EFFICIENCY MAINE TRUST
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR
CALL CENTER SERVICES

RFP EM-008-2018

<u>Date Issued: March 15, 2018</u>

<u>Closing Date: May 4, 2018 at 3:00pm EST</u>

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Separate attachments:
Attachment A – Proposal Cover Sheet Form
Attachment B – Standard Agreement
Attachment C – Project Proposal Cost Form

SECTION 1 –RFP INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTIONS

1.1 Title and Purpose

The Efficiency Maine Trust (the "Trust" or "Efficiency Maine") seeks a qualified bidder or team of bidders to provide call center services in support of energy efficiency programs.

1.2 Designated Contact Person for this RFP

Andy Meyer
Program Manager
Efficiency Maine
168 Capitol Street, Augusta, ME 04330-6856
Email: andy.meyer@efficiencymaine.com
Phone: (207) 213-4148

1.3 Schedule of Activities

	Event	Date/Deadline
1	RFP Issued	3/15/18
2	Question Period Closes	3/29/18
3	Responses to Questions Posted	4/5/18
4	Proposals Due at Efficiency Maine Trust Office	5/4/18
5	Anticipated Award Date	5/31/2018
6	Anticipated Contractor Start	7/1/2018

Schedule changes: The Trust reserves the right to modify this schedule at its discretion. Any changes or additional information regarding the RFP schedule and pre-bid activities, including responses to questions, will be posted on the Trust's website at: http://www.efficiencymaine.com/opportunities

1.4 Questions

Questions regarding this RFP must be submitted by email to the Designated Contact Person listed in section 1.2 prior to the close of the Question Period specified in section 1.3. The subject line of the email should be: **Call Center RFP Questions**. Responses to questions will be posted on the Trust's website.

1.5 Proposal Submittal Deadline

Proposals must be received at the Trust's office by the due date and time specified in section 1.3. Any proposal received after the deadline will not be considered. Proposals must be complete when submitted; changes or additions will not be accepted after the specified due date and time, except for any clarifications requested of bidders by the Trust. Each bidder is responsible for ensuring timely receipt of its proposal. Further details regarding proposal requirements are provided in section 5 of this RFP.

1.6 Cost of Proposal Preparation

Costs incurred in the preparation of any proposal in response to this RFP are the sole responsibility of the bidder.

1.7 Anticipated Contract Term

It is anticipated that this RFP will result in a contract for an initial term of two years, starting July 1, 2018. The contract will include an optional one-year extension by mutual agreement.

1.8 Anticipated Contract Budget

Proposals should be bid on a time and materials basis, including specific rates for personnel and cost for any required materials, with an estimated total cost based on the Scope of Work set forth in Section 3.

1.9 Contract Award

The Trust will notify all bidders of the contract award decision by email. The anticipated award date is specified in section 1.3. The Trust reserves the right to negotiate the final terms and conditions of the contract award with a winning bidder whose proposal is selected by the Trust, and to reject any winning bidder with whom the Trust cannot agree to terms and conditions meeting the Trust's needs, in the Trust's sole judgment.

1.10 Contracting Process

The selection of service providers and grant recipients is governed by the Efficiency Maine Trust Rule Chapter 1: Contracting Process for Service Providers and Grant Recipients, which can be found on the Trust's website:
http://www.efficiencymaine.com/docs/Chapter-1-Contracting-Process-for-Service-Providers-and-Grant-Recipients.pdf

SECTION 2 – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.1 Efficiency Maine Trust

Efficiency Maine is the independent administrator for programs to lower the cost and environmental impacts of energy in Maine. Our programs promote energy conservation and alternative energy systems primarily by delivering rebates on the purchase of high-efficiency upgrades to help customers save electricity, natural gas and heating fuels throughout the Maine economy. The Trust is governed by a stakeholder Board of Trustees with oversight from the Maine Public Utilities Commission.

