

**Efficiency Maine Trust Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to
Provide Various Advertising, Graphic Design and Website Support Services
RFQ EM-011-2021**

Responses to Questions as of March 26, 2021

1. What are you looking for in a partner or pool of partners? Are there experiences in the past that have helped inform your current search? [Also submitted: You mentioned working with a pool of qualified partners. Do you have a sense of or expectation regarding how that pool might work together?]

Response: This RFQ is an ongoing resource to help support the communications needs of Efficiency Maine programs. Please see **SECTION 3 – SCOPE OF WORK FOR POTENTIAL SERVICES AND ASSIGNMENTS** for requested information on the approach to coordinating with other subcontractors. Our requirements are based on past experiences that have illustrated the skills and expertise needed to help the Trust market its programs and report on its activities.

2. Regarding Section 3.3 Website Services, must an applicant be proficient in both website development AND app development in order to apply under this section? For example, if our application includes a strong demonstration of WordPress design and programming skills for responsive sites, but no app development experience, would we be considered for the WordPress-related design and development work? Or, should we consider ourselves not qualified under this section? [Also submitted: We understand that your current website is on WordPress CMS. Do you wish to continue with the same CMS, or you are open to other open-source CMS like Drupal?]

Response: An applicant need not be proficient in both website development and app development (only experienced in website design and development), but must have a knowledge of app development, APIs, and third-party plugins, and be able to subcontract for and/or manage an app development project, if required. Efficiency Maine would be open to any solution that offers improvements in delivery.

3. You mention brand strategy in Section 3.1. Have you done any brand strategy work in the past, and/or do you have any target audience or persona information?

Response: Efficiency Maine has a focused brand strategy. We are not looking to begin any brand strategy projects at this time.

4. In the digital advertising and graphics categories outlined in the RFQ, are you looking for a single firm with digital and traditional capabilities, or would a digital-only proposal be acceptable?

Response: A digital-only proposal would be acceptable. We are open to firms that do not offer traditional capabilities.

5. We want to focus our RFP response on how we can help you with your business issues.

a. What is the overarching business problem you are facing?

Response: Efficiency Maine is not addressing a business problem. The Trust routinely seeks consultants to supplement its ability to address the service areas outlined in the RFQ.

b. Why are you putting out this RFP for vendor partners at this time?

Response: We generally award contracts for a defined period of time and this current procurement allows us to continue the same type of services for a new time period.

6. Are you currently working with an agency?

Response: Yes. You can find a list of previous awardees on our website -- https://www.efficiencymaine.com/docs/RFQ_009_2018_Notice_of_Award.pdf

7. Are you dissatisfied with a current agency relationship?

Response: The Trust does not comment on past or present vendor relationships. The Trust routinely seeks consultants to supplement its ability to address the service areas outlined in the RFQ.

8. How many agencies have been invited to participate?

Response: The Efficiency Maine Trust seeks qualified bidders or teams of bidders to provide various advertising, graphic design, and website support services to help the Trust market its programs and report on its activities. The Trust has posted the opportunity on its website and has also informed a list of vendors that have subscribed at this link -- <https://www.efficiencymaine.com/about/newsletter-signup/> -- to receive RFP/RFQ notifications.

9. In the past, what's been missing in your agency relationships?

Response: The Trust does not comment on past or present vendor relationships. The Trust routinely seeks consultants to supplement its ability to address the service areas outlined in the RFQ.

10. What have you most appreciated in your agencies?

Response: The Trust has worked with a wide variety of contractors. The Trust expects contractors to have strong project planning skills and complete tasks in a timely and cost-effective manner.

11. How would you describe the ideal agency relationship?

Response: The Trust appreciates contractors that can act as a trusted consultant and that understand the goals of the organization well enough to recommend value-added solutions and/or strategic input. In many cases, the Trust already has a specific project that simply needs a contractor to execute as directed. We value partners that can execute projects efficiently and recognize that they may not be asked for input on all tasks.

12. Are you considering resources outside of Maine if they come with energy experience? Or is Maine preferred? [Also submitted: Is Efficiency Maine Trust looking for an in-state bidder, or may out of state bidders also respond to the proposal?]

Response: Any qualified vendor is eligible for this RFQ.

13. Who is the decision-making body for this RFP?

Response: Please see **Section 5 – PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA**. Please also see **Section 1.10 - Contracting Process** and **Section 1.9 - Contract Award**.

14. If we submit for all 4 service areas, are you looking for 3 samples each in Appendix C?

Response: Please follow the linked RFQ instructions and submit all samples that will best help the Trust understand the agency's capabilities.

15. Will the website be a complete rebuild or refresh? What do you want it to do that it does not do now?

Response: We have no plans to undertake a full website rebuild at this time.

16. Do you have an expectation around staffing levels/the number of dedicated agency personnel, specific experience in serving your organization?

Response: The Trust will leave it to the discretion of the vendor to determine the type of staffing needed to meet the requirements of the RFQ and for timely project delivery for assigned tasks. Staffing may be on a per project basis rather than for the duration of the contract period. Award of the RFQ is not a guarantee of a specific amount of work.

17. What in-house resources do you have that we would work with?

Response: The Trust utilizes the full Adobe Creative Cloud Suite and has in-house video production equipment. The Trust's website is on WordPress and our emails and contact management is through InfusionSoft.

