**STATE OF MAINE**

**Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry**

*Bureau of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources*

**RFP# 202402048**

**Pre-Qualified Vendor List for Marketing, Promotion, Media, and Assessment Services**

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| --- | --- |
| **RFP Coordinator** | *All communication, regarding this RFP must be made using the email address below.***Contact Information:** Michelle.T.Webb@maine.gov  |
| **Submitted Questions Due** | *Questions regarding this RFP can be submitted at any time while this RFP is open. All questions must be submitted, by e-mail, to the address identified above. Please include* ***“RFP# 202402048”*** in the subject line of your email. |
| **Proposal Submission** | *Proposals must be received by the Office of State Procurement Services by:***Submission Deadline:** **April 15, 2025** no later than 11:59 p.m., local time*Proposals must be submitted electronically to the following address:***Electronic (email) Submission Address:** Proposals@maine.gov |
| **Annual****Enrollment** | *After the initial RFP proposal submission deadline, proposal evaluations will be held on an annual basis. Annual proposal submission deadlines will be* ***11:59 p.m. on the******1st business day of July*** *while the RFP is active. Proposals are required to be submitted prior to the submission date and time in order to be considered for that enrollment period.***Electronic (email) Submission Address:** Proposals@maine.gov  |

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**PUBLIC NOTICE**

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**State of Maine**

**Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry**

**RFP# 202402048**

**Pre-Qualified Vendor List for Marketing, Promotion, Media, and Assessment Services**

The State of Maine is seeking proposals to be considered for inclusion on a Pre-Qualified Vendor List for marketing, promotion, media, and technical services to aid in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the agency's comprehensive agricultural marketing and promotions program.

A copy of the RFP, as well as the Question & Answer Summary and all amendments related to this RFP, can be obtained at the following website: <http://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/vendors/pqvls>

Proposals must be submitted to the State of Maine Office of State Procurement Services, via e-mail, to the following email address: Proposals@maine.gov. Proposal submissions must be submitted no later than 11:59 pm, local time, on April 15, 2025. Proposals will be opened the following business day.

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**RFP DEFINITIONS/ACRONYMS**

The following terms and acronyms shall have the meaning indicated below as referenced in this Pre-Qualified Vendor List RFP:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Term/Acronym** | **Definition** |
| **ARD** | Agricultural Resources Development Division |
| **Department** | Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry |
| **KPI** | Key Performance Indicators |
| **PQVL** | Pre-Qualified Vendor List |
| **Real Maine** | The State’s agricultural promotions program brand |
| **RFP** | Request for Proposal |
| **ROI** | Return on Investment |
| **SEO**  | Search Engine Optimization |
| **State** | State of Maine |
| **OIT** | Office of Information Technology |

**State of Maine - Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry**

*Bureau of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources*

**RFP# 202402048**

**Pre-Qualified Vendor List for Marketing, Promotion, Media, and Assessment Services**

# **PART I INTRODUCTION**

## A. Purpose and Background

The Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (Department) is seeking proposals to provide create a list of pre-qualified vendors to provide marketing, promotion, media, and assessment services as defined in this Request for Proposals (RFP) document. This document provides instructions for submitting proposals, the procedure and criteria by which the Provider(s) will be selected and the contractual terms which will govern the relationship between the State of Maine (State) and the awarded Bidder(s).

Within the Department’s Bureau of Food, Agriculture, and Rural Resources, the Agricultural Resource Development (ARD) Division works to encourage agricultural development, market enhancement, and sustainability through education, events, technical assistance, funding opportunities, research, economic development, environmental stewardship, and the promotion of Maine’s existing and future farm businesses.

The Department is responsible for the implementation, management, and stewardship of the agricultural promotions program such as Real Maine. This promotional program connects consumers, wholesale buyers, and visitors to Maine’s farms, food producers, agricultural products makers, and agritourism experiences. Real Maine’s current marketing and promotions efforts include, but are not limited to digital, print, video, and radio advertising; online and television influencer partnerships; social media content; industry and stakeholder surveys and analysis; membership content for Real Maine members; and a robust website. The website is an agricultural promotions hub for consumers, wholesale buyers, and those seeking to plan shopping and/or agritourism experiences by mapping an itinerary of farms, markets, and/or agritourism experiences.

The Department is responsible for the marketing and promotion of statewide agricultural events and activities including, but not limited to Open Farm Days, Maine Dairy Month, Maine Day at the Legislature, Maine agricultural fairs, the Maine Agricultural Trade Show. Further, Department often sponsors agricultural events and festivals such as the Maine Cheese Festival and frequently supports these sponsored events through collaborative marketing and promotion. The Department also seeks to expand agricultural market access and opportunity through state, regional, and national fairs, expos, and trade shows such as the Eastern States Exposition Big E Fair. Further, the Department administers programs that seek to enhance the viability and vitality of Maine’s agricultural farms, producers, and business through activities related to the Maine Healthy Soils Program, the Working Farmland Access and Protection Program, Farms for the Future, The Emergency Food Access Program, the Local Foods Procurement Fund, and the Maine Senior Farm Share Program.