2.2 Call Center Background and Context

Efficiency Maine offers rebates, financing, technical information and directories of independent energy efficiency contractors to homeowners and businesses throughout Maine. Incentives are offered for energy efficiency upgrades like insulation, space heating, water heating, lighting, appliances, pumps, motors, and commercial kitchen appliances. These offerings are part of eight different programs that are implemented by third-party companies ("delivery teams") under contract to Efficiency Maine.

Outreach efforts include our website, social media, direct mail, email, advertising, trade shows, webinars, and more. Customers and contractors contact Efficiency Maine primarily via mail, email, and phone. Most of the phone calls and emails come through our call center. The call center often answers questions using our website and Google Drive-based call center manuals; questions they cannot answer are forwarded on to Efficiency Maine staff or members of a delivery team under separate sub-contract to Efficiency Maine. Currently, there are four full-time equivalent call center agents (including a team lead).

Call center duties typically include:

- 60 inbound calls per day;
- 30 inbound emails per day;
- 60 pieces of postal mail per day (all are forwarded to the appropriate delivery team or Efficiency Maine staff member);
- 0-100 outbound phone survey call attempts and 10 completed surveys per day;
- Fulfilling requests for Efficiency Maine literature;
- Establishing customer eligibility for certain Efficiency Maine programs ; and
- Reporting (daily, weekly, and quarterly).

2.3 Additional Sources of Information

Following are links to additional information that bidders may find helpful in preparing a response to this RFP:

TITLE	LOCATION (link)
Efficiency Maine Trust website	www.efficiencymaine.com
Most recent Efficiency Maine Trust Annual Report	https://www.efficiencymaine.com/about/library/reports/

SECTION 3 – SCOPE OF WORK

3.1 Overview and Objectives

Under this solicitation, the Efficiency Maine Trust seeks a qualified contractor or team of contractors to provide customer-focused, inbound and outbound, call center and customer service fulfillment services in support of energy efficiency program delivery. The call center must be able to provide clear and accurate information about Trust programs and ensure that calls are transferred to other Trust personnel or contractors when necessary.

The call center will be required to have broad knowledge of all Trust programs, know where to find program details, and provide first call resolution whenever possible. When necessary, the call center representative should provide “hot” transfers to the appropriate Efficiency Maine staff or sub-contracted delivery team resource. Efficiency Maine will provide routine training to the call center as needed.

The call center will be expected to document each call. The call center will also be expected to have capability to monitor and record calls for quality assurance, performance improvement, and program enhancement purposes.

The call center will also fulfill other customer service needs including responding to email inquiries, fulfilling literature requests, conducting phone surveys, and placing phone invitations to Efficiency Maine events.

3.2 Tasks and Related Requirements

1. <u>Inbound call support</u> – The call center provides live, dedicated agent support for customer calls from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday (except Maine State holidays) and voicemail all other hours. The call center must offer voicemail with greetings customized for business hours, after hours, and holidays.
2. <u>Inbound email support</u> – The call center provides inbound email support from 8:00 a.m.

to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday (except Maine State holidays), using Efficiency Maine's Outlook webmail. The call center will respond to all inbound emails by either answering or forwarding to the appropriate backup.

