**STATE OF MAINE**

**Governor’s Energy Office**

**RFA# 202410193**

**Research to Inform Responsible Floating Offshore Wind Development in the Gulf of Maine 2**

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| **RFA Coordinator** | *All communication regarding the RFA must be made through the RFA Coordinator identified below*.**Name:** Meghan Suslovic **Title:** Offshore Wind Energy Policy Analyst**Contact Information:** meghan.suslovic@maine.gov  |
| **Submitted Questions Due** | *All questions must be received by the RFA Coordinator identified above by:***Date:** November 15, 2024, no later than 11:59 p.m., local time |
| **ApplicationSubmission Deadline** | *Applications must be received by the Division of Procurement Services by:***Submission Deadline:** January 17, 2025 no later than 11:59 p.m., local time.*Applications must be submitted electronically to:* Proposals@maine.gov |

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**RFA TERMS/ACRONYMS with DEFINITIONS**

The following terms and acronyms, as referenced in the RFA, have the meanings indicated below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Term/Acronym** | **Definition** |
| **BOEM** | Bureau of Ocean Energy Management |
| **Consortium**   | Maine Offshore Wind Research Consortium   |
| **Department/GEO**  | Governor’s Energy Office  |
| **MDIFW** | Maine Department of Inland Fish and Wildlife  |
| **DMR**   | Maine Department of Marine Resources   |
| **DOE** | United States Department of Energy |
| **FOW** | Floating Offshore Wind |
| **NOAA** | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration |
| **NOWRDC** | National Offshore Wind Research and Development Consortium |
| **OSW** | Offshore Wind |
| **PAC** | Project Advisory Committee |
| **RFA** | Request for Applications  |
| **ROSA** | Responsible Offshore Science Alliance |
| **RWSC** | Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative for Offshore Wind |
| **State** | State of Maine |
| **USFWS** | United States Fish and Wildlife Service |
| **WEA** | Wind Energy Area |

**PART I OVERVIEW OF THE GRANT OPPORTUNITY**

## Purpose and Background

The Governor’s Energy Office (Department/GEO) is seeking applications for independent, science-based services from consultants with strong knowledge of Gulf of Maine science and collaborative research, Gulf of Maine stakeholders, state government, and offshore wind to address high priority research needs identified by the Maine Offshore Wind Research Consortium as defined in this Request for Applications (RFA). This document provides instructions for submitting applications, the procedure and criteria by which the awarded Applicant(s) will be selected, and the contractual terms which will govern the relationship between the State of Maine (State) and the awarded Applicant(s).

In February 2023, Maine released the [Maine Offshore Wind Roadmap](https://www.maineoffshorewind.org/road-map/), a comprehensive plan to responsibly advance offshore wind. The Roadmap, developed over 18 months with engagement and input from stakeholders and the public, outlines how offshore wind presents a significant opportunity for Maine to reduce its reliance on expensive, imported fossil fuels, create good-paying jobs and economic investment, stabilize energy costs, advance floating offshore wind innovation, and make progress toward our statutory emissions reductions and clean energy targets.

As an industry, offshore wind is poised to grow significantly in the coming years. This growth can support existing and emerging Maine companies, create new jobs and career opportunities for Maine people, attract new workers and families to Maine, and deliver infrastructure investments in communities across the state. Through the development of the Roadmap, GEO worked with fishermen, scientists, and others to address head-on important questions about how offshore wind can be compatible with the Gulf of Maine’s remarkable ecosystem and existing users, which provides an informed path for advancing offshore wind in manners that protect people, communities, and the environment.

As part of our responsible approach to offshore wind ([the Maine Offshore Wind Initiative](https://www.maine.gov/energy/initiatives/offshorewind)), GEO has pursued an inclusive, collaborative, and research-driven strategy to realize the benefits presented by offshore wind while also preserving Maine’s vibrant maritime heritage, fishing industry, and the Gulf of Maine ecosystem. This approach, coordinated across State agencies, is outlined in the key strategies of the Roadmap and central to the state’s advancement of the [Maine Offshore Wind Research Array](https://www.maine.gov/energy/initiatives/offshorewind/researcharray), which is an important step to increase the understanding of how to maximize floating offshore wind opportunities while minimizing potential negative impacts.

