



**EFFICIENCY MAINE TRUST  
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) FOR  
CALL CENTER SERVICES**

**RFP EM-008-2021**

**Date Issued: February 18, 2021**

**Emailed Proposals Due: April 1, 2021**

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THE TRUST IS THE INDEPENDENT ADMINISTRATOR FOR PROGRAMS TO IMPROVE THE EFFICIENCY OF ENERGY USE AND REDUCE GREENHOUSE GASES IN MAINE. THE TRUST DOES THIS PRIMARILY BY DELIVERING FINANCIAL INCENTIVES ON THE PURCHASE OF HIGH-EFFICIENCY EQUIPMENT OR CHANGES TO OPERATIONS THAT HELP CUSTOMERS SAVE ELECTRICITY, NATURAL GAS AND OTHER FUELS THROUGHOUT THE MAINE ECONOMY. THE TRUST IS A QUASI-STATE AGENCY GOVERNED BY A BOARD OF TRUSTEES WITH OVERSIGHT FROM THE MAINE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION. ....	6
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**Separate attachments:**

Attachment A – Proposal Cover Sheet Form

Attachment B – Standard Agreement

Attachment C – Project Proposal Cost Form

## SECTION 1 – INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTIONS

### 1.1 Purpose

The Efficiency Maine Trust (the Trust) seeks a qualified contractor or team of contractors to provide call center services for three years starting 7/1/2021. The work is currently being handled by four full-time equivalent agents. In-state call centers are highly preferred.

### 1.2 Designated Contact Person for this RFP

Andy Meyer  
Senior Program Manager  
Efficiency Maine Trust  
168 Capitol Street, Suite 1  
Augusta, ME 04330-6856  
Phone: (207) 213-4148  
Email: andy.meyer@efficiencymaine.com

### 1.3 Schedule

	Milestone	Date/Deadline
1	RFP Issued	2/18/2021
2	Questions Due	3/4/2021
3	Responses to Questions Posted	3/11/2021
4	Emailed Proposals Due	4/1/2021
5	Anticipated Award Date	4/22/2021
6	Anticipated Contractor Start	5/13/2021
7	Call Center go live	7/1/2021

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 Anticipated Contract Term

The Trust anticipates awarding a single bidder or team of bidders up to three one-year contracts starting 7/1/2021.

### 1.5 Anticipated Contract Budget

The anticipated annual budget for this program is approximately \$200,000 per year. Each year the actual budget will be updated pursuant to approvals by the Trust's Board of Trustees and orders by Maine Public Utilities Commission related to the Trust's Triennial Plan.

The proposed budgets for the call center should cover all costs related to its operation under the awarded contract, including labor, office space, technology, licensing, supplies, and printing. Excluded costs are brochure printing and postage.

### 1.6 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.

### **1.7 Submitting Questions**

Questions regarding this RFP must be submitted by email to the Designated Contact Person listed in section 1.2 prior to the due date above. The subject line of the email should be: "Call Center RFP Questions". Responses to questions will be posted on <http://www.efficiencymaine.com/opportunities>.

### **1.8 Proposal Confidentiality**

Bidders should be aware that information provided to the Trust is subject to the Maine Freedom of Access Act (FOAA), 1 M.R.S. §§ 401 et seq., unless there is a specific confidentiality exemption in the Efficiency Maine Trust Act, 35-A M.R.S. §10106. Bidders should assume that all information submitted in response to this RFP will be considered public records available for public inspection pursuant to the Maine FOAA following announcement of an award decision.

### **1.9 Contract Award**

The Trust will notify all bidders of the contract award decision by email. 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. The Trust reserves the right to reject any proposal that does not meet these requirements.

### **1.10 Contracting Process**

The selection process 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>.

### **1.11 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 noncompliant submissions in response to this RFP and to waive minor formalities in the Trust's reasonable discretion. Issuance of this RFP does not commit the Trust to make an award or to pay any costs or expenses incurred by a bidder in connection with preparation of a proposal or response to this RFP.

### **1.12 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.

Information regarding a customer that has participated or that may participate in a Trust program is deemed confidential by the Efficiency Maine Trust Act. The winning bidder and its agents and subcontractors will be required to execute a nondisclosure agreement. See <http://legislature.maine.gov/statutes/35-A/title35-Asec10106.html> for additional information on related confidentiality restrictions.

**1.13 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>

## SECTION 2 – BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### 2.1 Efficiency Maine Trust

The Trust is the independent administrator for programs to improve the efficiency of energy use and reduce greenhouse gases in Maine. The Trust does this primarily by delivering financial incentives on the purchase of high-efficiency equipment or changes to operations that help customers save electricity, natural gas and other fuels throughout the Maine economy. The Trust is a quasi-state agency governed by a Board of Trustees with oversight from the Maine Public Utilities Commission.

### 2.2 Background and Context

Efficiency Maine offers financial incentives, technical information, and directories of independent energy efficiency contractors to homeowners and businesses throughout Maine. Incentives are available for energy efficiency upgrades like insulation, space heating, water heating, lighting, appliances, pumps, and motors. These incentives are made through programs that are implemented by third-party companies (“program delivery teams”) under contract to Efficiency Maine.