3. Hot transfers – The call center must be able to "hot transfer" callers to backup specialist. For the purposes of this procurement, "hot transfer" is defined as bringing a specialist onto the call so that the customer, Call Center agent, and specialist are all on a three-way call for the introduction and then the Call Center agent exits, leaving the customer and specialist connected to one another.
4. System Emergency Backup Plan – The call center must have a backup plan for phone, internet, and hardware system failures.
5. Personnel Backup Plan – The call center must have a clear backup plan for maintaining a fully staffed team and compensating for vacancies (e.g., due to vacation, illness, training, resignation, etc.). Preference will be given to bidders that can maintain the maximum trained and experienced agents while managing costs. For example, the call center could have agents that are dedicated to Efficiency Maine two to three days per week and can be reassigned to work up to 5 days per week if needed. We refer to these as "rotator agents." At least two days per week per agent are needed in order to maintain necessary skill levels. All other things being equal, a proposal with six agents sharing 160 hours per week would be preferred over a proposal for four agents sharing 160 hours per week.
6. Outbound call campaigns – The call center provides outbound call services, as needed, such as follow-up surveys and invitations to Efficiency Maine events.
7. Literature fulfillment – The call center stocks literature provided by Efficiency Maine (20 to 30 different ones) and mails to customers, contractors, or others, as requested. The call center must report the revision level of all literature in stock and manage the reordering of additional material from Efficiency Maine (at no cost to call center) to ensure availability.
8. US Mail – The call center must check a local US Post Office mailbox daily and respond to or forward all pieces.
9. Service Levels – The call center must achieve these weekly Service Levels:
   a. Answering time: 90% within 20 seconds;
   b. Phone monitoring availability: 99% during business hours;
   c. Phone system availability: 99.9% during business hours;
   d. Respond to literature fulfillment requests: same business day; and
   e. Respond to email requests: 2 business hours;
10. Web testing – The call center must test specified portions of Efficiency Maine's website weekly and alert Efficiency Maine of any errors.
11. Expense management – The call center must manage expenses to stay within budget.

3.4 Reporting

1. Recorded Calls
   a. The call center must be able to securely retain all call recordings for six months and provide remote access to recorded calls to Efficiency Maine staff.

   b. The call center must be available for joint monitoring of recorded calls.
2. Daily Reports – The call center provides daily reports, as requested, including the following topics:
   a. Call campaign results
   b. Phone survey results
3. Weekly reports – The call center will provide weekly reports, as requested, including the following topics:
   a. Number of calls by per day by call reason (e.g., which energy efficiency program)
   b. Number of calls per day answered within Service Level during business hours
   c. Number of calls per day received outside of business hours
   d. Daily call average duration
   e. Number of inbound emails per day
   f. Number of inbound postal mail pieces received per day
   g. Number of outbound calls by call campaign per day
   h. Number of completed surveys by survey per day
   i. Training status of each agent by training module (developed by Efficiency Maine)
   j. Monthly actual and forecasted expense compared to contract
   k. Customer feedback
   l. Response times of delivery teams to Call Center forwarded calls
   m. Efficiency Maine website testing results (tests specified by Efficiency Maine)
   n. Literature levels and inventory revision levels (to ensure up-to-date)
   o. Frequently asked questions
   p. Process/protocol suggestions for improvement
4. Quarterly Reports – The call center will present a quarterly business review, in person, sharing highlights and critical success factors of their work.

3.5 Facilities, Security, and Infrastructure

- Emergency backup – The call center must have adequate facilities and back-up infrastructure to ensure continuous phone, computer and email services. Agents must work from a shared office, but ideally have the ability to work from home on days with dangerous weather.
- Noise – Background sound must be inaudible to callers.
- Computers – All call center representative workstations must have internet access, standard PC applications (e.g., Acrobat Reader and Microsoft Office), and access to color printing.
- Toll-Free Number – The call center must be able to receive calls directed from Efficiency Maine's toll-free number.
- Security – The call center must provide industry-standard data security for Efficiency Maine information stored by call center systems and personnel. The call center must abide by the Efficiency Maine Confidential Information Management Systems policies.
- Location – Efficiency Maine strongly prefers a call center located near an Efficiency Maine Trust office (Augusta or Westbrook) in order to facilitate site visits.

3.6 Training

In addition to hiring representatives with appropriate professionalism and verbal communication skills, the call center will need to follow a clearly documented process for training, testing, and monitoring representatives. Successful bidders will demonstrate plans for on-going process improvement and training for employees.

Efficiency Maine and its program delivery contractors will be available to provide training on content related to efficiency programs, but the call center will need to be able to provide other professional development training such as customer service, phone skills, Microsoft Office, and business writing.