The objective of this RFP is to establish a list of prequalified vendors to work collaboratively with the Department in the creation and implementation of marketing and promotions efforts designed to increase and enhance consumer agricultural product purchases, agricultural awareness and visibility, domestic trade, agritourism, farm viability, soil health, economic impact, and other factors important to the Department’s overarching goals and priorities. This work aligns with the statewide goal to increase the amount of food consumed in Maine from state food producers to 30% by 2030 and will be instrumental in the implementation of additional goals surrounding improvements to Maine’s agricultural foods and products sales outcomes. The successful bidder(s) will be placed on a Pre-Qualified Vendor List (PQVL) for these services. Specific project proposals will be submitted to vendors on the list in a mini-bid process, on a project-by-project basis.

## B. General Provisions

1. From the time this RFP is issued until award notification is made, all contact with the State regarding this RFP must be made through the aforementioned RFP Coordinator. No other person/ State employee is empowered to make binding statements regarding this RFP. Violation of this provision may lead to disqualification from the bidding process, at the State’s discretion.
2. Issuance of this RFP does not commit the Department to issue an award or to pay expenses incurred by a Bidder in the preparation of a response to this RFP. This includes attendance at personal interviews or other meetings and software or system demonstrations, where applicable.
3. All proposals should adhere to the instructions and format requirements outlined in this RFP and all written supplements and amendments (such as the Summary of Questions and Answers), issued by the Department. Proposals are to follow the format and respond to all questions and instructions specified below in the “Proposal Submission Requirements” section of this RFP.
4. Bidders shall take careful note that in evaluating a proposal submitted in response to this RFP, the Department will consider materials provided in the proposal, information obtained through interviews/presentations (if any), and internal Departmental information of previous contract history with the Bidder (if any). The Department also reserves the right to consider other reliable references and publicly available information in evaluating a Bidder’s experience and capabilities.
5. The proposal shall be signed by a person authorized to legally bind the Bidder and shall contain a statement that the proposal and the pricing contained therein will remain valid and binding for a period of 180 days from the date and time of the bid opening.
6. The RFP and the selected Bidder’s proposal, including all appendices or attachments, shall be the basis for the final contract, as determined by the Department.
7. Following announcement of an award decision, all submissions in response to this RFP will be considered public records available for public inspection pursuant to the State of Maine Freedom of Access Act (FOAA) (1 M.R.S. §§ 401 et seq.).

<http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/1/title1sec401.html>

1. The Department, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to recognize and waive minor informalities and irregularities found in proposals received in response to this RFP.
2. The State of Maine Office of State Procurement Services reserves the right to authorize other Departments to use the contract(s) resulting from this RFP, if it is deemed to be beneficial for the State to do so.
3. All applicable laws, whether or not herein contained, shall be included by this reference. It shall be the Bidder’s responsibility to determine the applicability and requirements of any such laws and to abide by them.

## D. Pre-Qualified Vendor List Term

The Department is seeking a cost-efficient proposal(s) to provide services, as defined in this RFP, for the anticipated Pre-Qualified Vendor List (PQVL) period defined in the table below. Please note that the dates below are estimated and may be adjusted, as necessary, in order to comply with all procedural requirements associated with this RFP process. Utilization of a PQVL for will begin once the RFP process has been finalized.

The term of the anticipated PQVL, resulting from this RFP, is defined as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Period** | **Start Date** | **End Date** |
| Period of Performance | July 1, 2025 | Termination of RFP |

This RFP offers an annual enrollment for new vendors to be included on the pre-qualified vendor list. Once selected, vendors do not need to reapply during an annual enrollment.  Proposals will be accepted from vendors not currently on the PQVL as long as this RFP is active.  Proposals submitted during the annual enrollment will be evaluated and the vendors will be notified of the decision within 30 days.

## E.     Mini-Bid Process and Awards

Once the pre-qualified list is established, the Department will notify all pre-qualified vendors when specific services are needed. Each vendor on the PQVL will be given a description of the particular services needed and asked to respond within a specific timeframe with information on how that vendor proposes to provide the particular services, along with the project-specific cost proposal for those services. Vendors should respond to each mini-bid with their proposal or provide a “no-bid” as a response. The Department will then select one vendor based on the project-specific cost proposal submitted during the “mini-bid” process of those pre-qualified vendors who can meet the specific service requirements.

The Department reserves the right to select vendors from the pre-qualification list without using the mini-bid process for emergencies (if the need arises). The Department also retains the discretion to issue new RFPs for specific projects. Providers for those projects will not be selected from the PQVL, but rather through the separate RFP or other procurement process based on the Department’s specific needs/timelines.

# **PART II SCOPE OF SERVICES TO BE PROVIDED**

## A.     Scope of Services Overview

The Department has the need to develop a pre-qualified list of vendors to perform the following services on an as-needed basis. All original advertising material or specific rights to material created or negotiated for or on behalf of the Department such as copy, photography, illustration, videography, artist’s layouts or design sketches, and storyboards will become property of the State, unless otherwise stated in a Professional Services contract once Contractor charges are fully paid. Awarded Bidders must supply the equipment/tools to perform the services.

Bidders are encouraged to submit proposals to perform any or all of the **service types** listed below. Bidders may propose to complete services through the use of experienced and qualified subcontractors.

