

## **Finance Authority of Maine**

### **Request for Proposal State Digital Lending Portal October 2021**

#### **Background:**

The state of Maine has a diverse landscape of alternative financing opportunities for businesses of every size and at every stage of development. These financing opportunities are managed through many organizations with varied programs. The organizations are broad and represented by: Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFIs), Economic Development Districts (EDDs), other Regional Economic Development Revolving Loan Program (REDRLP) participants, banks, credit unions, state agencies (Maine Rural Development Authority (MRDA), Maine Technology Institute (MTI), Maine Venture Fund (MVF), etc.) and alternative commercial lenders (Finance Authority of Maine (FAME), Coastal Enterprises Inc. (CEI), etc.). Business programs involve: direct loans, sub-debt loans, loan guarantees, start-up grants, equity-based transactions, tax-incentive and tax credit programs and numerous other business incentives.

These organizations and programs provide extensive capital and support for thousands of businesses in Maine and are vital to the growth and prosperity of our economy. The Finance Authority of Maine, as a lead organization in the deployment of this proposed solution, provides access to innovative financial solutions to help Maine citizens pursue business and higher educational opportunities. FAME was established as an independent business finance agency of the State of Maine in 1983 and charged with supporting the startup, expansion and growth plans of Maine's business community. The agency works closely with Maine's lending community to improve access to capital as well as to help fill gaps that exist in the State's capital delivery system.

FAME will serve as a lead organization in the deployment of recovery funding under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA); allocated by the Maine Legislature and Governor under LD 1733 which:

- Provides one-time funding for loans or loan guarantees through the Finance Authority of Maine for businesses having difficulty securing investment capital due to the COVID-19 pandemic and provides capital for rural development projects through the Maine Rural Development Authority.
- Provides one-time funding for business assistance programs through the Finance Authority of Maine for organizations employing emerging financing and/or

organizational models that became market trends during the pandemic, including Co-Ops, B-corps, and Employee Stock Ownership Plans.

ARPA funds are targeted for:

- **Small businesses** - including loans, grants, in-kind assistance, technical assistance or other services, that responds to *the negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 public health emergency*.
- **Nonprofits** - including loans, grants, in-kind assistance, technical assistance or other services, that responds to *the negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 public health emergency*.
- **Aid to impacted industries** - Aid to tourism, travel, hospitality, and other impacted industries that responds to *the negative economic impacts of the COVID-19 public health emergency*.

FAME will also serve as a lead organization in the deployment of funding under the State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI) designated to promote growth in the following areas:

- loan guarantees;
- loan participations and subordinated debt; and
- venture capital investments

Eligible uses for SSBCI enhanced funding are:

- New money transactions
  - Equipment, real estate used in the business, working capital, leasehold improvements, new construction, renovation and other business asset acquisition
- For profit and nonprofit businesses are eligible

**Purpose:**

The patchwork of organizations challenged to meet the financing needs of Maine's business community have numerous business assistance programs. The plethora of programs also represent a point of frustration for business customers looking for the capital they need to grow or preserve businesses. Customers have repeatedly spoken about the difficulty of finding the best program/partner and the excessive time to funding and lack of collaboration in sharing of information among these alternative lenders. The purpose of this project is to provide a digital

lending portal for the State of Maine (MeLendPort) that will help improve these disparate systems.

We envision a new system that performs the following tasks:

- Creates a public facing web portal that provides education on alternative financing opportunities in a concise and simple manner.
- This web portal will also allow users to register and authenticate for submission of common business documentation to aid with financing options (tax returns, promissory notes, insurance information, environmental studies etc.)
- Users will be able to manage their applications in the web portal.
- Organizations that identify collaborative funding opportunities will share application information to finalize funding in a single location for businesses.
- The cloud-based data warehouse of business digital content will bi-directionally share data with the participating lending organizations.
- The public website will also need to support a program of secondary funding of businesses to partner organizations that have directly made loans. E.g. if a CDFI provides a loan to a business that has been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic the web-portal must allow for the CDFI to request reimbursement of the disbursed capital for eligible lending.
- Overarching functionality of the system will include a secure cloud-based architecture with robust document/workflow management, role-based 2 factor authentication and mobile device support.

### **Specific System Requirements:**

In your responses please address the following goals with detailed answers to specific questions:

1. How will you create a public facing web portal that provides the following:
  - a. Education on state alternative financing options
    - i. *What are some examples you have of taking 40-50 varied programs and allowing users to easily navigate to clear overviews of those programs?*
  - b. Creation of inquiry form for intake of financing questions
  - c. Customer registration and account creation for secure login
    - i. *How do you intend to handle confidentiality agreements from a customer?*
  - d. Allow the public, including individuals with disabilities access. Viewing of pages must work in most internet browsers and browser versions in order to

reach the widest audience possible. The pages should be tested in popular screen readers to help assure accessibility.