Customer outreach efforts include the Efficiency Maine 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, postal letters, and emails come to Efficiency Maine’s call center. The call center answers some questions using the Efficiency Maine website and manuals. Questions they cannot answer are forwarded on to Efficiency Maine staff or members of a program delivery team. Currently, calls and email inquiries are fielded by four full-time equivalent call center agents (including a team lead).

Call center duties typically include:

1. 100 inbound calls per day (some fully handled, some forwarded)
2. 40 inbound emails per day
3. 80 pieces of postal mail per day (all are forwarded to the appropriate program team or Efficiency Maine staff member)
4. 0-100 outbound phone surveys per day
5. 0-10 literature request fulfillments
6. 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	<a href="http://www.energymaine.com">www.energymaine.com</a>
Efficiency Maine Trust Annual Reports	<a href="https://www.energymaine.com/about/library/reports/">https://www.energymaine.com/about/library/reports/</a>
Efficiency Maine Trust – Triennial Plan	<a href="https://www.energymaine.com/about/library/policies/">https://www.energymaine.com/about/library/policies/</a>

## SECTION 3 – SCOPE OF WORK

Following is a task-by-task description of the work covered by this RFP. As explained in section 4.3, below, bid proposals must reflect the bidder's plan, approach, capacity for each task and describe related experience.

### 3.1 Overview and Objectives

Under this solicitation, the Efficiency Maine Trust seeks a qualified contractor or team of contractors to provide call center services in support of our energy efficiency programs. The focus of the call center is to make it easy for callers to do business with Efficiency Maine by helping them navigate to our resources: programs, trade allies, technical information, staff, etc.

The call center will be required to leverage our website, manuals, and other sources of information to provide first call resolution whenever possible, and to forward callers to the appropriate backup team otherwise. When necessary, call center representatives should provide "hot" transfers. Efficiency Maine will provide 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, handling inbound postal mail, fulfilling literature requests, conducting phone surveys, and making invitation calls to Efficiency Maine events.

### 3.2 Tasks and Related Requirements

1. Inbound call support – The call center provides live, dedicated agents to support inbound 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. Hot transfers – The call center must be able to "hot transfer" callers to backup specialists. 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.
3. Inbound email support – 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.
4. Outbound call campaigns – The call center provides outbound call services, as needed, such as surveys and invitations to Efficiency Maine events.
5. Literature fulfillment – The call center stocks literature provided by Efficiency Maine (20 to 30 different pieces) 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.
6. US Mail – The call center must check an Efficiency-Maine-funded local US Post Office mailbox daily

- and respond to or forward all pieces.
7. Web testing – The call center must test specified portions of Efficiency Maine’s website weekly and alert Efficiency Maine of any errors.
  8. Staffing – Efficiency Maine expects that the winning bidder will staff the call center with the equivalent of four full-time agents. 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.
  9. Agent 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 team 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, and Microsoft Office.
  10. Personnel Backup Plan – The call center must have a clear backup plan for maintaining a fully staffed team and covering 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.
  11. 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.
  12. Expense management – The call center must manage expenses to stay within budget.
  13. 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.
    2. Daily Reports – The call center must be able to provide 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. During business hours
        - i. Number of calls during open hours
        - ii. Number of calls answered within 20 seconds, during open hours
        - iii. % of calls answered within 20 seconds during open hours
        - iv. Number of calls not answered
        - v. % of calls, hung up, not answered, or went to voicemail, during open hours
        - vi. Average call duration by min
        - vii. Number of inbound emails per day



- viii. Number of inbound postal mail pieces received per day
    - ix. Number of outbound total dials per day
    - x. Number of completed surveys per day
    - xi. Number of outbound direct mail pieces sent
  - b. Outside of business hours
    - i. Number of calls received
    - ii. Percent of calls received outside of business hours
    - iii. Prior 60 days total calls received
    - iv. Prior 60 days total calls received outside of business hours
  - c. Training status of each agent by training module (developed by Efficiency Maine)
  - d. Customer feedback including frequently asked questions
  - e. Suggestions from call center agent for program/process/website improvement
  - f. Efficiency Maine website testing results (tests specified by Efficiency Maine)
  - g. Speed-to-answer by program teams to call center forwarded calls
  - h. Literature levels and inventory revision levels (to ensure up-to-date)
  - i. Year-to-date actual expense and full year forecast compared to contract
- 4. Monthly Reports
  - a. Number of calls by call reason (e.g., which energy efficiency program)
- 5. Quarterly Business Reviews – The Call Center will present a quarterly business review, sharing highlights and critical success factors of their work.
  - a. Changes to processes or personnel
  - b. Continuous improvement efforts and results
  - c. Monthly inbound call volume trends and by reason for call
  - d. Monthly inbound email volume trends and drivers
  - e. Monthly inbound postal mail volume trends and drivers
  - f. Monthly service level vs Service Level Agreement
  - g. Monthly expenses and full year forecast compared to contract
  - h. Feedback from customers and agents.
- 14. Facilities, Security, and Infrastructure
  - 1. Facility Efficiency Maine prefers that agents work together in a shared office where they can see and talk with one another.
  - 2. Emergency backup – The call center must have adequate facilities and back-up infrastructure to ensure continuous phone and computer services in the event of primary system failures. Agents must have the ability to work from home on days with dangerous weather.
  - 3. Location – Efficiency Maine strongly prefers a call center located near an Efficiency Maine Trust office (Augusta or Westbrook) in order to facilitate site visits.
  - 4. Noise – Background sound must be inaudible to callers.
  - 5. 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.
  - 6. Toll-Free Number – The call center must be able to receive calls directed from Efficiency Maine’s toll-free number.
  - 7. Security – The call center must provide industry-standard data security for Efficiency Maine information stored or accessed by call center systems and personnel. The call center must abide by the Efficiency Maine Confidential Information Management Systems policies.

