

Early Adopter Pilot Program

Frequently Asked and Clarifying Questions

1. What distinguishes “eligible to apply” from “likely to be a competitive proposal”?

Eligibility for this program is broad and competitiveness is based on the criteria outlined in the Program Description and Application Form. Please consider how well your proposal aligns with the program’s intent outlined in the program description. Your proposal is less likely to be competitive and selected to pitch if your goal is simply to receive \$10,000 in funding for your company than if your goals are along the lines of “I can get a better sense of whether a State agency is a good market to pursue,” or “I could do valuable customer discovery through this program,” or “this is a great chance to see if X is a viable revenue stream in addition to our primary product.” If you have to stretch a concept, product, or service to fit the program’s intent, your application is unlikely to be competitive.

2. How does the \$10,000 cap work? Is that the cost of onboarding, promotion costs, or the full cost of running the program for a year?

The State procurement rules say that the State can enter a contract of up to \$10,000 based on an oral presentation (the “pitch”). So, \$10,000 is the most the State can put under contract for an Early Adopter time-limited project. It is up to the pitcher to say how the project could happen for that amount of money. We also anticipate that in some cases, we will enter agreements where no money actually changes hands between the State and the company, if the role of the State agency is, for example, simply as a test phase participant.

3. Does the State have to be an ultimate customer of the proposed product or service?

While the State agency does not necessarily have to be a customer of the company’s product or service in the long run, the State should be a logical target customer for the proposed product or service at this stage of its development. The State does not have to be the customer for an existing use case – it could also serve as a way to test out additional use cases for a given product or service. For example, if a company has a software platform that does one thing for its existing customers, but also gathers a great deal of data in the process that could be useful to a State, the company could conceivably apply to test a build out of data dashboards as an additional use case that it might sell to States. It is important to note that such a project would have to be fairly easily developed and implemented in order to be competitive.

4. What is considered a “Maine-based” business for the purposes of this program? Does the company have to be headquartered in Maine in order to be eligible?

To be eligible for this program, a company must be registered with the Maine Secretary of State and have some physical presence in Maine. The application asks for applicants to describe their presence and commitment to the State of Maine. Responses to this question may be used as a differentiator in the selection process, but being headquartered outside of Maine does not make a business ineligible for consideration so long as it meets the aforementioned criteria.

5. Does my pitch have to be targeted at one State agency, or can it involve multiple agencies?

A pitch can involve multiple agencies, but the project agreement would ultimately lie with one agency.

6. Can two companies apply together for a joint project?

Yes, two companies can apply together for a joint project. The \$10,000 maximum budget would still apply for the joint project.

7. Can a company submit multiple project proposals?

A company can submit applications for multiple projects if they have multiple hypotheses to test where the State makes sense as an early adopter or beta-tester, but they would not be selected to “pitch” more than one project.

8. What if I’m not sure which State agency or department is the best fit for my project? Could someone at the State provide suggestions?

If you don’t know what agency is the best one to target, you can describe the connection to the State in your application and we can help figure out the right agency if you are selected to pitch. For example, if a company has a software platform for employers to identify wellness resources for employees but the company doesn’t know the ins and outs of the State’s HR departments, they don’t need to know the exact agency but can say something like “the agency that would have an HR function” or “the agency that would select a wellness resource to provide for State employees.”

9. I am developing a product/service that would be a good fit for this program, but it won’t be ready to launch for another year. Will DECD be running this program again next year?

Beginning in April 2021, DECD will pilot this program quarterly for one year and then will either adjust, expand, or terminate the program based on the learnings during this pilot phase. Please check back next year to see if the program will be continued.