To advance understanding of benefits of offshore wind and identify ways to reduce the impacts, with bipartisan support, the legislature established the [Maine Offshore Wind Research Consortium (Consortium)](https://www.maine.gov/energy/initiatives/offshorewind/researchconsortium) and provided funding to support initial research priorities. The Advisory Board of the Consortium is comprised of experts representing broad perspectives including fisheries, wildlife, environmental non-governmental organizations, municipalities, industry, and state agency representatives from the Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR), Maine Department of Inland Fish and Wildlife (DIFW), and GEO. The Advisory Board is responsible for a research strategy that, at a minimum, includes the following themes:

* Opportunities and challenges caused by the deployment of floating offshore wind projects to the existing uses of the Gulf of Maine;
* Methods to avoid and minimize the impact of floating offshore wind projects on ecosystems and existing uses of the Gulf of Maine; and
* Ways to realize cost efficiencies in the commercialization of floating offshore wind projects.

With bipartisan support from the Legislature, the state has made a significant commitment to advancing research to reduce costs and understand the local and regional impacts of floating offshore wind by establishing and providing initial funding for the Maine Offshore Wind Research Consortium. To date, the Research Consortium has funded three projects that advance our shared understanding of floating offshore wind. The three projects, broadly described, fall under the following topic areas:

* Fisheries coexistence
* Socioeconomic baseline inventory
* Seafloor mapping

For project summaries, please visit the Consortium’s [website](https://www.maine.gov/energy/initiatives/offshorewind/researchconsortium).

In the months since the Consortium Advisory Board identified those three priority topics, the Advisory Board has continued to meet publicly and underwent a prioritization process for the second time. During this time, the Consortium has continued to collaborate with other states, as well as regional and national science and research partners, including the National Offshore Wind Research and Development Consortium (NOWRDC), the Responsible Offshore Science Alliance (ROSA), and the Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative for Offshore Wind (RWSC).

Through this RFA, the GEO expects to make one (1) award for each of the following three (3) high priority research topics identified by the Consortium Advisory Board and important to inform the planning and preconstruction phase of commercial offshore wind development in then Gulf of Maine:

1. Baseline assessment of social, economic, and cultural impacts of FOW development on Maine’s fishing industry
2. Baseline secondary entanglement risk assessment and technology feasibility study
3. Baseline offshore bat monitoring assessment

This set of high priority research questions are relevant to all three of the Consortium’s themes. The state and partners are actively seeking federal, regional, and private funding opportunities in order to address the full breadth of research topics.

Future solicitations may include more specific research priorities to achieve cost reductions such as enhancing the efficiencies of supply chain and workforce or specific technology advances in design or deployment that reduce costs.

## General Provisions

1. From the time this RFA is issued until award notification is made, all contact with the State regarding this RFA must be made through the RFA Coordinator identified on the cover page of this RFA. No other person/State employee is empowered to make binding statements regarding this RFA. Violation of this provision may lead to disqualification from the application process, at the State’s discretion.
2. Issuance of the RFA does not commit the Department to issue an award or to pay expenses incurred by an Applicant in the preparation of a response to the RFA. This includes attendance at personal interviews or other meetings, where applicable.
3. All applications must adhere to the instructions and format requirements outlined in the RFA and all written supplements and amendments (such as the Summary of Questions and Answers), issued by the Department. Applications are to follow the format and respond to all questions and instructions specified in Part III of the RFA.
4. Applicants will take careful note that in evaluating an application submitted in response to this RFA, the Department will consider materials provided in the application, information obtained through interviews/presentations (if any), and internal Departmental information of previous contract history with the Applicant (if any). The Department also reserves the right to consider other reliable references and publicly available information in evaluating the Applicant’s experience and capabilities.
5. The application must be signed by a person authorized to legally bind the Applicant and must 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 RFA and the awarded Applicant’s proposal, including all appendices or attachments, will 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 RFA will be public records, available for public inspection pursuant to the State of Maine Freedom of Access Act (FOAA) ([1 M.R.S. § 401](http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/statutes/1/title1sec401.html) et seq.).
8. In the event that a Bidder believes any information that it submits in response to this RFP is confidential, it must mark that information accordingly, and include citation to legal authority in support of the Bidder’s claim of confidentiality. In the event that the Department receives a FOAA request that includes submissions marked as confidential, the Department shall evaluate the information and any legal authority from the Bidder to determine whether the information is an exception to FOAA’s definition of public record. If the Department determines to release information that a Bidder has marked confidential, it shall provide advance notice to the Bidder to allow for them to seek legal relief.
9. The Department, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to recognize and waive minor informalities and irregularities found in applications received in response to the RFA.
10. All applicable laws, whether or not herein contained, shall be included by this reference. It shall be the Applicant’s responsibility to determine the applicability and requirements of any such laws and to abide by them.

