



Policy, Legislative and Administrative Committee

Board Action Item II-C

September 14, 2006

**Request to Initiate and Award Contract for
Background Investigative Services**

**Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority
Board Action/Information Summary**

Action
 Information

MEAD Number:
99596

Resolution:
 Yes No

PURPOSE

To request Board approval to initiate and award a competitively negotiated procurement for a contractor to provide pre-employment screening background checks [to include criminal, education, credit (where applicable) and previous employment] for applicants applying for positions with the Authority. We would like to identify a primary and a secondary provider for these services. The contract will be for a two-year base.

DESCRIPTION

The use of a contractor to provide background checks has streamlined the hiring process, provided consistent information, assisted in reducing the time it takes to hire and further reduced the risks resulting from not doing thorough and accurate background checks. Since we started conducting full background checks, to include criminal and credit checks, we have minimized our exposure to negligent hiring complaints and reduced security risks to employees and customers.

With our present contract, our contractor performs various types of checks based on information that we provide. The first check is verification of social security number. We receive an alert if the applicant's social security number has been used by another person or in another capacity, i.e. to obtain death benefits. We also conduct verifications of employment and education, processes that prior to this contract were performed by employment services staff. Finally, and most significantly, we are able to verify an applicant's criminal record for any jurisdiction in which he or she has lived or applied for credit. Prior to our present contract, applicants were asked to provide a police clearance from the jurisdiction in which they lived. The present contract allows for a search in the District of Columbia, Prince George's County, and Alexandria, for example, if the applicant has indicated that they have lived in each these of jurisdictions, or if our contractor can determine through the social security check that they have lived and/or applied for credit in these areas. While there are restrictions on how far back these checks can go, this is a more comprehensive criminal check that what was previously used.

While background checks include criminal, employment and education verifications for most positions, we also conduct credit checks on specific positions. Examples are those positions that require fare collections or processing, cash handling, revenue processing, fare media, financial accounting, contract management, positions that can commit Authority funds, positions performing operational functions, internal and legal review; and/or positions that service or maintain revenue equipment or computer systems.

In order to ensure that the elements of quality, trust and ethics are maintained as components to the recruitment and hiring process and to ensure the safety of our customers, it is necessary to verify an applicant's criminal activity and creditworthiness in addition to other verifications.

In conclusion, reports on applicant's credit and criminal history should be prepared by a consumer reporting agency that regularly engages in assembling information on applicants for the purpose of furnishing reports to third parties. This will ensure unbiased reports and the consistency of the information reported, as well as expediting the recruitment and hiring process.

We have utilized the services of a background investigation company for the last four years and would like to continue to do so. In the next contract, we would look for:

- ❑ A company that has a proven history of background check completion within 36-48 hours.
- ❑ A company that can provide an even more comprehensive review of criminal history.
- ❑ A company that is able to receive information electronically through our PeopleSoft system.

Based on projected increases in recruitment activity and the present average cost of background checks per person, we request an authorization of \$200,000 per year in the base years.

FUNDING IMPACT

Budget: Operating Budget, Fiscal Year 2007-2009

Office: Human Resource Management Services (HRMS)

Account: Other Services

This Action: \$400,000.00

Budget Information:

Base Year - FY07-FY09 (Two-year base from December 2006 to December 2008)
- \$400,000

Total: \$400,000.00

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Board approve this action to initiate and award a competitive negotiated contract to procure the services of a firm to perform background investigations for a two-year base plus three option years, if options are exercised.