3.7 Staffing

Efficiency Maine expects that the winning bidder will staff the call center with four full-time equivalents. (See mention of "rotator agents" above.) Preference will be given to bidders who can provide a team of rotating agents so that more than four agents can be fully trained with at least two days per week of on-phone practice.

SECTION 4 – GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND REQUIREMENTS

4.1 Contractor Responsibilities

The winning bidder will be responsible for adhering to the following requirements:

- **Confidentiality.** All the Trust's customer information is confidential, and the winning bidder, its staff, and its subcontractors will be required to sign a nondisclosure agreement before any customer data is released to the contractor. See http://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/35-A/title35-Asec10106.html for additional information on related confidentiality restrictions.

- **Project Personnel.** In accordance with Standard Agreement, Rider B, Section 3, Provider Personnel (see Attachment B), no re-deployment or replacement of any Key Personnel may be made without the prior written consent of the Trust.

- **Communication and Marketing Coordination.** The winning bidder will be required to work cooperatively with the Trust and any marketing contractors to ensure program marketing materials and messages comply with style guidelines and to coordinate messages across various media outlets.

- **Call Center Transition.** The Trust expects the winning bidder to work with all preceding and succeeding contractors to accomplish a smooth transition. The transition must be performed in an organized and efficient manner with a minimum of disruption to customers, vendors, trade allies, contractors, and other energy-efficiency service partners.

4.2 Efficiency Maine Trust Responsibilities

The Trust, through its designated Program Manager for this contract, will oversee and manage all work undertaken by the winning bidder, including but not limited to:

- Providing project oversight and management;
- Reviewing, commenting on and approving all deliverables;
- Reviewing and approving, or rejecting, invoices;
- Providing guidance and direction regarding program implementation, initiatives and strategies;
- Reviewing program data and contractor maintained tracking systems; and
- Providing relevant work products and data that are the property of the Trust.

SECTION 5 – PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

5.1 Project Organization and Staffing Requirements

Proposals that include teaming arrangements must designate one party as the lead bidder. Personnel who are proposed shall be the actual contract performers. Bidders may not substitute personnel without prior written approval of the Trust.

5.2 Submittal Requirements

Proposals must be delivered to the Trust by the due date and time specified in Section 1.3 of this RFP to the attention of the designated Contact Person specified in section 1.2. Proposals must be delivered in an envelope or package visibly labeled, "**Response to RFP EM-008-2018 – Call Center Services"**

The proposal submission must include:

- One (1) signed original document that is unbound and includes all sections, forms and appendices;
- Four (4) *bound* hard copies of the entire original, and
- One (1) electronic copy on CD-ROM of the complete proposal; files on the CD-ROM must be provided in Microsoft Office and/or PDF format and a copy of Attachment C must be provided in Microsoft Excel format.

The Trust reserves the right to reject any proposal that does not meet these requirements.

5.3 Content and Organization Requirements

The proposal must include the following contents, which should be presented in the following order:

1. Proposal Cover Sheet Form

- Include a completed, signed Proposal Cover Sheet Form, which is provided in Attachment A.
- If the proposal involves any subcontractors, provide a completed Team Commitment page.

2. Letter of Transmittal / Letters of Commitment

- Include a brief Letter of Transmittal, on company letterhead, signed by an appropriate officer of the lead bidder who can bind the company to a contract.
- If the proposal involves any subcontractors, include a letter of commitment from each subcontractor, signed by an appropriate officer of the subcontractor who can bind the company to a contract.

4. Introduction (2 pages maximum)

- Summarize understanding of the services requested in the RFP and proposed approach to fulfilling the requirements of this RFP.
- Briefly describe the proposed project team and qualifications.

