



**MAINE  
CONNECTIVITY  
AUTHORITY**

## **REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL**

The Maine Connectivity Authority is requesting proposals for a:

**Strategic Communications, Campaign Management,  
Digital Media Asset Development, Media Relations, and  
Web Development Services.**

<b>RFP Issued:</b>	Friday, September 17, 2022
<b>Due Date for Questions:</b>	Friday, September 24, 2022 @ 11:59 PM EDT
<b>Proposals Due:</b>	Friday, October 14, 2022 @ 11:59 PM EDT
<b>Proposal Evaluations:</b>	October 17-25, 2022
<b>Notice of Award:</b>	Friday, October 28, 2022
<b>Expected Start Date:</b>	By Friday, November 4, 2022

**Submit Proposals and any questions via e-mail to:**

Brian Allenby  
Maine Connectivity Authority  
ballenby@maineconnectivity.org

**Please email an electronic copy of your final submission to the specified e-mail address.**

Proposals must be received prior to the time and date for which they are due.

Any proposal, portion of a proposal, or unrequested proposal revision received by the Maine Connectivity Authority after the time and date specified above **will not** be accepted.

All requests for clarification and/or requests for additional information regarding the RFP must be **submitted in writing via email and directed to the RFP Coordinator listed above.** Such correspondence must reference the RFP and project name in the subject line.

**The Maine Connectivity Authority reserves the right to answer or not to answer any question received.**

**THIS REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL IS 9 PAGES (including the title page).**

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## PART I. General Information

### 1.1 Introduction

The Maine Connectivity Authority (“MCA”) is seeking proposals from qualified, independent consultants, consulting groups, institutions, or firms (“Applicants”) that **can assist the MCA and provide strategic communications, media campaign management, digital media asset development, and web development services.**

The specific services that the MCA is requesting assistance with are listed below. Through this RFP, the MCA anticipates executing a contract with one or more successful Applicants to perform a combination of these services.

### 1.2 Project Background

The MCA was established in 2021 as a quasi-governmental agency charged with achieving the universal access of affordable high-speed broadband in Maine.

In particular, the MCA is working to achieve three goals:

- 1) Ensure that effective, accessible connectivity is universally available in the state;
- 2) Ensure that there is secure, affordable, reliable, competitive, sustainable, and forward-looking infrastructure that can meet future needs; and
- 3) Ensure that all residents, businesses, and institutions in Maine are able to take full advantage of the economic, health, educational, and other opportunities available through connectivity services.

The MCA is advancing digital equity for all Mainers by focusing on projects, places, and people. MCA’s full strategic summary can be found [here](#).

The MCA is entering a new phase of public impact and awareness. **The organization has an opportunity to define the narrative of its work and to promote the benefits and impact of connectivity through stories of the people, places, and projects around the state. We are looking for a service provider to coordinate, develop, and manage multiple facets of an integrated communications strategy and plan.**

## PART II. Scope of Work

### 2.1 Project Scope of Work (“Services”)

The MCA is seeking assistance in developing and implementing a strategic communications plan that will inform our short, medium, and long-term goals of educating the public about the importance of broadband and MCA's efforts in Maine, promoting and successfully engaging applicants through MCA funding programs, and communicating the impact of MCA's work across Maine.

We are seeking a service provider (or providers if necessary) to oversee and execute the delivery of the services listed below. Recognizing that a single service provider might not be able to deliver all services listed, we expect that the primary provider will subcontract with partners when appropriate. Timeframes noted are projected service start dates. Work in each area is expected to continue beyond the dates listed.

#### **Develop Strategic Communications Plan (Fall 2022)**

- Develop high-level communication and messaging strategy and plan for promoting and marketing the Maine Connectivity Authority, associated funding programs, and stories of broadband impact from around Maine
- Develop a framework and templates for the MCA team to distribute communications through multiple media types, including the MCA website, e-newsletters, social media, and other print collateral

#### **Toolkit for Get Ready Community Support Program (Fall 2022 / Winter 2023)**

- Create a framework for the MCA team to provide priority training, tools, templates, and technical assistance for Get Ready Community Support program
- Including resources and tools on best practices, techniques to enhance community engagement efforts, a cross-network mentor program, and customizable templates of communications content

#### **Education/Awareness Campaign (Fall 2022 / Winter 2023)**

- Develop a multi-channel campaign to build broadband awareness and spotlight the MCA's work around Maine. Running for 12-18 months, this campaign will target the general public, potential funding recipients, and other key stakeholders such as ISPs, government officials, and influencers around Maine
- Assist with the creation and implementation of unique and creative media partnerships that will highlight MCA's work and connect the organization with the many sectors benefiting from increased connectivity around the state
- Support communications efforts around the research, surveying, and focus groups we'll be undertaking as part of our Digital Equity and BEAD planning processes.