Brand Management expertise will be relevant to all service types and will be key to successful proposal. The Bidder shall possess a deep understanding and knowledge of the Real Maine brand, as well as extensive experience with brand management and brand strategy. The Department has the need for recommendations on integrating the brand into every aspect of agricultural marketing and promotions service types.

## B.     Service Types

## Copywriting

The Department produces numerous print publications as well as manages a significant online presence and has the need to work with a professional copywriter to produce written content for the Department’s website, blog, informational brochures and publications, policy documents including rules and program reports, marketing emails and social media.

## Creative Services, All Other

The Department conducts marketing, promotional, and event logistics activities through a variety of methods and outlets. A general creative services provider may assist the Department in creating and implementing marketing and promotions content for use in television, radio, email, trade shows, expositions, live events, agritourism activities, influencer, and other marketing, advertising, and outreach service type areas not expressly outlined in this RFP. All creative services work must be under the guidance of Department staff and be tracked and evaluated for KPI, ROI, accuracy, quality, and alignment with Department goals and priorities.

## Digital and Social Media Services

The Department conducts marketing and promotions activities through a variety of paid digital and social media services including the Real Maine Facebook page. A creative digital media services provider will:

1. Research and evaluate media opportunities that will most effectively meet KPI and ROI goals for focus areas/themes and target audience;
2. Plan, purchase, and place paid media advertising under the guidance of Department staff;
3. Ensure media is accurate, high-quality, conducted as scheduled, and aligned with Department goals;
4. Negotiate added-value marketing opportunities throughout media channels;
5. Verify media ran as scheduled;
6. Provide detailed tracking and analysis, evaluate for optimization of campaign performance against KPI and ROI; and
7. Collaborate with Department staff who have responsibility for agricultural promotions and organic social media content.

## Data Evaluation and Assessment

## The Department conducts research and data assessment activities and prepares program and legislative reports for a variety of indicators, programs, and responsibilities. A contractor may be used to support the Department in conducting surveys, interviews, focus groups, and/or other data collection needs. Activities may include establishing baseline information to evaluate the depth and breadth of existing marketing, promotion, branding, and/or program initiatives. Activities may include developing a data management plan, and/or a coordinated framework aggregating market outreach goals, metrics, and impacts across divisions and/or agencies and developing recommendations for strategically investing resources to meet the goal of measurable impact and sustained, long-term growth for Maine’s agricultural sector. Services may include the creation of a data collection and reporting plan and the development and implementation of an agricultural and economic data dashboard.

## TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS:

## ACCESSIBILITY: All IT applications must comply with the Digital Accessibility Policy (<https://www.maine.gov/oit/sites/maine.gov.oit/files/inline-files/DigitalAccessibilityPolicy.pdf>). In addition, all IT applications and content delivered through web browsers must comply with the State Web Standards ([https://www.maine.gov/oit/policies/webstandards.html)](https://www.maine.gov/oit/policies/webstandards.html%29)

## STATE IT POLICIES: All IT products and services delivered as part of this Agreement must conform to the State IT Policies, Standards, and Procedures (<https://www.maine.gov/oit/policies-standards>) effective at the time this Agreement is executed

1. **Event Production and Meeting Facilitation Services**

The Department conducts and hosts a variety of training, strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, trade show, exhibition, and agriculture, food, and forest product marketing, promotion, and outreach events and activities. A vendor or consultant will assist the Department in event planning, development, and production, short-term event staffing and operations, digital and audio/visual event participant engagement and interaction, exhibitor space design, planning, and implementation, connecting exhibitors with buyers and stakeholders. Services may include meeting facilitation, strategy and event planning, event management, show site display design and installation, on-site production staffing, event operation, exhibitor training, and event production design.

## Graphic Design

The Department produces numerous print publications as well as manages a significant online presence and has the need to work with a professional graphic designer to produce image and infographic content for the Real Maine website, informational brochures and publications, law and rule books, program and project reports, marketing emails, social media, etc. Design work will typically be done within the guidance of the Department’s established brand style guide.

## Marketing Planning and Analysis

The Department is responsible for developing and evaluating marketing and promotion KPIs and analyzing the ROI on all marketing and promotional activities. A Marketing Agency will assist the Department in the development and implementation of a statewide market analysis and marketing plan that aligns with Department goals, priorities, mission, and vision.

The calendarized comprehensive marketing plan must include:

1. Identification of prioritized content focus areas/themes;
2. Identification of target markets;
3. Specific strategies that include measurable objectives for target focus areas and markets (such as developing a resource road map for various agricultural sectors and groups);
4. Specific campaign/activity goals and objectives;
5. An action plan of tactics to achieve the goals and objectives;
6. A timeline of monthly, quarterly, and annually scheduled activities and associated anticipated outcomes;
7. Specific indicators that will inform the measurement of KPI and ROI results; and
8. An outline of how results will be measured and reported.

Creation and implementation of work will be done within the guidance of the Department staff through the Real Maine brand. The Marketing Agency will provide a day-to-day point of contact for Department staff responsible for the overall management of marketing planning and analysis, including contracts, budgets, billing, quality control, and project management to ensure activities are delivered on time and on budget. The Marketing Agency will meet with the Department Division Director and designated agricultural promotions staff no less than two times per month to evaluate, adjust, and adapt marketing plan activities.