5. Statement of Work (6 pages maximum)

- ***Overview:*** Provide an overview of the proposed approach. Describe how the project is to be implemented to fulfill the objectives of the program, as specified by the Trust, and all requirements of the Scope of Work (Section 3).
- ***Task by Task Program Implementation Plan:*** Specify the proposed Program Implementation Plan for accomplishing each individual task specified in the Scope of Work. Each task-specific plan should outline the approach to the task and specify the relevant methods and deliverables.

6. Staffing, Management and Qualifications (10 pages maximum)

- ***Overview:*** Briefly describe the overall staffing plan and management approach to the program, including coordination with subcontractors where applicable.
- ***Organizational chart:*** Provide an organizational chart of the proposed team for the program. The chart should identify key team members, their project roles, and illustrate relationships between the individual staff and the organizations (the Trust, the contractor and any subcontractors) and clearly indicate the primary point of contact for the Trust.
- ***Individual qualifications:*** For each staff member that is bid on the project, please provide a brief narrative that includes a description of the individual's role on this project and a summary of his or her relevant skills, qualifications, experience and expertise, including previous program evaluation projects completed. (Resumes must be included in a separate appendix.)
- ***Corporate qualifications:*** Describe the corporate qualifications of the lead bidder, including brief descriptions of past experience on contracts of similar scope and size; provide a client name and contract value for each and describe how the work is relevant to the current RFP. Provide the same information for each subcontractor.
- ***Financial capability:*** Disclose and provide details regarding any bankruptcy petition (whether voluntary or involuntary), receivership, insolvency event, or similar adverse

financial circumstance suffered or incurred by bidder (or any predecessor entity) within the three years preceding the date of submission of this proposal. Disclose and provide details regarding any litigation, arbitration, or administrative proceedings involving bidder within the three years preceding the date of submission of this proposal in which the amount claimed or adjudged against bidder exceeded $50,000. Upon request, in order to provide the Trust with the ability to judge the bidder's financial capacity and capabilities to undertake and successfully complete the contract, the bidder may be required to submit two years of certified financial statements that include a balance sheet, income statement and statement of cash flow, and all applicable notes for the most recent calendar year or the bidder's most recent fiscal year. If certified financial statements are not available, the bidder should provide either a reviewed or compiled statement from an independent accountant setting forth the same information required for the certified financial statements, together with a certification from the Chief Executive Officer or the Chief Financial Officer, that the financial statements and other information included in the statements fairly present in all material respects the financial condition, results of operations and cash flows of the bidder as of, and for, the periods presented in the statements. In addition, the bidder may be required to submit a bank reference. The bidder may clearly mark financial documents submitted in connection with the proposal as "Confidential Financial Information."

1. Budget/Cost Proposal (5 pages maximum)

- ***Cost Information:*** Provide a Time-and-Materials with a Not-to-Exceed bid for delivering the program, including separate rates by program year (July 1 – June 30). The bid should reflect an understanding that under the resulting contract agreement the winning bidder will be bound by the labor rates and not-to-exceed level specified in the contract.
- ***Narrative:*** Provide a brief narrative explanation of the project budget/cost proposal, including the total price, price for each task, and any relevant assumptions.
- ***Cost Form:*** Provide a completed Project Proposal Cost Form (Attachment C) detailing the breakout of costs, including: labor hours, hourly rates and costs for all personnel, including any subcontractors; other direct costs; and total costs. All related expenses must be included and itemized on this form; any costs not included on this form will be disallowed.

Appendices

- ***Appendix A – References***: Provide a list of references for the lead bidder and any subcontractors included in the bid. At least three (3) references must be provided for each organization included in the bid. For each reference, please provide current contact information (name, company, telephone number, and email address) and a brief description of the work conducted for the reference and its relevance to the current RFP.
- ***Appendix B – Resumes:*** Provide resumes of key project team members in an Appendix. Key project team members identified in the proposal must be dedicated to the proposed project at the level proposed. Any substitutions of key project team members must be approved by the Trust.