#### **Public & Media Relations (Fall 2022 / Winter 2023)**

- Provide high-level strategy and guidance on media relations
- Draft, distribute, and service press releases
- Pitch featured stories to targeted publications
- Provide speech/presentation training to the MCA team and partner organizations

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**Website (re)Design (Winter / Spring 2023)**

- Design the next iteration of the MCA website
- Develop content and a UX that works well for our core audiences: the public, funding recipients, and other key stakeholders (Internet Service Providers, Government Officials, etc.)
- Create an enhanced data architecture connecting resources, programs, and impact stories allowing the dynamic display of content across the site
- Provide a strong feature on storytelling - stories that illustrate broadband impact from around the state, complimenting and adding context to the often technical metrics we're presenting.
- Build integrations with MCA's CRM and Grants Portal
- Increase the use of original photos and videos

**Graphic Design (Winter / Spring 2023)**

- Design print materials, including mailers and other materials for both MCA and community partners
- Assist with the creation of presentation materials, including digital and physical presentation templates and informational handouts
- Assist with the creation of live event materials, including banners, table covers, stand-up displays, tents, and any other infrastructure needed

**Advertising (Winter / Spring 2023)**

- Coordinate digital advertising, including assistance with budgeting, purchasing, placement, and tracking.

**Photography/Videography (Winter / Spring 2023)**

- Provide video production, including shooting, editing, and finalizing video content which may include, but is not limited to the following: Production of a series of short videos (maximum 5 minutes each) that will highlight the impact of MCA's work around Maine
- Provide photography to support MCA's website, social media, and campaign needs. Photography will focus on capturing the people, places, and projects that MCA are supporting through their work

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## 2.2 Deliverables

The selected consultant will conduct each of the below deliverables related to the Services identified above.

1. Hold a kick-off team meeting with the MCA team where roles, responsibilities, schedules, goals, and project communication strategies will be agreed upon, and arrange regular meetings as needed.
2. Hold regular check-in meetings to update progress on each service area.
3. Provide recommended strategies that can be implemented by the MCA team, applicant, and subconsultants.
4. Develop action plans and timelines for the implementation of the services listed above.
5. Introduce the MCA team and coordinate meetings with any subconsultants contracted to provide the services listed.
6. Share digital media content in full-resolution versions with MCA having the full rights to use in any format.

The MCA will make available, to the best extent possible, introductions and other assets that may assist the selected consultant in the creation and implementation of the communications plan.

The selected consultant shall perform all Services to the sole satisfaction of the MCA.

## 2.3 Timeline

The anticipated contract term shall be until June 30, 2023, commencing upon full execution of the contract. The contract can be extended beyond this period pending progress on deliverables and both parties consent.

The MCA reserves the right to modify the initial contract term at its sole discretion, as well as awarding additional phases of the project when it is in the best interest of the MCA.

## PART III. Applicant Requirements

### 3.1 Eligibility

- The MCA is seeking a consultant with at least ten (10) years of experience in (1) communications and marketing and (2) working with state and/or local governments, community organizations, and other stakeholders.
- The selected team will be expected to:
  - a. Have or retain staff that can be easily available for both in-person and/or virtual consultations with appropriate notice,
  - b. Communicate effectively with involved parties, such as stakeholders, state agencies, and community partners. Communications may be with or on behalf of the MCA, and
  - c. Applicants must be able to confirm that they have no existing conflicts. Other projects or business dealings shall not interfere with the ability of the selected consultant to work with or provide this information.
- The selected consultant ideally will also:
  - a. Have experience/familiarity with doing business in the State of Maine,
  - b. Have experience providing strategic communications, media campaign management, digital media asset development, and web development services.
  - c. Have familiarity with statewide engagement campaigns and the introduction/launch of broadband or other technology, programs.