## Promotion and Outreach

The Department administers a variety of state and federally-funded grants, loans, and financial resources. The Department may seek a service provider to assist in the promotion of resource opportunities to include communication outreach, application and data collection, content training, and administrative support.

## Photography

The Department has a need to maintain a repository of professional images to be utilized in a variety of print and digital marketing and promotional materials. Much of the work of the Department's staff is conducted in the field and outdoors. An awarded Bidder will need to be comfortable and capable of working in a variety of outdoor environments.

## Print Media

The Department conducts marketing and promotional activities through a variety of print media outlets. A creative print media services provider will:

1. Research and evaluate media opportunities that will most effectively meet KPI and ROI goals for focus areas/themes and target audience;
2. Plan, purchase, and place paid media advertising under the guidance of the Departments staff;
3. Ensure media is accurate, high-quality, conducted as scheduled and aligned with Department goals;
4. Negotiate added-value marketing opportunities throughout media channels;
5. Verify media ran as scheduled
6. Provide detailed tracking and analysis, evaluate for optimization of campaign performance against KPI and ROI; and
7. Collaborate with Department staff who have responsibility for agricultural promotions and organic print content.

## Technical Assistance

The Department connects farmers and producers with a variety of financial, marketing, and promotion resources (e.g. grant funds, fair and trade show exhibitions, workshops and training opportunities, etc.). A technical assistance service provider may support the Department in facilitating in-person and/or online learning events and workshops (e.g. trade summit), supporting business and marketing plan development, and providing coaching and advising on key topic areas. Technical assistance topic areas may include developing and implementing marketing tools, templates, and advising. Technical assistance participants may include Real Maine members, beginning farmers and producers, those seeking to achieve scale or access new markets, or for those exploring farm succession planning.

## Technical Writing

The Department produces numerous print publications as well as manages a significant online presence and has the need to work with a technical writer to produce content that is clear and precise for public consumption for the Department’s website, informational brochures and publications, policy documents, program/project reports, road maps, strategic plans, etc.

## Videography

The Department has a need to produce a variety of marketing, promotion, educational videos and/or Public Service Announcements (PSA’s) for public consumption, typically through platforms such as YouTube and social media, but occasionally of broadcast quality. The selected bidder will provide creative services for the development of television and other videography planning and production. These projects will include coordinating with Department staff to script or outline the video, filming or capturing video, and producing the video. Videography may include Real Maine brand development and advertising work as well as occasional projects for Department programs/partners as directed by the Department. Much of the work of the Department’s staff is conducted in the field and outdoors. An awarded Bidder will need to be comfortable and capable of working in a variety of outdoor environments.

## Website Services

The Department promotes agricultural foods, beverages, products, activities, and experiences through the [Real Maine website](https://www.realmaine.com/) which will include the Maine Healthy Soils website, and other public-facing Department program web presence.

Maine farms and businesses that grow, produce or process agricultural products, or offer agricultural experiences may become a Real Maine member. Membership is free to eligible agricultural enterprises. Members may use the [Real Maine logo](https://www.realmaine.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/2021_12_09_Style-Guide-One-Pager-1.pdf) on their products and packaging, may purchase [marketing materials](https://mainedacf.myshopify.com/collections/real-maine) (such as stickers, banners, flags, and hang tags), and are listed in the online, searchable member directory.

A website services provider will support the development, maintenance, and ongoing evaluation and updating of a strong web presence for the Department’s consumer-facing website, [www.RealMaine.com](http://www.RealMaine.com) and related program pages including the Maine Healthy Soils Program with an intuitive easy to use interface for consumers and visitors that allows for inspiration, education, and easy shopping and itinerary planning. This includes design, hosting, maintenance, SEO, troubleshooting, and problem solving for the website and the Real Maine membership database. The Department currently uses Personify/Member Clicks as the membership platform.

## TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS:

## ACCESSIBILITY: All IT applications must comply with the Digital Accessibility Policy (<https://www.maine.gov/oit/sites/maine.gov.oit/files/inline-files/DigitalAccessibilityPolicy.pdf>). In addition, all IT applications and content delivered through web browsers must comply with the State Web Standards ([https://www.maine.gov/oit/policies/webstandards.html)](https://www.maine.gov/oit/policies/webstandards.html%29)

## STATE IT POLICIES: All IT products and services delivered as part of this Agreement must conform to the State IT Policies, Standards, and Procedures (<https://www.maine.gov/oit/policies-standards>) effective at the time this Agreement is executed

# **PART III KEY RFP EVENTS**

## Questions

**1. General Instructions**

**a.** It is the responsibility of all Bidders and other interested parties to examine the entire RFP and to seek clarification, in writing, if they do not understand any information or instructions.

**b.** Bidders and other interested parties should use **Appendix D** (Submitted Questions Form) for submission of questions.

**c.** The Submitted Questions Form must be submitted to the RFP Coordinator email address identified on the cover page of this RFP.