SECTION 6 – PROPOSAL EVALUATION AND AWARD

Proposals that are received by the submission deadline and that meet the requirements established in the RFP will be reviewed and evaluated by a proposal review team. The Trust reserves the right to decide whether a proposal is or is not acceptable in terms of meeting the requirements of this RFP and to accept or reject any or all proposals received.

In evaluating proposals, the Trust reserves the right to take any of the following steps, with respect to either all of the proposals received or to a subset of proposals selected as superior to the others: (1) consult with prior clients on the performance of the bidder or of particular persons proposed for this bid; (2) schedule presentations or interviews with representatives of the bidder or persons proposed for the project; (3) conduct a review of past performance, including a review of reports, analyses, or other materials that would reflect the bidder's performance; and (4) request additional data or supporting material.

6.1 Evaluation Criteria

In evaluating proposals submitted in response to this RFP, the proposal review team will use the following criteria:

Scoring Category	Maximum Points Available
1. Statement of Work **a.** Does the Statement of Work present a comprehensive, sound approach for accomplishing the requirements of this RFP? **b.** Is the Statement of Work thorough, specific and responsive to the requirements and details specified in the RFP? **c.** Does the proposal demonstrate a clear understanding of the Trust's requirements? **d.** Does the Statement of Work reflect best practices?	30
2. Staffing, Management and Qualifications **a.** Is the proposed project staffing plan clear, well-defined and appropriate for the scope of the services requested by the Trust? **b.** How qualified are the proposed personnel in terms of skills, expertise and experience relevant to this particular program? **c.** How qualified is the bidding team in terms of demonstrated experience and capacity to execute this type of program?	30
3. Project Cost/Budget **a.** Are appropriate resources being devoted to the individual tasks and sub-tasks? **b.** How does the total bid compare to other comparable proposals? **c.** Is the proposed budget consistent with the proposed Statement of Work?	30
4. Proximity to an Efficiency Maine Office (Augusta or Westbrook) **a.** Proximity facilitates on-site monitoring and training.	10
Total	**100**

6.2 Contract Award

The Trust will notify all bidders of the contract award decision by email. The anticipated award date is specified in section 1.

The Trust reserves the right to negotiate the final terms and conditions of the contract award with a winning bidder whose proposal is selected by the Trust, and to reject any winning bidder with whom the Trust cannot agree to terms and conditions meeting the Trust's needs, in the Trust's sole judgment.

SECTION 7 – GENERAL CONDITIONS

7.1 RFP Process – Reservation of Rights

The Trust reserves the right to cancel or extend the RFP process at any time. The Trust also reserves the right to reject any and all submissions in response to this RFP and to waive formalities if doing so is in the best interests of the Trust.

7.2 Contract Agreement

A copy of the Efficiency Maine Trust Standard Agreement appropriate to this RFP is provided as **Attachment B – Standard Agreement.** This is the standard document that will complete the agreement for services between the winning bidder and the Trust.

7.3 Billing

Invoices submitted for work performed under the resulting contract shall be sufficiently specific to allow the Trust to evaluate charges billed in light of the tasks required. Each invoice must include a clear breakdown, by task where appropriate, indicating the individual personnel who performed work; the date, nature, and duration of work; and the rate charged.

7.4 Termination of Contract

Termination of the agreement by the Trust is governed by section 7 of the Standard Agreement (see Attachment B).

7.5 Request for Reconsideration

An aggrieved person may request a hearing for reconsideration of a contract award decision by filing a written petition with the Executive Director of the Trust within 14 calendar days of the notification of the contract award. Each petition to reconsider must meet the requirements specified in Efficiency Maine Trust Rule Chapter 1, Contracting Process for Service Providers and Grant Recipients, Section 5(B), which can be found on the Trust's website under Documents and Services: http://www.efficiencymaine.com/docs/Chapter-1-Contracting-Process-for-Service-Providers-and-Grant-Recipients.pdf