

**GENERAL SUMMARY OF VIRGINIA PROCUREMENT POLICY
REGARDING EXECUTIVE-BRANCH AGENCIES
CONTRACTING WITH SEARCH FIRMS**

An executive-branch agency that seeks to procure the services of a search firm may proceed in either of two ways: a competitive-bidding procurement process or a cooperative-contract (non-competitive) procurement process.

In a competitive-bidding procurement process, the agency follows the standard procurement methodology of:

- creating and issuing a request for proposals;
- reviewing the proposals received;
- negotiating with the highest-scoring bidders; and
- selecting a vendor with which to enter into a contract for the search services.

In a cooperative-contract procurement process, the agency follows a non-competitive procurement methodology of:

- identifying one or more existing search-services state contracts that are designated as Cooperative Contracts, meaning that the contract is open for other state organizations to “ride” or “piggyback on;”
- requesting permission from the original search-services procurer/contractor to join its Cooperative Contract; (if the procurer/contractor declines the request, then the contract-seeking agency either seeks permission to join a different Cooperative Contract or reverts to the competitive-bidding process above);
- if the state entity in the Cooperative Contract agrees to the contract-seeking agency’s request, then:
 - if the Department of General Services has already vetted the existing contract, then the contract-seeking agency can initiate the process of joining the Cooperative Contract according to its terms and conditions; or
 - if the Department of General Services (DGS) has not vetted the existing contract, then the contract-seeking agency asks DGS to vet the contract and grant permission to join it. If DGS approves, then the contract-seeking agency can initiate the process of joining the existing Cooperative Contract according to its terms and conditions.