**d.** Submitted Questions must include the RFP Number and Title in the subject line of the e-mail. The Department assumes no liability for assuring accurate/complete/on time e-mail transmission and receipt.

**2. Question & Answer Summary:** Responses to all questions will be compiled in writing and posted on the following website: <http://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/vendors/pqvls> . Bidders should submit questions 15-days prior to the most current proposal submission deadline in order to receive a response 7-days prior to that deadline. All other questions will be addressed after the current deadline. It is the responsibility of all interested parties to go to this website to obtain a copy of the Question & Answer Summary. Only those answers issued in writing on this website will be considered binding.

## Amendments

All amendments released in regard to this RFP will also be posted on the following website: <http://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/vendors/pqvls> . It is the responsibility of all interested parties to go to this website to obtain amendments. Only those amendments posted on this website are considered binding.

## Submitting the Proposal

1. **Proposals Due:** Proposals must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. local time, on the date listed on the cover page of this RFP. They will be opened the next business day. Proposals received **after** the 11:59 p.m. deadline will be **held until the next open enrollment opening**.
2. **Delivery Instructions:** Email proposal submissions are to be submitted to the State of Maine Office of State Procurement Services, via email Proposals@maine.gov.
3. Only proposals received by email will be considered. The Department assumes no liability for assuring accurate/complete e-mail transmission and receipt.
4. Proposal submission e-mails that are successfully received by the proposals@maine.gov inbox will receive an automatic reply stating as such.
5. E-mails containing links to file sharing sites or online file repositories will not be accepted as submissions. Only e-mail proposal submissions that have the actual requested files attached will be accepted.
6. Encrypted e-mails received which require opening attachments and logging into a proprietary system will not be accepted as submissions. Please check with your organization’s Information Technology team to ensure that your security settings will not encrypt your proposal submission.
7. File size limits are 25MB per e-mail. Bidders may submit files separately across multiple e-mails, as necessary, due to file size concerns. All e-mails and files must be received by the due date and time listed above.
8. Bidders are to insert the following into the subject line of their email submission: **“RFP# 202402048 Proposal Submission – [Bidder’s Name]”**
9. Bidder’s proposals are to be sent as one document. PDF is preferred but other formats, such as MS Word, will be accepted.
10. Bidder’s proposals must include (in the order below):

- **Appendix A** (Proposal Cover Page)

- **Appendix B** (Responsible Bidder Certification)

- **Appendix C** (Organization Qualifications and Experience) and

- All related/required attachments stated in PART IV, Section III

- Company Rate Sheet(s)

# **PART IV PROPOSAL SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS**

This section contains instructions for Bidders to use in preparing their proposals. The Department seeks detailed yet succinct responses that demonstrate the Bidder’s qualifications, experience, and ability to perform the requirements specified throughout the RFP.

The Bidder’s proposal must follow the outline used below, including the numbering, section, and sub-section headings. Failure to use the outline specified in PART IV, or failure to respond to all questions and instructions throughout the RFP, may result in the proposal being disqualified as non-responsive or receiving a reduced score. The Department, and its evaluation team, has sole discretion to determine whether a variance from the RFP specifications will result either in disqualification or reduction in scoring of a proposal. Rephrasing of the content provided in the RFP will, at best, be considered minimally responsive.

Bidders are not to provide additional attachments beyond those specified in the RFP for the purpose of extending their response. Additional materials not requested will not be considered part of the proposal and will not be evaluated. Include any forms provided in the submission package or reproduce those forms as closely as possible. All information must be presented in the same order and format as described in the RFP.

**Proposal Format and Contents**

**Section I Preliminary Information**

* 1. **Proposal Cover Page**

Bidders must complete **Appendix A** (Proposal Cover Page). It is critical that the cover page show the specific information requested, including Bidder address(es) and other details listed. The Proposal Cover Page must be dated and signed by a person authorized to enter into contracts on behalf of the Bidder.

* 1. **Responsible Bidder Certification**

Bidders must complete **Appendix B** (Responsible Bidder Certification). The Responsible Bidder Certification must be dated and signed by a person authorized to enter into contracts on behalf of the Bidder.

**Section II Organization Qualifications and Experience**

* 1. **Overview of the Organization**

Bidders must complete **Appendix C** (Qualifications and Experience Form) describing their qualifications and skills to provide the requested services in the RFP. Bidders must include three examples of projects that demonstrate their experience and expertise in performing these services as well as highlighting the Bidder’s stated qualifications and skills.

* 1. **Current Clients**

Bidders must provide a list of no less than three current clients, years of service, and reference contact information for each. Identify any current clients posing a possible conflict of interest.

* 1. **Annual Billings**

To ascertain if the Bidder has capacity to manage a contract of similar size and scope to the Department, please provide total annual billings for 2021, 2022, 2023 and anticipated 2024.