## Awards

The Department anticipates making one or more awards as a result of this RFA process. One (1) award will go to the highest scoring applicant that has applied for the baseline social, economic, and cultural impacts assessment (Project 1), one (1) award will go to the highest scoring applicant that has applied for the secondary entanglement risk assessment (Project 2), and one (1) award will go to the highest scoring applicant that has applied for the baseline offshore bat monitoring assessment (Project 3).

Applicants may apply for any or all three projects, but if they do so, they must submit a separate application for each project.

Maximum Awards: The award for the baseline social, economic, and cultural fisheries impact assessment will not exceed $400,000 (Project 1), the award for the baseline secondary entanglement risk assessment will not exceed $350,000 (Project 2), and the award for the baseline offshore bat monitoring assessment will not exceed $400,000 (Project 3). The Department reserves the right to eliminate the lowest scoring application(s) and/or make awards at amounts less than that requested, whichever is in the best interest of the State.

Priority Applications: The Department intends to prioritize applications that leverage existing resources and funds, build off existing partnerships or create new partnerships, and/or encourages collaborative research projects with members of Maine fishing communities.

1. **Appeal of Contract Awards**

Any person aggrieved by the award decision that results from this Request for Applications 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: [Chapter 120](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.

**PART II ACTIVITIES AND REQUIREMENTS**

1. **Project 1: Baseline assessment of social, economic, and cultural impacts of FOW development on Maine’s fishing industry**
	1. **Objective**

Offshore wind presents a significant opportunity for Maine, given the abundant wind resources in the Gulf of Maine and the state’s high dependence on imported fossil fuels. In recognition of this opportunity, the State of Maine has committed to support responsible offshore wind development, which includes continuing to support Maine’s marine economy, traditions and culture and protecting the environment, wildlife and fisheries ecosystem in the Gulf of Maine.

Maine’s fishing industry adds more than $2 billion annually in direct and indirect economic benefit to the State, which makes the industry—and the families and communities that rely on the health of the Gulf—critical to Maine’s economy and identity. The State recognizes that offshore wind development must deliver benefits to people and communities in coastal Maine by co-existing with the vital seafood industry. In support of this, the Maine Offshore Wind Roadmap includes several actions, many of which were originated by the Fisheries Working Group, that this project aims to address. One of those actions is:

“If impacts to fisheries cannot be avoided, minimized, or mitigated, advocate for a plan to assess and quantify these impacts utilizing the best available fisheries, ecological, and socio-economic data, including the value of loss to the unique qualities of Maine fisheries, heritage, and communities. The plan should consider broad impacts to the industry and its communities before, during, and after construction and operation of OSW farms, and impacts on fishermen, associated businesses, and communities.”

This project aims to characterize the socioeconomic impacts of floating offshore wind development to Maine’s fishing sector and identify which onshore communities are most likely to be impacted by planned development. The results of this study will serve as a foundation for future assessments of the impacts of floating offshore wind projects on the identified fishing and working waterfront communities in Maine.

This project will directly build on previous work funded by the Research Consortium Advisory Board. In Fall 2023, the Advisory Board identified the evaluation of socioeconomic impacts, both positive and negative, of offshore wind development on Maine’s fishing communities as a high priority. As a result, RFP# 202310220, Research to Inform Responsible Floating Offshore Wind Development in the Gulf of Maine, included a project with the following key deliverables: 1) a data inventory of existing socioeconomic data, (2) a review of best practices for a full socioeconomic impact assessment, and (3) a gap analysis identifying the missing data to conduct a comprehensive socioeconomic impact assessment. Through a competitive RFP process, Karp Strategies, partnered with Colby College, was awarded the project.

The final project report (Inventorying Baseline Data on Socioeconomics of Maine Fishing Communities, found [here](https://www.maine.gov/energy/sites/maine.gov.energy/files/inline-files/Inventorying%20Baseline%20Data%20Final%20Report.pdf)) recommended a series of next steps to carry out a socioeconomic analysis that incorporates both industry and human data indicators.