- e. Provide language support in at least the 5 most commonly used in Maine: Arabic, French Canadian, Somali, Spanish and Vietnamese. Potential for additional translations support in Chinese, Russian, and Khmer.
  - f. Role based access.
    - i. *What are the types of roles you see required in the system and how will you allow for collaboration on documents and applications?*
    - ii. *For loans that required shared funding resources from multiple organizations how will you handle this?*
  - g. Upload, view, sequencing of input documents throughout the loan life cycle.
  - h. Generation of notifications, consents, borrower agreements, signing documents, responding to lender requests, etc.
    - i. *Specifically answer how you handle electronic signatures?*
  - i. Administrative access and workflow configuration.
    - i. *How do administrators manage access and workflow?*
2. Augmentation of public facing web portal for business partners fund disbursement for funds from American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and increased funding of State Small Business Credit Initiative (SSBCI)
- a. Creation of secure and authenticated section of website for business partner use
    - i. *Do you see this access as different from a business customer?*
  - b. Creation of streamlined (shortened) application for fund disbursement of COVID-19 impacted businesses identified by lending partners
  - c. Document/workflow management functionality to support these applications
3. Application platform to house digital content:
- a. Must be cloud-based
    - i. *What cloud data architecture will you house the database on?*
  - b. Checklists/ Tasks based workflow movement with Alerts, Notification and requests scheduling
    - i. *Please provide detailed overview of your workflow process.*
  - c. Audit trail generation
  - d. Provides a standards-based architecture that allows integration of digital content with other systems.
    - i. *How would you handle secure ETL in both intake and extract from the data structure?*
    - ii. *Will any of this functionality be provided with an API? If so how?*

4. Allow for mobile access to public website including loan application digital content.
  - a. Responsively designed for mobile web browsers
  - b. Native iOS and Android apps

**Vendor Experience and Qualifications:**

- Provide a brief (1-2 paragraphs) background of your organization, including the year it was founded, address and contact information.
- Provide a brief (1-2 paragraphs) background of the solution you are proposing.
- Provide your total annual revenue.
- What percentage of your revenue is derived from the following:
  - Software License Fees
  - Maintenance Fees
  - Professional Services / Consulting
  - SaaS Revenue
- Identify and provide biographical information of the key person(s) who would have primary responsibility for execution of services

**Cost Response:**

Vendor must provide detailed cost on the following components:

Lending Portal software solution and Licensing.

- Please provide initial and annual licensing cost. Cost must include core software and/or custom development programming, user licensing, support cost options and any additional licensing cost incurred.

Any proposed 3<sup>rd</sup> party software and licensing fees.

Professional services required to implement the proposed solution.

### **Requirements for Submitting Responses**

#### **A. Acceptance of Contract and Process**

The successful respondent may be required to enter into a formal contract embodying the requirements of the bid documents and subsequent responses. Submission of a response to this RFP will be understood as the bidder's acceptance of standard contract terms and conditions, and the bidder's acceptance of the bidding and evaluation process. Submission of a response is also the bidder's acknowledgment that evaluation will require FAME to apply subjective as well as objective criteria.

#### **B. Request for References**

1. How many organizations have implemented solutions from you overall?
2. How many organizations are still running your solutions with active maintenance and support contracts (i.e., lifetime customer retention)?
3. Provide the name of the oldest, active customer of your solution.
4. How many customers were added in the past three (3) fiscal years?
5. Describe the customer industries you service.
6. Provide information in relation to three (3) customers who have implemented a solution similar to Finance Authority of Maine. Include company name, location, inception date, and solution specifics, as well as contact information.

#### **C. Response Calendar and Requests for Additional Information**

Bidders Submit Questions		November 5, 2021
Response to Questions		November 12, 2021
Due Date for Responses	4:00 pm EST	December 1, 2021
Estimated Notification Date		December 15, 2021

All questions and requests for additional information must be submitted by email by 4:00 p.m. EST on November 5, 2021 to Jonathan Harvell, Chief Information Officer at the Finance Authority of Maine (jharvell@famemaine.com). FAME reserves the right to schedule a bidder's conference call at its sole discretion.

#### **D. Submitting Responses**

**Responses are due by 4:00 p.m. EST on December 1, 2021.** Responses received after the specified date and time may not be considered. Please submit your response package as follows:

In PDF format by email to: [jharvell@famemaine.com](mailto:jharvell@famemaine.com)

OR

By U.S. Postal Service delivered to:

Jonathan Harvell, Chief Information Officer  
Finance Authority of Maine  
PO Box 949  
Augusta, ME 04332-0949

OR

By hand delivery or other carrier delivery to:

Jonathan Harvell, Chief Information Officer  
Finance Authority of Maine  
5 Community Drive  
Augusta, ME 04332

FAME is not responsible for ensuring or acknowledging receipt, timely or otherwise, of a response.

FAME reserves the right to make additional copies of the submitted responses for evaluation purposes. Materials submitted in response to this bid will not be returned, will become the sole property of FAME, and will become public record in accordance with Maine law. Any information which you believe should be confidential must be clearly marked as such, be accompanied by your request for confidential treatment, and will only be treated as confidential to the extent permitted by Maine law.

#### **E. Other Information**

Upon review of acceptable bids, FAME may engage one or more bidders in additional discussion. All costs incurred in connection with responding to this RFR shall be borne by the respondent.

FAME anticipates making a final selection by December 15, 2021. This RFR does not commit FAME to respond to any communications from respondents except in accordance with the question period provided. FAME reserves the right to ask for additional information from any respondent, consider a response received after the deadline, select any respondent or no respondent at all, and accept a response that is not the lowest cost response.

### **Evaluation Criteria**

FAME may select the response which it considers most advantageous overall. FAME will evaluate responses and select a vendor, at its discretion. A few criteria it may use, include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Quality, reputation and performance of providing past solutions. FAME requires an opportunity to evaluate models/samples for testing.
2. Thoroughness of response preparation.
3. Simplicity of use of the proposed solution and clarity of public information for both the customer and lending partners.
4. Demonstrated excellence in service and support.
5. Competitive pricing with the capacity to provide locked pricing.
6. Ability to deliver the requested goods and/or services by the required dates.