* 1. **Statement of Services Demonstrating Success with Similar Clients in Similar Content Areas**

Bidders should provide a statement of prior success in working with clients including State Agencies, or similar, and within similar content areas. The statement of services should demonstrate:

* The Bidder’s ability to provide services with high standards for accuracy, quality, and alignment with Department goals and priorities;
* The Bidder’s experience with content related to state, regional, and national advertising, marketing and promotion campaigns, and/or technical services for an account of this size and scope;
* The Bidder’s understanding of and experience with Maine’s agricultural landscape, food and beverage systems, agritourism, tourism-related creative or technical content, and/or natural resources with an understanding of industry trends and forecasts with particular emphasis on the opportunities/challenges for Maine and related marketing, promotion, and/or technical experience;
* The Bidder’s ability to work collaboratively under the guidance of Department staff;
* The Bidder’s ability to understand, track, evaluate, and report on the KPI and ROI for services provided;
	1. **Organizational Chart**

Bidders must provide an organizational chart.  The organizational chart must include the key personnel who will be assigned to the project being proposed.

* 1. **Key Personnel**

Provide a professional biography or summary for the personnel who will be working with the Department, including proposed subcontractors. Provide their titles and discuss their roles in relation to the work areas and include any applicable experience with content services related to agricultural marketing and promotion, tourism, policy, and/or economic development (not to exceed one page per biography).

* 1. **Subcontractors**

If subcontractors are to be used, Bidders must provide a list that specifies the name, address, phone number, contact person, and a brief description of the subcontractors’ organizational capacity and qualifications.

* 1. **Litigation**

Bidders must attach a list of all current litigation in which the Bidder is named and a list of all closed cases that have closed within the past five (5) years in which the Bidder paid the claimant either as part of a settlement or by decree.  For each, list the entity bringing suit, the complaint, the accusation, amount, and outcome.

* 1. **Certificate of Insurance**

Bidders must provide a certificate of insurance on a standard Acord form (or the equivalent) evidencing the Bidder’s general liability, professional liability and any other relevant liability insurance policies that might be associated with the proposed services.

**Section III Proposed Services**

* 1. **Services to be Provided**

Discuss the Scope of Services referenced above in Part II of the RFP and what the Bidder will offer. Bidders are encouraged to submit proposals to perform any or all of the **service types** listed in Part II of the RFP. Bidders must ensure narrative responses are presented in a format which reflects the respective header titles provided in Part II of the RFP. Give particular attention to describing the methods and resources you will use and how you will accomplish the tasks involved. Also, describe how you will ensure expectations and/or desired outcomes as a result of these services will be achieved. If subcontractors are involved, clearly identify the work each will perform.

Successful Bidders will:

* Provide a clear presentation of proposed services to be provided;
* Demonstrate capacity to utilize the described methods and resources to accomplish the proposed tasks;
* Provide a clear presentation of concepts for creative and/or technical content for the proposed service types in an authentic and compelling manner;
* Demonstrate the ability to increase consumer purchases of agricultural products, enhance farm and market visitation, and/or bolster economic impact;
* Demonstrate the ability to connect their proposed work with the statewide goal to increase the amount of food consumed in Maine from state food producers to 30% by 2030.
	1. **Understanding of the local and national food and agriculture markets:**

Provide a narrative of the Bidder’s understanding of Maine’s agricultural landscape, food, and beverage systems, agritourism, natural resources, and industry trends and forecasts with particular emphasis on the opportunities/challenges for Maine.

**Section IV Cost Proposal**

* 1. **General Instructions**

The Bidder must submit a current rate sheet. Rate sheets must provide a listing of all the typical fixed and hourly rates for all services and the positions expected to be involved in the services provided as well as all other expected expenses. Any out-of-pocket costs incurred by the successful Bidder on behalf of the Department must be approved in advance by the Department and must be billed at cost, with no mark up.

The current rate sheet may include the following:

* A fixed agency fee paid monthly. This fee compensates for all internal staff work done by the Bidder on behalf of the Department. This includes, but is not limited to, account management, branding and strategic planning, creative planning and execution, media planning, buying and trafficking, communication and billing.
* Production costs using an average hourly rate for the various agency roles that will be used on this account.
* Reimbursement for paid media costs with no markup. All media costs are direct passthrough with no commission, fees or mark up.

**PART V PROPOSAL EVALUATION AND SELECTION**

Evaluation of the submitted proposals shall be accomplished as follows:

## Evaluation Process - General Information

* + - 1. An evaluation team, comprised of qualified reviewers, will judge the merits of the proposals received in accordance with the criteria defined in the RFP, and in accordance with the most advantageous financial and economic impact considerations (where applicable) for the State.
			2. Officials responsible for making decisions on the selection of a contractor shall ensure that the selection process accords equal opportunity and appropriate consideration to all who are capable of meeting the specifications. The goals of the evaluation process are to ensure fairness and objectivity in review of the proposals and to ensure that the contract is awarded to the Bidder whose proposal provides the best value to the State of Maine.
			3. The Department reserves the right to communicate and/or schedule interviews/presentations with Bidders if needed to obtain clarification of information contained in the proposals received, and the Department may revise the scores assigned in the initial evaluation to reflect those communications and/or interviews/presentations. Interviews/presentations are not required, and changes to proposals will not be permitted during any interview/presentation process. Therefore, Bidders should submit proposals that present their rates and other requested information as clearly and completely as possible.

## Scoring Weights and Process

* 1. **Scoring Weights:** The score will be based on a 100-point scale and will measure the degree to which each proposal meets the following criteria.