BOEM has now identified the final lease areas in the Gulf of Maine making it an appropriate time to action the next steps identified in the report.

This project aims to answer the following guiding questions: (1) What Maine fishing communities are likely to be most impacted by the development of floating offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine? and (2) What are those impacts, both economic and socio-cultural?

GEO envisions this project occurring in two phases but may consider other approaches if the Applicant adequately describes and justifies their proposed approach. The first phase is intended to assess the direct economic impacts of floating offshore wind development on Maine’s commercial fishing industry and identify the most economically vulnerable communities. The project should employ a suitable methodology to quantify, where possible, the baseline economics of the communities and how floating offshore wind development could impact the local economies. The second phase is intended to characterize the socio-cultural impacts on the associated, vulnerable communities as identified as part of phase one. GEO anticipates that an ethnographic approach will be necessary for phase two but will consider alternative methodologies if justified. Based on the results of both phases, which may inform one another, the project should then make recommendations for future work.

The proposed methodology and analysis should be done in a way that builds acceptance of the results among fishing communities and other parties with expertise in the field. Any application should include how the applicant will engage with the Research Consortium Advisory Board and fishing communities.

* 1. **Required Activities**

Applicants should propose approaches for each of the following tasks to achieve the objectives outlined above in Section A.1. Applicants should propose a realistic timeline for achieving the tasks described below, with a suggested timeline between 9-12 months. It is anticipated that the project will kick off in early 2025. The Applicant should plan to consult with GEO at key decision making points.

The following tasks outline the steps that are expected to be taken during phase 1 and phase 2.

* + 1. **Task 1: Review indicators, recommendations, and related activities**
			1. Review indicators and recommendations from the best practice analysis from the Inventorying Baseline Data on Socioeconomics of Maine Fishing Communities report to inform the methodology that will be defined in Task 2. The Applicant should also include a review of existing related activities to avoid any duplicative efforts, and in the application, the Applicant should demonstrate their familiarity with any ongoing efforts.
		2. **Task 2: Stakeholder Engagement Plan**
			1. Create a Stakeholder Engagement plan that details how the Applicant will engage with the fishing community to review and receive feedback on the proposed methodology (Task 3) and initial results (Tasks 4 and 5). The Applicant should include in their application how and when they plan to engage key stakeholders including the Research Consortium Advisory Board, fishermen, RODA, and others. The Stakeholder Engagement Plan should consider strategies to minimize stakeholder fatigue, diversity across geographies and fisheries, and the multiple stressors impacting the fishing industry. A Stakeholder Engagement Plan could include the creation of a Project Advisory Committee. The Applicant should include their stakeholder engagement efforts in their proposed project budget and timeline.
		3. **Task 3: Adapt and define assessment methodologies**
			1. Economic Assessment: Adapt and define a methodology to identify the approach and inputs (e.g. geospatial, economic, etc.) for development of a baseline economic assessment of fishing dependent Maine communities. The focus should be on Maine’s commercial fishing industry, but Applicants should consider how the recreational fishing industry can be included throughout the analysis. It is anticipated that the Applicant will require access to federal fishing-landings data, which is confidential and requires special permission to access. In the application, the Applicant should include their familiarity with working with this data and how they plan to access it.
			2. Socio-cultural Assessment: Adapt and define a methodology to identify the approach and inputs for development of a socio-cultural impact assessment. It is anticipated that new data will need to be collected so this methodology should include a data collection plan. This can happen in parallel to Task 3.i or after the economic assessment is completed.
		4. **Task 4: Conduct Assessments**
			1. Economic Assessment: Analyze the existing data according to the methodology developed during Task 3 and develop a baseline economic impact assessment for fishing dependent communities. However, the Applicant is invited to propose alternative focus areas, where relevant, and provide relevant justification.
			2. Socio-cultural Assessment: Analyze new (see Optional Subtask 4.1) and/or existing data according to the methodology developed during Task 3 and characterize the likely socio-cultural impacts of floating offshore wind development on Maine’s fishing communities.
		5. **Optional Subtask 4.1: New Data Collection**
			1. If the Applicant proposes a methodology in Task 3 that requires using new, uncollected data, the Applicant must propose a data collection approach and reflect the data collection in their proposed budget, which should not exceed the $400,000 total project cap.
		6. **Task 5: Identify Fishing Communities**
1. Summarize the results of Tasks 1-4 that includes the identification of potentially impacted communities based on the baseline economic and socio-cultural assessments and proposed offshore wind lease areas in the Gulf of Maine. The results should take into account the relative impact of OSW development on communities’ overall economic value.
	* 1. **Task 6: Final Report and Communication Products**
			1. Summarize the methodology, all findings, and make recommendations for future socioeconomic work based on Tasks 1-5 in a report and presentation, both aimed at communicating with broad public audiences. The Applicant should be prepared for these materials to be used in an outreach and engagement campaign to communicate the Consortium’s work to the public.
	1. **Non-Allowable Use of Funds**

