

**Finance Authority of Maine**  
**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**  
**Marketing Communications Agency**  
**April 28, 2017**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

**A. General Information**

The Finance Authority of Maine ("FAME") is an independent state agency that develops and administers programs related to the financing of both business and higher education in the State of Maine. FAME's primary audiences are Maine businesses and lenders seeking financing or credit enhancement, as well as students, families, and schools seeking financial resources for higher education. FAME's primary goal is to expand opportunities for Maine residents and businesses to grow Maine's economy. FAME has been helping Maine people succeed for over 30 years. To learn more about FAME, please visit [FAMEmaine.com](http://FAMEmaine.com).

FAME is seeking the services of a full-service marketing firm (Vendor) to serve as its marketing agency for most, but not all, of its programs. FAME has some in-house marketing capability and capacity, but has many projects whereby it wishes to collaborate and/or contract out all or part of the marketing process with an outside expert.

Submission of a proposal indicates acceptance by the firm of the conditions contained in this request for proposals ("RFP"). There is no expressed or implied obligation for FAME to reimburse responding firms for any expenses incurred in preparing proposals in response to this RFP. All information contained in a respondent's submission must be factual and accurate. Misrepresentation of facts may be grounds for dismissal from consideration.

**B. Term of Engagement**

Three consecutive one-year contractual engagements are contemplated, subject to recommendation of FAME staff and satisfactory negotiation of terms. FAME will reserve the right to terminate the contract during any engagement period.

**II. NATURE OF SERVICES REQUIRED**

FAME is seeking a full-service marketing firm to provide marketing services on an as needed basis. This RFP does include services for the NextGen College Investing Plan®.\*

**Background**

FAME's Brand Promise: To aspiring Mainers, FAME is the leading financial resource that expands business and educational opportunities through our willingness to invest at greater risk based on public benefit.

FAME's vision: FAME will lead the creation of good paying jobs for Maine residents by working at the nexus between economic and workforce development.

FAME's Mission: FAME provides access to innovative financial solutions to help Maine residents pursue business and higher education opportunities.

As part of FAME's mission we encourage Maine residents to plan for future college expenses by, among other things, becoming financially capable and as appropriate opening NextGen accounts and regularly contributing to those accounts. We require a marketing agency with social marketing experience – a proven ability to create marketing programs that encourage behavior change.

NextGen is designed to comply with the requirements for treatment as a qualified tuition program under Section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code, and is administered by FAME. Merrill Lynch is the Program Manager. Section 529 plans are tax-advantaged investment vehicles that involve the sale of municipal securities which are subject to various state and federal securities and other laws and regulations. The NextGen plan may only be sold and distributed by Merrill Lynch Financial Advisors or Maine Distribution Agents, directly through FAME, or through Merrill Lynch's online platform. In particular, advertising must comply with the applicable rules of the Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board and applicable state and federal securities laws and regulations and may also be subject to the rules of certain self-regulatory organizations. By contract with Merrill Lynch, FAME is required, with certain limited exceptions, to submit all proposed advertising, marketing, or promotional materials to Merrill Lynch for review. In addition, both FAME and Merrill Lynch are subject to various privacy and confidentiality laws and regulations which also affect NextGen. To learn more about FAME or NextGen, please visit [www.NextGenforME.com](http://www.NextGenforME.com).

### **Description of Services**

Marketing Firm (Vendor) will:

- Provide a single point of contact
- Help coordinate, develop, and execute comprehensive annual marketing plans to achieve strategic plan goals for:
  - FAME Business
  - FAME Education
  - FAME Student Loans
  - NextGen College Investing Plan
- Provide services to include, but may not be limited to:
  - Market research
  - Marketing strategy
  - Concept development
  - Writing, editing, proofreading
  - Graphic design

- Sourcing vendors to provide additional services (e.g. signage, printing, mail services, etc.)
- Press opportunity development and execution for certain programs
- Social media planning and execution
- Direct mail coordination
- Media buying
- Measurement and reporting on results
- Account management

Current marketing plans can be requested by contacting Director of Business Development, Elizabeth Vanderweide at [evanderweide@famemaine.com](mailto:evanderweide@famemaine.com). It is FAME's intention to use the Vendor for all its outsourced marketing service needs. However, FAME also plans to request estimates ahead of initiating certain projects and may or may not accept Vendor's quote or may use a different vendor for any marketing project. FAME also reserves the right to select multiple vendors.

\*Marketing for NextGen is inclusive of marketing to Maine residents only, and does not include nationwide marketing. Please note we are not generally able to participate in most social media platforms for NextGen, and promotion via radio has been hampered by the necessity to include lengthy disclosure.

