 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; and
- Resolved,** that all prior actions taken by the Executive Director, Deputy Executive Director, and Chief Strategy and Innovation Officer that are consistent with the authority conferred herein are hereby expressly ratified and confirmed.