Applicants should not include in their applications or budgets:

* Development of a wholly new socioeconomic impact assessment framework
* Projects that focus solely or primarily on the development of a novel methodology
* Projects that focus solely or primarily on the collection of new data
* Activities that are duplicative to prior or ongoing studies
	1. **Reporting Requirements**
		1. Final Deliverables:
			1. Final report summarizing the methodology and all findings that includes a two-page summary
			2. Slide deck and final presentation to the Advisory Board
		2. Ongoing Deliverables:
			1. Meeting on a regular basis with GEO and DMR to monitor project progress, starting with a kickoff call to align expectations. This may include coordination with GEO on related projects.
			2. Submit interim deliverables associated with each task for GEO’s review
			3. Engage with ROSA, RWSC, and other regional entities working on similar efforts
1. **Project 2: Secondary Entanglement Risk Assessment and Technology Feasibility Study**
	1. **Objective**

Floating offshore wind projects can have dynamic mooring and cabling systems. As such, it is important to understand the risk of secondary entanglement for marine wildlife. Secondary entanglement refers to marine debris, such as ghost fishing gear, that becomes ensnared around mooring lines and/or cables, with the potential to subsequently entangle marine wildlife. There have been qualitative assumptions about potential entanglement but there has been limited work to identify the risk of secondary entanglement occurring.

It is important to understand the potential for gear accumulation and the likelihood of entanglement to most appropriately identify monitoring and mitigation best practices. While there is some research evaluating the likelihood and actual risk of entanglement, the specific conditions of the Gulf of Maine (water depth, fishing gear types, etc) have not been studied at sufficient detail to inform these recommendations properly. This desktop project aims to fill that gap.

This project should specifically consider and attempt to qualify the likelihood and risk of secondary entanglement in the Gulf of Maine as this will help identify future work. While the primary objective of this project is to gather data, Applicants should consider in their methodology how the deliverables will ultimately lead to the quantifying of risk of secondary entanglement.

For the technology feasibility study, GEO is aiming to advance understanding of what an effective secondary entanglement monitoring program should consist of from a technology and regulatory perspective. The outcome should be a set of recommendations for appropriate monitoring techniques and outline retrieval options based on current and forecasted technologies and the results of the risk assessment.

* 1. **Required Activities**

Applicants should propose approaches for each of the following tasks to achieve the objectives outlined above in Section B.1. Applicants should propose a realistic timeline for achieving the tasks described below, with a suggested timeline between 8-12 months. It is anticipated that the project will kick off in early 2025. The Applicant should plan to consult with GEO at key decision making points throughout the project.

