

Early Adopter Pilot Program Webinar

April 23, 2021 – 12-1 PM

Program Overview

- DECD is piloting this program on an annual basis over the next year (NOTE: As of 12/21/21 DECD will pilot this program on an annual basis). We will take our learnings from the pilot phase and evaluate whether we continue, change, expand, or terminate the program.
- The program is a key piece of the Strategic Plan implementation around the Promote Innovation strategy area.
- **Program Goals:**
 1. Support innovative Maine companies by having the State serve as an early adopter customer or tester of a company's newly developed product and/or service. The State will help companies in the early development stages of new products/services when they need all the support, customer feedback, and information they can gather.
 2. Help the State understand innovation better and how we can have more innovative approaches to our work. Part of this is around the concept of procurement – with public procurement processes, the State puts out Requests for Information/Proposals for things we know we need. This program is a way for the State to learn about innovative products we might not know we need, as well.
- **Program Process:**
 - Maine companies will submit the written application form, which is essentially a request to pitch. The written application asks companies to show they are a Maine-based business, that they have an innovative product/service, that the State could be an early adopter customer/tester, and why it's a good project for both the company and the State.
 - The application form can be found on DECD's website [here](#).
 - DECD will review the applications and determine which are the best fit for the goals of the program, as well as which ones propose a strong time-limited project that could clearly answer a question for the company.
 - Of the applications received, up to 3 will be selected to pitch. Selected companies will have an opportunity to pitch their proposed project to a committee made up of DECD, procurement representatives, and agency decision-makers that would go into the time-limited project agreement.
 - From the companies that pitch, we'll select anywhere from none to all 3 to do a time-limited project.
 - We'll follow the same process the next quarter.
 - We'll also plan to give feedback to anyone not selected upon request. If it seems like there could be tweaks to the project based on that feedback, the company can reapply in the following quarter.
- This pilot will help the State learn about the cultural differences between the innovation space and the procurement space, and how we might bridge some of those differences.

Q&A Session

1. What makes a proposal competitive?

The competitiveness of a proposal will be based off several factors, including:

- Is the State a logical tester or adopter of the product/service?
- How well can the project answer a particular question for the company, and how well can it help the State understand whether it is a product/service it wants to use?
- The feasibility of the project will also be an important factor – is it far enough along in development to be easily implemented?

2. My product/service is a little more expensive than \$10,000. Can you talk about the \$10,000 cap?

The cap is \$10,000 because, according to the State's procurement policies, \$10,000 is the maximum amount the State can put under contract based on an oral presentation/pitch. It is also the largest amount that can be given without an open RFP/competitive bidding process. Part of this pilot will be learning whether this is a program that can work with a \$10,000 cap and, if not, how we might potentially work with other partners in the ecosystem to bring other dollars to bear on the projects.

It is important to note that the value of this program isn't about the \$10,000 – it's about access to the State as an early adopter/tester customer.

3. When is the application deadline for the first quarter? Will the deadline be every three months quarterly from here on out?

This quarter's deadline is April 30 by 4:00 p.m. ET, driven by the need to review applications, get companies lined up to pitch, and get contracts underway before the end of the State's fiscal year. We may do it on more of a rolling basis starting July 1, depending on how this quarter goes – how many applications we receive and the feedback we get on the process.

4. We noticed you want to applicants to target specific State agencies. What if our product/service applies to a certain demographic of State employees, not specific to one department or another? Is there a way to apply across all State agencies?

There's a question in the application that asks companies to tell us what State agency they are targeting. If you're not sure which State agency or agencies makes the most sense, you can describe what you want to do and then we can help figure out the right agency or agencies for you to target on our end. If it's a product/service that would apply to employees across all agencies, you would probably target the Bureau of Human Resources at some level, but you don't need to have it narrowed down exactly if it's not readily apparent to you.

5. Can a company submit multiple proposals if they have multiple products/services?

Yes, a company can submit multiple project applications if they have multiple products/services, or if they have multiple hypotheses they're testing where the State could provide useful feedback.

6. Does using less of the \$10,000 maximum budget make an application more compelling?

This is not a key criterion in terms of the ultimate decision. Consideration will be focused more on the logic behind the dollar amount and if it makes sense to be using it in the proposed way.

7. Who is the best contact to reach out to if we have questions after this webinar?

Please send any questions you may have to the email address listed in the application form:
BizAwards.DECD@maine.gov.