## SECTION 4 – PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

### 4.1 Proposal Packaging and Physical Contents

Proposals must be emailed to the Designated Contact mentioned in section 1.2 above. The subject line of the email must be “Call Center Services RFP Proposal.” The proposal must include the following attachments:

- One electronic copy of the complete proposal in Microsoft Word and/or PDF format that includes signatures of authorized representatives using Attachment A.
- A copy of Attachment C in Microsoft Excel format.

### 4.2 Format Requirements

Proposals will be evaluated for adherence to the following format requirements:

- Proposals must be typewritten.
- Pages must be numbered.
- Unnecessary attachments (i.e., any attachments beyond those sufficient to present a complete, comprehensive, and effective proposal) will not be considered in the evaluation of the proposal.
- Proposals must adhere to prescribed page limits specified in this RFP. The Trust values concise proposals.

### 4.3 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 of the Request for Proposals.
- Proposals that include teaming arrangements must designate one party as the lead bidder.

#### 2. Letter of Transmittal (1 page)

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.

#### 3. Letters of Commitment (1 page each)

If the proposal involves any subcontractors, include a letter of commitment from each subcontractor, signed by an authorized employee of the subcontractor who can bind the company to a contract. Include a statement certifying that the provision of services to the Trust will not result in a conflict of interest.

#### 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 (10 pages maximum)

List the tasks outlined in section 3.2 above and briefly describe how you will accomplish the task, including examples of how you have completed similar work in the past. This section is a critical part of the proposal.

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

Describe the bidding team's qualifications, including brief descriptions of past experience on contracts of similar scope and size. For each, provide the client name, the results achieved, and how the work is relevant to the current RFP.

**b. 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 education, training, experience and expertise. Include resumes in Appendix B.

**c. Organizational Chart**

Provide an organizational chart of the proposed team for the program. The chart should identify key team members where identified, their roles, and relationships between staff and organizations (the Trust, the contractor, and any subcontractors). Clearly indicate the day-to-day primary point of contact for the Trust as well as the lead executive contact.

**d. 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.

**7. Cost Proposal (use Project Cost Form provided)**

Using the Project Proposal Cost Form (Attachment C) provided with the RFP, provide a time-and-materials with a not-to-exceed cost proposal for the Statement of Work for each of the three years covered in section 1.4 (Anticipated Contract Term). Any costs not included on this form will be disallowed.

**8. Appendices****a. Appendix A - References**

Provide a list of references for the lead bidder and any subcontractors included in the bid. At least three 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.

**b. Appendix B - Resumes**

Provide resumes of key project team members. Key project team members identified in the proposal must be dedicated to the proposed project in the role proposed. Any substitutions of key project team members must be approved by the Trust.

## SECTION 5 – PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals that meet the requirements established in the RFP will be evaluated by a proposal review team. The Trust reserves the right to decide whether a proposal is 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.

### 5.1 Evaluation Criteria

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

Scoring Category	Maximum Points
<b>1. Statement of Work</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Does the Statement of Work present a comprehensive, sound approach for accomplishing the requirements of this RFP?</li> <li>b. Is the Statement of Work thorough, specific, and responsive to the requirements and details specified in the RFP?</li> <li>c. Does the proposal demonstrate a clear understanding of the Statement of Work and the Trust's expectations?</li> <li>d. Does the Statement of Work reflect best practices in delivering the specific services described in this RFP?</li> </ul>	30
<b>2. Staff and Organization Qualifications</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Is the proposed project staffing plan clear, appropriate, and realistic for the scope of the services requested?</li> <li>b. How qualified are the proposed personnel in terms of relevant skills and experience?</li> <li>c. How qualified are the proposed organizations (lead bidder and subcontractors) in terms of demonstrated experience and capacity to execute this type of program?</li> </ul>	30
<b>3. Project Cost/Budget</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Are appropriate resources being devoted?</li> <li>b. How does the total bid cost compare to other comparable proposals?</li> <li>c. Is the proposed budget consistent with the requested Statement of Work?</li> <li>d. How do the quoted rates compare to other comparable proposals?</li> </ul>	30
<b>4. Proximity to an Efficiency Maine Office</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. How easy is it for Efficiency Maine staff to visit the call center?</li> </ul>	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>