* + 1. **Task 1: Literature Review, Data Collection, and Data Gaps**
			1. Conduct a literature review of existing information on marine debris, fishing gear, gear loss rates in the Gulf of Maine, and entanglement. The focus area should be within and adjacent to the final lease areas in the Gulf of Maine. Current types of fishing gear used and types of gear that are likely to be used in the future (i.e., alternative gear used per future regulations or due to the impact of climate change affecting the types of species fished) should be considered. Information may be collected from sources including, but not limited to, passive acoustic monitoring data, data from marine mammal survey vessels, ROV footage, logbook data, NOAA Marine Debris Program, recorded activities from the Oil & Gas sector in the Gulf of Mexico, recorded activities from existing floating wind farms, or other sources.
			2. Identify data gaps and recommendations on how they should be addressed and by whom. The results of this task will be key chapter of the final report.
		2. **Task 2: Stakeholder Engagement Plan**
			1. Create a Stakeholder Engagement plan that details how the Applicant will engage with the fishing community throughout the project to review initial results, build acceptance, and receive feedback. The Applicant should include in their application an overview of how they plan to engage key stakeholders including the Research Consortium Advisory Board, fishermen, and others. This could include the creation of a Project Advisory Committee, and the Applicant should include their stakeholder engagement efforts in their proposed project budget and timeline.
		3. **Task 3: Desktop Risk Assessment**
			1. Conduct a desktop risk assessment that includes information collected in Task 1 to analyze the likelihood of entanglement in the Gulf of Maine. The analysis should produce a probability estimate of entanglement by each fishing gear type. Applicants should consider using existing models or work, notably the [BOEM/NOAA floating offshore wind farm simulator](https://www.boem.gov/sites/default/files/documents/regions/pacific-ocs-region/environmental-science/PR-19-ENT-profile_0.pdf#:~:text=Develop%20a%20simulator%20designed%20to%20examine%20the%20risk%20and%20potential), to analyze how marine mammals are likely to behave around floating wind farms, if appropriate.
			2. Describe how this assessment can inform future adaptations of BOEM’s simulator model that currently focuses on California floating offshore wind.
		4. **Task 4: Monitoring Approaches and Technologies**
			1. Following the risk assessment results from Task 3, undertake a desktop study to explore regulatory and technological opportunities for deploying real-time marine acoustic/mammal detection systems and fishing gear entanglement sensors directly on floating offshore wind systems. The regulatory review should include any requirements and/or guidance that federal agencies (BOEM, BSEE, NOAA, etc), other countries, or qualified institutions have published on monitoring best practices. Recommend appropriate monitoring techniques and technology gaps that could include both integrated and stand-alone sensing systems. The study should include options that leverage offshore power availability to facilitate real-time data collection and transmission.
			2. Summarize the results of this regulatory and technological desktop study and highlight the gaps identified.
		5. **Task 5: Retrieval Approaches and Technologies**
			1. Identify possible technology solutions or innovations related to retrieving marine debris and ghost fishing gear based on the level of risk and type of monitoring in Tasks 1-4.
			2. Complete a gap analysis and identify opportunities for retrieval technology development.
		6. **Task 6: Final Report and Communication Products**
			1. Summarize the methodology, all findings, and make recommendations for future work based on Tasks 1-5 in a report and presentation, both aimed at communicating with broad public audiences. The Applicant should be prepared for these materials to be used in outreach and engagement to communicate the Consortium’s work to the public.
	1. **Non-Allowable Use of Funds**

Applicants should not include in their applications or budgets:

* Proposals to advance, test or support the technology development of an individual concept
* Collecting new marine wildlife data
	1. **Reporting Requirements**
		1. Final Deliverables:
			1. Final report summarizing the approach, methodology, and all findings that includes a two-page summary
			2. Slide deck and final presentation to the Advisory Board
		2. Ongoing Deliverables:
			1. Meeting on a regular basis with GEO and DMR to monitor project progress, starting with a kickoff call to align expectations
			2. Submit interim deliverables associated with each Task for GEO’s review
			3. Engage with ROSA, RWSC, BOEM, NOAA, DOE, and other states working on similar efforts
1. **Project 3: Baseline offshore bat monitoring assessment**
	1. **Objective**

Bats have been detected in coastal areas of the Gulf of Maine, but little is known about bat use of the offshore environment, including species composition, abundance and distribution, temporal patterns, and influence of weather conditions. Baseline data collection offshore is essential to understand the future potential impact of floating offshore wind in the Gulf of Maine.

 In the coming years, developers will submit bat risk assessments and monitoring plans as part of their Construction and Operations Plans (COPs) for specific lease areas. However, baseline data collection is needed for the offshore Gulf of Maine to provide context for individual project risk assessments as well as an understanding of the species most at risk.

The primary objective of this project is to collect and analyze acoustic data on bat species to characterize baseline bat activity in the offshore Gulf of Maine, with emphasis on seasonal abundance and distribution. This study should focus on baseline bat activity offshore, rather than specifically collecting data within a defined location, such as a specific lease area. The primary data collection activity is anticipated to be bat acoustic detectors that could be deployed on existing buoy networks, island weather stations, coastal sites, and fishing vessels and/or other vessels of opportunity; however, novel ideas will be considered. This study is expected to build on a Fall 2024 data collection effort led by MDIFW.

* 1. **Required Activities**

Applicants should propose approaches for each of the following tasks to achieve the objectives outlined above in Section C.1. Applicants should propose a realistic timeline for achieving the tasks described below, with a suggested data collection campaign in Fall 2025. It is anticipated that the project will kick off in early 2025. The Applicant should plan to consult with GEO and DIFW at key decision making points.