**Section I. Preliminary Information (No Points)**

 Includes all elements addressed above in Part IV, Section I.

**Section II. Organization Qualifications and Experience (30 points)**

Includes all elements addressed above in Part IV, Section II.

**Section III. Proposed Services (40 points)**

Includes all elements addressed above in Part IV, Section III.

**Section IV. Cost Proposal (30 points)**

Includes all elements addressed above in Part IV, Section IV.

* 1. **Scoring Process:** The review team will use a consensus approach to evaluate and score the sections above. Members of the review team will not score those sections individually but, instead, will arrive at a consensus as to assignment of points for each of those sections.

Proposals for each service type will be scored together – copywriting, creative services, digital and social media services, evaluation and assessment, graphic design, marketing planning and analysis, photography, print media, promotion and outreach, technical assistance, technical writing, videography, and website services.

* 1. **Negotiations:** The Department reserves the right to negotiate with the successful Bidder to finalize a contract at the same rate or cost of service as presented in the selected proposal. Such negotiations may not significantly vary the content, nature or requirements of the proposal or the Department’s Request for Proposals to an extent that may affect the price of goods or services requested. The Department reserves the right to terminate contract negotiations with a selected Bidder who submits a proposed contract significantly different from the proposal they submitted in response to the advertised RFP. In the event that an acceptable contract cannot be negotiated with the highest ranked Bidder, the Department may withdraw its award and negotiate with the next-highest ranked Bidder, and so on, until an acceptable contract has been finalized. Alternatively, the Department may cancel the RFP, at its sole discretion.

## Selection and Award

**1.** The final decision regarding the award of the contract will be made by representatives of the Department subject to approval by the State Procurement Review Committee.

**2.** Notification of contractor selection or non-selection will be made in writing by the Department.

**3.** Issuance of this RFP in no way constitutes a commitment by the State of Maine to award a contract, to pay costs incurred in the preparation of a response to this request, or to pay costs incurred in procuring or contracting for services, supplies, physical space, personnel or any other costs incurred by the Bidder.

**4.** The Department reserves the right to reject any and all proposals or to make multiple awards.

**5.**   Selection to be included on the PQVL is not a guarantee of work.

**6.** Updated documentation pertaining to Certification of Insurance, Certification/Licensure, and Rates will be required to be submitted to the RFP Coordinator by all Providers on the PQVL on an annual basis.

## Appeal of Contract Awards

Any person aggrieved by the award decision that results from this RFP may appeal the decision to the Director of the Bureau of General Services in the manner prescribed in 5 MRSA § 1825-E and 18-554 Code of Maine Rules, Chapter 120 (found here: <https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/policies-procedures/chapter-120> ).  The appeal must be in writing and filed with the Director of the Bureau of General Services, 9 State House Station, Augusta, Maine, 04333-0009 within 15 calendar days of receipt of notification of contract award.

Since this RFP results in a PQVL, the appeal procedures mentioned above are available upon the original determination of that vendor list. The appeal procedures will not be available during subsequent competitive procedures involving only the PQVL participants if cost is the sole determining factor.

## Removal from Pre-Qualified Vendors List

The Department may remove a pre-qualified vendor from the PQVL at any time, upon giving 30 days’ written notice to the pre-qualified vendor, if the Department determines that during the pre-qualification term:

* 1. The pre-qualified vendor failed or refused to perform its contractual obligations,
	2. The pre-qualified vendor’s performance was unsatisfactory including, but not limited to, the quality and timeliness of services provided,
	3. The pre-qualified vendor no longer has the ability to perform the services specified in this RFP, or
	4. The pre-qualified vendor is continually “unresponsive” to providing any feedback to the Department’s mini-bid solicitations.

# **PART VI LIST OF RFP APPENDICES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS**

**Appendix A** – Proposal Cover Page

**Appendix B** – Responsible Bidder Certification

**Appendix C** – Qualifications and Experience Form

**Appendix D** – Submitted Question Form

**APPENDIX A**

**State of Maine**

**Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry**

**PROPOSAL COVER PAGE**

**RFP# 202402048**

**Pre-Qualified Vendor List for Marketing, Promotion, Media, and Assessment Services**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Bidder’s Organization Name:** |  |
| **Chief Executive - Name/Title:** |  |
| **Tel:** |  | **E-mail:** |  |
| **Headquarters Street Address:** |  |
| **Headquarters City/State/Zip:** |  |
| ***(Provide information requested below if different from above)*** |
| **Lead Point of Contact for Proposal - Name/Title:** |  |
| **Tel:** |  | **E-mail:** |  |
| **Headquarters Street Address:** |  |
| **Headquarters City/State/Zip:** |  |
| **Types of Services Proposed***(check all that apply)* | ☐ Copywriting☐ Creative Services, All Other☐ Data Evaluation and Assessment☐ Digital and Social Media Services☐ Event Production and Meeting Facilitation Services☐ Graphic Design☐ Marketing Planning and Analysis☐ Promotion and Outreach☐ Photography☐ Print Media☐ Technical Assistance☐ Technical Writing☐ Videography☐ Website Services |

* This proposal and the pricing structure contained herein will remain firm for a period of 180 days from the date and time of the bid opening.
* No personnel currently employed by the Department or any other State agency participated, either directly or indirectly, in any activities relating to the preparation of the Bidder’s proposal.
* No attempt has been made, or will be made, by the Bidder to induce any other person or firm to submit or not to submit a proposal.
* The above-named organization is the legal entity entering into the resulting agreement with the Department should they be awarded the contract.
* The undersigned is authorized to enter contractual obligations on behalf of the above-named organization.