18. How does your organization handle strategic planning? Do you have a current plan we would be working against?

Response: The Trust is guided by its Triennial Plan, which can be found at this link: <https://www.energymaine.com/about/library/policies/>. Strategic planning for communications and marketing is completed internally. Project and campaign strategy is drafted on a case-by-case basis.

19. Do you have any audience or industry research that will be shared with us?

Response: Depending on the project, the Trust may discuss program or industry specifics with the contractor, or work with a contractor to conduct necessary audience research. An overview of our work and audiences may be found in our Triennial Plan at this link: <https://www.energymaine.com/about/library/policies/>.

20. Who/what do you see as your primary competitors?

Response: Efficiency Maine is the sole administrator for programs to improve the efficiency of energy use and reduce greenhouse gases in Maine. As such, there are no other entities in the state performing similar work.

21. Are there other organizations in or out of energy that you admire and/or wish to emulate?

Response: The Trust does not seek to emulate other agencies, but we do appreciate seeing how other efficiency programs (like Efficiency Vermont, Mass Save®, NYSEERDA, and Energy Trust of Oregon) conduct outreach and communication efforts.

22. Can you share your marketing budget and/or budgets for each area (3.1 Advertising, 3.2 Graphic Design Services, 3.3 Website Services and 3.4 Third-party marketing SAAS Support)?

Response: In Fiscal Year 2020 (July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020) the budget for organization-wide Public Information and Outreach was approximately \$200,000. In addition to the Public Information and Outreach budget, the majority of the Trust's marketing and outreach activities are included in specific program budgets. The Trust may invest more or less money in marketing and outreach depending on program and organizational needs. Participating contractors should have no expectation of a certain amount of work or budget over the two-year period. Rather the Trust will discuss budgets for specific projects or outreach needs on a case-by-case basis. Please also see **Section 1.5 Anticipated Contract Budget.**

23. Can you give us an idea of the number of projects per area ?

Response: In the past, Efficiency Maine has overseen numerous simultaneous projects that support organization-wide needs. These projects have spanned up to five areas of service using up to seven vendors working independently or collaboratively as the needs of the project dictate.

24. Do you have an established media budget? What type of campaigns have you run? Digital, Social, OOH, DM etc.? Which have been most successful?

Response: Please see **Section 1.5 Anticipated Contract Budget**. We have run Google Text Ads, Google Display Network, Facebook ads, YouTube ads, print, radio and TV. We have done direct marketing, but not OOH. Google Ads and Facebook ads have yielded the best results for us.

25. What in your current marketing plans do you want to accomplish that you haven't to date?

Response: The Trust initiates marketing and outreach activities to match organizational and program goals. Please see the Triennial Plan for more information on these goals: <https://www.efficiencymaine.com/about/library/policies/>.

26. Is there any insurance requirement that needs to be fulfilled by bidder?

Response: Please see Attachment B, Standard Contract Template, Rider B, section 9.

27. We are an AWS Public Sector Partner for cloud hosting. Do you wish to host the redesigned website on AWS Cloud?

Response: The Trust's website is currently hosted on Godaddy, but Efficiency Maine would be open to alternate hosting platforms.

28. What are your security requirements for the website?

Response: The Trust relies on Godaddy, SSL, backups, and our Wordpress plugins to maintain our website security.

29. Do you have a style guide or brand standards? If not, would you like to have it developed as part of this project?

Response: Yes. Efficiency Maine has a style guide and brand guidelines. We currently do not foresee the need to revise them at this time. Please see the RFQ for detailed requirements.

30. Do you have any development or programming capabilities in-house?

Response: The Trust has programming experience in-house.

31. Is there anything specific you like about the current site and want us to retain or expand on its functionalities?

Response: There is no upcoming project scheduled to expand the website's capabilities. Over the RFQ period, the Trust may add additional resources or functionality, including a search-query database, but no specific projects are planned at this time.

32. Is Content migration part of the project? If yes, provide a ballpark estimate of the pages/content that needs to be migrated.

Response: No. Content migration is not part of this project.

33. Do you want to link videos from YouTube and/or other platforms, or would you like to have the media content self-hosted?

Response: The Trust would be interested in self-hosted videos if it offers improvements over the current service and improves delivery speeds.

34. What kind of post-launch support are you looking for? Can you give us the details of services that are expected from the bidder in terms of monthly support and maintenance?

Response: There is no upcoming project scheduled to expand the website's capabilities or relaunch the website. Therefore, "post-launch" support is not required at this time.

35. Do you expect a vendor to create the content for a redesigned website?

Response: We have no plans to undertake a full website rebuild at this time. The vendor will collaborate with members of Trust staff, as well as with other vendors, if necessary, to deliver requested updates or maintenance to the website.

36. Do you have a project completion date in mind for the web services part of the work?

Response: Website services are ongoing and will be requested on a project-by-project basis. Some website services, like routine maintenance and reporting, will be monthly tasks. For example, development of a new website feature or page may be completed by one vendor while another handles routine maintenance and reporting.

37. What is the budget allocated for the below work?

a. Website services

b. Third-party marketing Software as a Service (SaaS) support

Response: Please see **Section 1.5 Anticipated Contract Budget**.