* + 1. **Task 1: Develop Study Plan**
			1. Establish a detailed study plan. This plan should include the study methodology, survey area and, if applicable, agreements on buoy modifications or deployments. The application should include the high- level approach and timeline for securing those agreements if applicable. This plan should consider the methodology and data collected by MDIFW in Fall 2024. The plan will be reviewed by GEO and MDIFW.
		2. **Task 2: Collect Data**
			1. Collect the data according to the study plan. The schedule should be established to account for unfavorable weather conditions. Submit regular updates via email to GEO and MDIFW.
		3. **Task 3: Data Processing and Analysis**
			1. Undertake quality control, data vetting and processing, and data analysis. All data to be processed following the USFWS guidelines (USFWS, 2023). Use of descriptive statistics and spatial analyses could be used to help determine species composition onshore and offshore, seasonality, mapping of detections, and/or visualizations of temporal and spatial patterns onshore and offshore.
		4. **Task 4: Final Report and Communication Products**
			1. Summarize the methodology, all findings, and make recommendations for future work based on Tasks 1-3 in a report and presentation, both aimed at communicating with broad public audiences. The Applicant should be prepared for these materials to be used in an outreach and engagement campaign to communicate the Consortium’s work to the public.
			2. Submit data collected to the North American Bat Monitoring Program, following recommendations from the Regional Wildlife Science Collaborative (RWSC)
	1. **Reporting Requirements**
		1. Final Deliverables:
			1. Final report summarizing the approach, methodology, and all findings that includes a two-page summary
			2. Slide deck and final presentation to the Advisory Board
			3. Submit data collected to the North American Bat Monitoring Program, following recommendations from the RWSC
		2. Ongoing Deliverables:
			1. Meeting on a regular basis with GEO and MDIFW to monitor project progress, starting with a kickoff call to align expectations
			2. Submit interim deliverables associated with each Task for GEO’s review
			3. Engage with ROSA, RWSC, BOEM, DOE, and other states working on similar efforts

**PART III KEY PROCESS EVENTS**

## Submission of Questions

* 1. **General Instructions:** It is the responsibility of all Applicants and other interested parties to examine the entire RFA and to seek clarification, in writing, if they do not understand any information or instructions.
		1. Applicants and other interested parties should use **Appendix A** (Submitted Questions Form) for submission of questions. The form is to be submitted as a WORD document.
		2. Questions must be submitted, by e-mail, and received by the RFA Coordinator identified on the cover page of the RFA as soon as possible but no later than the date and time specified on the RFA cover page.
		3. Submitted Questions must include the RFA 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 State’s Division of Procurement Services [Grant RFPs and RFAs](https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/vendors/grants) website. 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 RFA will be posted on the Office of State Procurement Services [Grant RFPs and RFAs](https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/vendors/grants) website. 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.

## Application Submission

* 1. **Applications Due:** Applications must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. local time, on the date listed on the cover page of the RFA.
		1. Any e-mails containing original application submissions or any additional or revised application files, received after the 11:59 p.m. deadline, will be rejected without exception.
1. **Delivery Instructions:** Applications must be submitted electronically to the State of Maine Division of Procurement Services at proposals@maine.gov.
	1. Only applications received by e-mail will be considered. The Department assumes no liability for assuring accurate/complete e-mail transmission and receipt.

Application submission e-mails that are successfully received by the proposals@maine.gov inbox will receive an automatic reply stating as such.

* 1. E-mails containing links to file sharing sites or online file repositories will not be accepted as submissions. Only e-mail application submissions that have the requested files attached will be accepted.
	2. Encrypted e-mails received which require opening attachments and logging into a proprietary system will not be accepted as submissions. It is the Applicant’s responsibility to check with its organization’s information technology team to ensure that security settings will not encrypt its application submission.
	3. File size limits are 25MB per e-mail. Applicants may submit files 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 as described above.
	4. Applicants are to insert the following into the subject line of their e-mail submission: “**RFA# 202410193 Application Submission – [Applicant’s Name]**”.
1. **Submission Contents**
2. Application submissions must include the Applicant’s completed **Application Form** (found in Part V of the RFA) and all required information and attachments as stated in the form.
3. The Application Form must be submitted as a single, typed, PDF file.
4. Applicants are not to provide additional attachments beyond those specified in the RFA or Application Form for the purpose of extending their response. Materials not requested will not be considered part of the application and will not be evaluated.