### **III. PROPOSAL CALENDAR**

1. Questions concerning this RFP should be received electronically by 5:00pm on Monday, May 8, 2017 and directed to Elizabeth Vanderweide at [evanderweide@famemaine.com](mailto:evanderweide@famemaine.com).
2. Answers to questions will be sent electronically to all known and interested vendors by 5:00 pm on Wednesday, May 10, 2017.
3. Responses should be e-mailed (in PDF form) and mailed or hand-delivered with five complete packages and received at the offices of FAME no later than 4:00 pm on Monday, May 22, 2017. FAME may, at its discretion, consider information received after that time, but shall be under no obligation to do so.
4. Estimated Notification Date: May 31, 2017
5. Estimated Start Work Date: July 1, 2017

### **IV. PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS**

#### **A. General Requirements**

1. State the size of the firm and describe the firm's history and relevant experience, the location of the office from which the work on this engagement is to be performed, and the professional staff to be employed in this engagement, by role. Provide information on each person's

- qualifications and relevant experience. Identify the primary contact who would be assigned to the engagement.
2. Include a brief summary (not to exceed two pages) containing the most important reasons why you believe your firm should be selected.
  3. Describe any marketing tactics you would employ that you believe would help FAME meet its marketing goals.
  4. Address the extent to which you are able to provide the services described.
  5. Provide five packages (with electronic links, if helpful) containing 4-5 samples of work which best illustrate your expertise.
  6. Describe your proposed use of partners, alliances, affiliations and/or subcontractors for any of the services in the scope of work. Include the company names and describe how they are utilized.
  7. Include details about your development process including approval cycles and specific information about your project management process.
  8. Provide details regarding the fees you propose to charge FAME for your services. If you propose a retainer, describe the frequency of payment, the services included in the retainer, and hourly rates by type of service for services not included in the retainer. Identify all costs you would expect to bill to FAME for the services.
  9. Provide three references that can attest to your company's capabilities.
  10. Provide any other information, suggestions and supporting materials that you believe will be relevant and should be considered in assessing your company's qualifications.

## **B. Form and Place of Submission**

All submissions must be received by 4:00 pm on Monday, May 22, 2017. Send or deliver one PDF package and five hard copy packages to:  
evanderweide@FAMEmaine.com

Elizabeth Vanderweide, Director of Business Development  
Finance Authority of Maine  
P.O. Box 949, 5 Community Drive, Augusta, ME 04332-0949

FAME may, in its discretion, consider information received after the deadline, but is under no obligation to do so.

## **V. EVALUATION PROCEDURES**

### **A. Review of Responses**

Responses submitted will be evaluated by the Director of Business Development with assistance of other FAME staff. FAME reserves the right to:

- Ask for additional information from any one or more respondents;

- Select any company for these services regardless of whether it submits information in response to this RFP and to select more than one such company or to select no company at all;
- Enter into further discussions or negotiations with any one or more respondents as FAME deems advantageous;
- Accept a proposal that does not offer the lowest cost;
- Confirm all references and contact further references obtained from other sources as deemed necessary or desirable;
- Waive or not waive any informalities or deficiencies in any response;
- Answer or not answer any questions that may be asked by any respondents and to use its own judgment with regard to whether or not to provide any additional information, clarification or extension of time to any respondent or potential respondent; and
- Retain all proposals submitted and use any idea in a proposal regardless of whether that proposal is selected.

#### **B. Evaluation Criteria**

Proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria:

- Quality and completeness of your response; 15%
- Ability of service offerings and capabilities to meet FAME's needs; 25%
- Experience, expertise, talents and skills of firm's staff as shown through samples references, and the proposal; 25%
- Suggested marketing communication tactics to help FAME achieve its goals; 10%
- Fees and anticipated total costs; 25%

#### **C. Oral Presentations and Site Visits**

During the evaluation process, FAME may request any one or all firms to make oral presentations or participate in telephone conferences. Such presentations will provide firms with an opportunity to answer any questions FAME may have on a firm's proposal. Not all firms may be asked to participate in such presentations.

FAME may request none, one or more of the respondents to meet with representatives of FAME at its offices in Augusta, Maine. All costs incurred in connection with responding to this RFP and travel to meetings with FAME shall be borne by the respondent. Respondents will be expected to provide FAME staff with the opportunity to visit and tour respondents' business facilities prior to final selection, if requested by FAME.

#### **D. Right to Reject Proposals**

FAME reserves the right without prejudice to reject any or all proposals.

This RFP does not commit FAME to contract with any respondent or to contract with any one or more respondent(s) for any particular period of time or scope of services or to contact any respondent following submission of information to confirm receipt or notify of any decision or for any other reason.

## **VI. CONFIDENTIALITY**

All material submitted to FAME shall be the sole property of FAME, and material and information submitted may be used by FAME in any manner it chooses. FAME is required to comply with the Maine Freedom of Access laws, 1 MRSA §401 et seq., and the confidentiality provisions of the Finance Authority of Maine Act, 10 MRSA §975-A. If a firm believes any information submitted to be confidential, such information should be clearly marked as such and accompanied by a request for confidential treatment based on one or more reasons set forth in 10 M.R.S.A. §975-A. FAME must disclose, upon request, information not deemed confidential and with respect to confidential information, is nevertheless authorized to disclose it to any person or entity when directed to do so by subpoena, request for production of documents, warrant or other order by competent authority, provided the requirements of 10 MRSA §975-A(3)(H) have been met.