To: Chair Cristol and the VRE Operations Board  
From: Rich Dalton  
Date: November 15, 2019  
Re: Authorization to Execute a Contract for State Government Relations Services

Recommendation:
The VRE Operations Board is asked to authorize the Acting Chief Executive Officer to execute a contract with Commonwealth Strategy Group, LLC of Richmond, Virginia, for State Government Relations Services for a base period of three years and two option years, with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) exercising the option years at their discretion, in the amount of $263,000, plus a 10% contingency of $26,300, for a total amount over the five years not to exceed $289,300.

Summary:
VRE has chosen to contract separately for government relations services specific to State issues as distinct from Federal Executive Branch and Legislative issues. This action will authorize the Acting CEO to execute a contract for State Government Relations Services. The current contract for State Legislative Services expires in December 2019.

Background:
VRE has found it more expedient and effective to contract for Government Relations Services at both the State and Federal level than to employ staff to attempt to monitor the myriad of government and legislative activities in Richmond and Washington, D.C. Professional government relations firms are also able to make and maintain the numerous contacts with elected officials and their staffs needed to effectively keep abreast of, analyze, and engage on issues related to VRE, public transportation, and rail.
On March 15, 2019, the VRE Operations Board authorized the CEO to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for State Government Relations Services. An RFP is the preferred method of procurement for this solicitation because there are different approaches to the desired service and an evaluation of technical merit is required. Upon completion of evaluation of proposals, negotiations were conducted with the highest ranked firms deemed to be fully qualified and best suited among those submitting proposals, based on the factors specified in the evaluation criteria. Price was considered in context of technical performance for this service to achieve a best value determination. After receipt of the best and final offer from the top-ranked firm, a cost analysis was performed to compare the proposed cost with the independent cost estimate and determined the proposed cost is fair and reasonable.

A mailing list of over one hundred prospective offerors, which included Virginia’s electronic procurement system (eVA), was established for the solicitation to ensure access to adequate sources of services. On September 16, 2019, an RFP was issued, and proposals were due on October 7, 2019. Two responses were received.

Evaluation of the proposals received was performed by the Technical Evaluation Team (TET), which consisted of three VRE staff members.

The TET met to discuss and evaluate the proposals using the following criteria:

- Legislative Experience of the Firm in the Commonwealth of Virginia
- Understanding of the Scope of Work
- Experience of Proposed Key Personnel
- Familiarity and Experience Interacting with Key Relevant State, Regional and Local Officials
- Management and Staffing Plan
- Cost

It was determined the proposal from Commonwealth Strategy Group, LLC was technically compliant and unanimously selected to be best value for the project.

Below is the final ranking of firms who submitted a proposal for State Government Relations Services.

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<th>Offerors</th>
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<td>1. Commonwealth Strategy Group, LLC</td>
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<td>2. Hardiman Advisors, LLC</td>
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The Offerors’ proposed pricing was in the range of $4,300 to $6,500 per month. VRE staff has certified the highest ranked Offeror’s price is fair and reasonable based on the cost estimate for this project.
The contract will be for a base period of three years and two option years, with the VRE CEO exercising the option years at their discretion. This authorization allows work to begin.

**Fiscal Impact:**

The FY 2020 operating budget for ‘Chief of Staff – Other Professional Services’ includes funding for this activity. Funding for future years will be included in each proposed annual budget.
Virginia Railway Express
Operations Board

Resolution
9D-11-2019

Authorization to Execute a Contract for
State Government Relations Services

WHEREAS, VRE has found it more expedient and effective to contract for government relations services than to employ staff to attempt to monitor the myriad of government and legislative activities in Richmond; and,

WHEREAS, professional government relations firms are also able to make and maintain the numerous contacts with elected officials and their staffs needed to effectively keep abreast of, analyze, and engage on issues related to VRE, public transportation, and rail; and,

WHEREAS, the current contract for State Legislative Services expires in December 2019; and,

WHEREAS, the Operations Board’s approval of this procurement does not represent its independent assessment of the candidate’s responses to the solicitation or of each step in the procurement process followed by staff; rather, the Operations Board’s action is premised upon its conclusion, after review of the information before it, that the process used by the staff was in accordance with law and that the staff recommendation appears to be reasonable;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT, the VRE Operations Board does hereby authorize the Acting Chief Executive Officer to execute a contract with Commonwealth Strategy Group, LLC of Richmond, Virginia, for State Government Relations Services for a base period of three years and two option years, with the Chief Executive Officer exercising the option years at their discretion, in the amount of $263,000, plus a 10% contingency of $26,300, for a total amount over the five years not to exceed $289,300.

Approved this 15th day of November 2019

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Katie Cristol
Chair

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John Cook
Secretary