

Meeting of the Virginia Horse Industry Board- Marketing Subcommittee

PATH Foundation, Warrenton, VA

July 21, 2025

Members Present:

Sharon Molster

Debbie Easter

Barbara Riggs

Gail Rezendes-Dell

VDACS Staff Present:

Joe Guthrie

Heather Wheeler

Amanda Neis-Berger

William Jennings

- I. Call to order- 9:00am
 - a. The meeting was called to order by S Molster
- II. Observation of new committee formation
 - a. J Guthrie observed that this is the first meeting of the VHIB marketing subcommittee under a different, and therefore new, makeup of individuals. It is also the first marketing subcommittee meeting since the Board voted on a subcommittee virtual meeting policy, which mimics that of the VHIB exactly. This means the subcommittee is allowed six (6) nonconsecutive virtual meetings per year.
- III. Discussion regarding subcommittee structure and quorum
 - a. A discussion was had between members of the subcommittee and VDACS staff regarding requirements of Board subcommittees- namely parameters for fulfilling quorum and attendance concerns. J Guthrie noted it's generally

better form to have a subcommittee comprised of four members, as with a three-member subcommittee there's a higher probability that in-person attendance would be skewed- IE having two members able to join virtually and only one in person. It was also noted that with a three-person committee, a discussion among two members would constitute a quorum and could pose complications. It was suggested this issue with meeting in person could be negated with a larger group, helping to provide for in-person quorum at each meeting. This inquiry was made by D Easter originally, citing that the Board has yet to confirm the structure of an additional subcommittee for the Economic Impact Study. H Wheeler suggested this be something that was included in the upcoming Board meeting for July 21.

IV. Year two contract deliverables

- a. A Nies-Berger led a discussion into the refined composition of deliverables for year two work under the Marketing Services Project. She noted that her finalized document to review with the subcommittee was a combination of approximately six documents that were all picked apart and consolidated accordingly. A Nies-Berger proceeded to walk through each of the stages of work, reviewing drafted deliverables at each stage for commentary/consideration by the subcommittee.
- b. It was noted that the sections of deliverables should have costs associated with each, so that as work is completed and invoiced it's readily apparent what has been completed
- c. H Wheeler noted that the Board can ultimately allow the subcommittee to finalize negotiations with TopRight, if I so chooses, as a way to expedite the final discussions and decision-making necessary to complete the year two agreement.
- d. Notes from A Nies-Berger's review of the deliverables list included:
 - i. Grants management software- need to establish whether it has in fact been purchased or not. It was recommended that as the software is presented to the Board/subcommittee, a demo be provided so they can ensure it contains all the features requested.
 - ii. Job Board- it was noted that TopRight should design/execute a plan to market the existence of the job board, much like the directory, so that organizations know to populate their own listings
 - iii. Search bar- to tie in with interactive map. H Wheeler pointed out that this function could be akin to the VA Grown website's search feature. An interactive map will display regional listings around the search prompt

- iv. Economic Impact- a page dedicated to the EIS in the works, but could also hold past economic research data gathered by the VHIB previously
- v. Event population- H Wheeler points out reasons to make organizations self-populate events, including awareness of the event's listing altogether. If an event is populated without an organization's knowledge and anything were to shift, the org wouldn't know to update that listing. Likewise, any outdated or incorrect contact information could lead users astray when trying to ascertain appropriate personnel to contact with inquiries
- vi. Organization listings- similar to above, this should be a self-directed listing process for organizations. H Wheeler points out that there could be an expiration associated with listings, whereby an organization would receive advance warnings at certain intervals as a way to notify them of their listings' expiration. They would then be able to correct/update the listings as needed to keep them up-to-date.
- vii. Content management- H Wheeler explained that the proposal of \$200,000 for this category did intend originally to include more than just one individual in the role. The \$200,000 was said to be divided among a content manager and subsequent content creators, such as photographers and videographers, even copywriters. It was noted that this needs clarification in the final contract.
- viii. About page- should include better overview of cost codes and roles- Board members and VDACS alike
- ix. Industry News- Users should submit news to be listed, so that info and links can be verified by project personnel before publishing. This could include G Petro, TopRight staff, and VDACS staff
- x. Website completion- Should be within 90 days of signing contract for year two
- xi. Board portal- Should have an integrated function in website where board members can "log in" to access up to date documents and information pertaining to the marketing project, including photographs and videos for content libraries
- xii. Media Buy- Need updated timeline for current buys/channels; Expect new media buy info in successive quarterly reports to demonstrate upcoming media purchases/planning for next six months each time
- xiii. Website analytics- Start collecting immediately upon return to work for baseline to compare against at future reviews

- xiv. Email templates- initial templates should aim to market/call to action directory population and events page population. Templates should be complete within 30 days of contract start.
- xv. EIS- Plan to be completed by 9/15 and execution of the plan by 10/15
- xvi. Press releases- 12 expected for the year since half of the year already passed by time they implement. 12 additional can be optional to approve with the additional optional media buy budget.
- xvii. Earmark additional funds- Should allocate additional funds to cover any board decisions to increase spending towards any one category as work is completed and priority of work could shift- IE print materials for events
- xviii. Content Manager- Articles, expectation is that content manager will draft articles/posts versus the Board or marketing subcommittee

V. Adjournment- 1:00pm

- a. S Molster made a motion to adjourn. D Easter seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.