**PART IV APPLICATION EVALUATION AND SELECTION**

1. **Evaluation Process – General Information**
	1. An evaluation team, composed of qualified reviewers, will judge the merits of the proposals received in accordance with the criteria defined in the RFA.
	2. Officials responsible for making decisions on the award selection will 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 applications and to ensure that all contracts are awarded to the Applicants that provide the best value to the State of Maine.
	3. The Department reserves the right to communicate and/or schedule interviews/presentations with Applicants, if needed, to obtain clarification of information contained in the applications received. The Department may revise the scores assigned in the initial evaluation to reflect those communications and/or interviews/presentations. Changes to applications, including updating or adding information, will not be permitted during any interview/presentation process and, therefore, Applicants must submit proposals that present their rates and other requested information as clearly and completely as possible.
	4. Failure to respond to all questions and instructions throughout the RFA may result in the application 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 RFA specifications will result either in disqualification or reduction in scoring of a proposal.
2. **Scoring Process:** The evaluation team will use a consensus approach to evaluate and score all sections listed below. 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.

The cost proposal will be evaluated based on a complete, accurate, and reasonable budget based on the proposed scope of work and adherence to the RFA guidelines. Projects that include a match component and/or leveraging other public and/or private funds will earn higher scores.

For more information on what constitutes “reasonable costs,” refer to 2 CFR 200 (Uniform Guidance).

1. **Scoring Weights:** The score will be based on a 100-point scale and will measure the degree to which each application meets the objectives and tasks described in the RFA for each project.

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| **Scoring Criteria** | **Points Available** |
| Qualifications and Experience | 28 |
| Proposed Scope of Work | 40 |
| Cost Proposal  | 25 |
| Partnerships and Letters of Support | 7 |
| **Total Points**  | **100 points** |

1. **Selection and Award**
	1. Notification of conditional award selection or non-selection will be made in writing by the Department.
	2. Issuance of this RFA in no way constitutes a commitment by the State to award a contract, to pay costs incurred in the preparation of a response to the RFA, or to pay costs incurred in procuring or contracting for services, supplies, physical space, personnel, or any other costs incurred by the Applicant.
	3. The Department reserves the right to reject any and all applications or to make multiple awards.
2. **Contract Administration and Conditions**
	1. The awarded Applicants will be required to execute a State of Maine Service Contract with the appropriate riders as determined by the issuing Department.
	2. Allocation of funds is final upon successful negotiation and execution of the contract, subject to the review and approval of the State Procurement Review Committee. Contracts are not considered fully executed and valid until approved by the State Procurement Review Committee and funds are encumbered. No contract will be approved based on an RFP which has an effective date less than fourteen (14) calendar days after award notification to Applicants. (Referenced in the regulations of the Department of Administrative and Financial Services, [Chapter 110, § 3(B)(i)](https://www.maine.gov/dafs/bbm/procurementservices/policies-procedures/chapter-110)). This provision means that a contract cannot be effective until at least 14 calendar days after award notification.
	3. Following the award, a Contract Administrator from the Department will be appointed to assist with the development and administration of the contract and to act as administrator during the entire contract period. Department staff will be available after the award to consult with the awarded Applicants in the finalization of the contract.
	4. In providing services and performing under the contract, the awarded Applicant must act as an independent contractor and not as an agent of the State of Maine.

**PART V APPLICATION FORM**

Applicants must use the Application Form embedded below to submit their application in response to this RFA.

The Application Form may be obtained in a Word (.docx) format by double clicking on the document icon below. Please note that this RFA must be downloaded and viewed in a desktop app for the embedded document to become accessible.

Applicants may choose to submit their application using a different template to have more space to respond to each section, but they are responsible for ensuring that all sections of the application are included and should reproduce the form as closely as possible. The budget must be submitted in the same format as the one included in the Application Form below.

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**APPENDIX A SUBMITTED QUESTIONS FORM**

This form should be used by Applicants when submitting written questions to the RFA Coordinator.

If a question is not related to any section of the RFA, enter “N/A” under the RFA Section & Page Number. Add additional rows as necessary. Submit this document in WORD format, not PDF.

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| **Organization Name:** |  |

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| **RFA Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
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