*To the best of my knowledge, all information provided in the enclosed proposal, both programmatic and financial, is complete and accurate at the time of submission.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name (Print):** | **Title:** |
| **Authorized Signature:** | **Date:** |

**APPENDIX B**

**State of Maine**

**Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry**

**RESPONSIBLE BIDDER CERTIFICATION**

**RFP# 202402048**

**Pre-Qualified Vendor List for Marketing, Promotion, Media, and Assessment Services**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Bidder’s Organization Name:** |  |

*By signing this document, I certify to the best of my knowledge and belief that the aforementioned organization, its principals and any subcontractors named in this proposal:*

1. *Are not presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, and declared ineligible or voluntarily excluded from bidding or working on contracts issued by any governmental agency.*
2. *Have not within three years of submitting the proposal for this contract been convicted of or had a civil judgment rendered against them for:*
	1. *Fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain, or performing a federal, state, or local government transaction or contract.*
	2. *Violating Federal or State antitrust statutes or committing embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements, or receiving stolen property.*
3. *Are not presently indicted for or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity (Federal, State or Local) with commission of any of the offenses enumerated in paragraph (b) of this certification.*
4. *Have not within a three (3) year period preceding this proposal had one or more federal, state, or local government transactions terminated for cause or default*.
5. *Have not entered into a prior understanding, agreement, or connection with any corporation, firm, or person submitting a response for the same materials, supplies, equipment, or services and this proposal is in all respects fair and without collusion or fraud. The above-mentioned entities understand and agree that collusive bidding is a violation of state and federal law and can result in fines, prison sentences, and civil damage awards.*
6. *Is not a foreign adversary business entity (*[*https://www.maine.gov/oit/prohibited-technologies*](https://www.maine.gov/oit/prohibited-technologies)*).*
7. *Is not on the list of prohibited companies (*[*https://www.maine.gov/oit/prohibited-technologies*](https://www.maine.gov/oit/prohibited-technologies)*) or does not obtain or purchase any information or communications technology or services included on the list of prohibited information and communications technology and services* [*https://www.maine.gov/oit/prohibited-technologies*](https://www.maine.gov/oit/prohibited-technologies) *(Title 5 §2030-B).*

**Failure to provide this certification may result in the disqualification of the Bidder’s proposal, at the discretion of the Department.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name (Print):** | **Title:** |
| **Authorized Signature:** | **Date:** |

**APPENDIX C**

**State of Maine**

**Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry**

## QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE FORM

**RFP# 202402048**

**Pre-Qualified Vendor List for Marketing, Promotion, Media, and Assessment Services**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Bidder’s Organization Name:** |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Present a brief statement of qualifications, including any applicable licensure and/or certification. Describe the history of the Bidder’s organization, especially regarding skills pertinent to the specific work required by the RFP and any special or unique characteristics of the organization which would make it especially qualified to perform the required work activities. You may expand this form and use additional pages to provide this information.** |
|  |

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| **Bidders must demonstrate experience and expertise in conducting large-scale creative or technical service responsibilities related to the Bidder’s proposed service types listed in Part II of the RFP to clients of a similar size and scope. Provide a description and supporting documents (e.g. portfolio samples) of three projects that occurred within the past five years which reflect experience and expertise needed in performing the functions described in the “Scope of Services” portion of this RFP. Include a brief description of the success of these efforts. Include the challenge the client faced, goals you set, rationale for the strategy you employed and the outcomes. Not to exceed two (2) pages each. For each of the project examples provided, a contact person from the client organization involved should be listed, along with that person’s telephone number and email address. Please note that contract history with the State of Maine, whether positive or negative, may be considered in rating proposals even if not provided by the Bidder.** |

|  |
| --- |
| **Project One** |
| **Client Name:** |  |
| **Client Contact Person:** |  |
| **Telephone:** |  |
| **E-Mail:** |  |
| **Brief Description of Project** |
|  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Project Two** |
| **Client Name:** |  |
| **Client Contact Person:** |  |
| **Telephone:** |  |
| **E-Mail:** |  |
| **Brief Description of Project** |
|  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Project Three** |
| **Client Name:** |  |
| **Client Contact Person:** |  |
| **Telephone:** |  |
| **E-Mail:** |  |
| **Brief Description of Project** |
|  |

 **APPENDIX D**

**State of Maine**

**Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry**

**SUBMITTED QUESTIONS FORM**

**RFP# 202402048**

**Pre-Qualified Vendor List for Marketing, Promotion, Media, and Assessment Services**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Organization Name:** |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **RFP Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
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*\* If a question is not related to any section of the RFP, state “N/A” under “RFP Section & Page Number”.*

*\*\* Add additional rows, if necessary.*