### 3.2 Proposal

- Please share the following information in your proposal to this RFP (“**Proposal**”):
  - a. Resumes of key personnel and experience with similar types of projects or projects in Maine in the past five (5) years
  - b. The particular Services that can be provided and those that lay outside the expertise of the applicant
  - c. List of subconsultants, if any, that are expected to be used to complete the Services
  - d. Project approach/strategy
  - e. Details of cost and timing to complete the Services, including a specific itemization of costs
  - f. Debarment certification (Section 4.8)
- All costs incurred in connection with responding to this RFP shall be borne by the Applicant.

### 3.3 Clarifications and Amendments

- It will be the Applicant’s responsibility to check the referenced website for any clarifications and/or any new amendments to the RFP (note, the Applicant must include reference to all amendments, to the extent they exist, in their response to the RFP).

## PART IV. Proposal Evaluation

### 4.1 Interview

- The MCA reserves the right to interview none, one, or multiple Applicants for further clarification and evaluation of their proposals.

### 4.2 Award

- The MCA reserves the right to reject any and all submissions without the right of recourse by any Applicant. The submission of a Proposal shall not in any manner obligate the MCA to enter into a contract or to be responsible for the costs incurred by the Applicant in responding to this request.
- The MCA will notify each Applicant in writing whether it has been selected or not.

### 4.3 Contract Term, Type, and Payment Method

- The anticipated contract term is until June 30, 2023, commencing upon full execution of the contract.
- The MCA reserves the right to modify the initial contract term at its sole discretion, as well as awarding additional phases of the project when it is in the best interest of the MCA.
- The contract type and payment method utilized for this project shall be determined by the MCA following MCA's award of the contract.
- If the MCA cannot successfully conclude a contract with the first-ranked Applicant, the MCA reserves the right to award the contract to alternative Applicants.

### 4.4 Non-Appropriations

The applicant acknowledges that the MCA is a quasi-governmental agency dependent upon state and federal funding. Although the MCA intends to enter into the proposed contract relying upon certain federal and state funding, the MCA will not be able to proceed with the contract unless such anticipated funding is ultimately received.

Therefore, notwithstanding any other provision of this RFP and any contract resulting therefrom, if at any time the MCA receives insufficient funds to meet the obligations established pursuant to the contract or for any reason is denied legal authority by the Maine Legislature or the Court system to expend funds appropriated for such purposes, then the MCA may terminate any contractual relationship established as a result of this solicitation and shall not be penalized for doing so.

### 4.5 Confidentiality of Information

Applicant acknowledges that it will be required by the contract to maintain the confidentiality of any confidential information provided by the MCA and to sign a non-disclosure agreement.

### 4.6 Freedom of Information/Proposal Confidentiality

Interested parties are advised that under Maine's Freedom of Access Act, Title 1 M.R.S.A. Chapter 13 §402 (3), et seq., "Public Records" (as that term is defined in Title 1 M.R.S.A. Chapter 13 §402(3)) are available for public inspection and copying once an award notification has been made.

As a general matter, information submitted in response to this RFP will be considered to be "Public Records" available for public inspection and copying once an award notification has been made. If, however, an Applicant believes that parts of its Proposal fall within one or more of the exceptions to the definition of "Public Records" set forth in Title 1 M.R.S.A. Chapter 13 §402(3), that an Applicant may submit those parts of its Proposal, with each page marked "Confidential" in a separate file marked "Confidential". Included in the file must be a non-confidential statement of the basis for an Applicant's claim that those parts of its Proposal fall within one or more of the exceptions to the definition of "public records".

**Designating part of a Proposal "Confidential" does not by itself ensure that those parts of the Proposal will remain confidential.**

In the event that the MCA receives a request to inspect or copy those parts of the Applicant's Proposal marked confidential, the MCA will notify the Applicant that such a request has been received. Any Applicant claiming documents are confidential shall, within 14 days of receiving the MCA's notice, send the MCA a list identifying each document that it claims is confidential. If the MCA agrees that the documents so identified fall within one of the exceptions to the definition of "Public Records", the MCA will notify the party requesting disclosure that the documents will be withheld.

If the party seeking disclosure files a legal action to gain access to the confidential information, then the Applicant must retain counsel and file for a protective order. The applicant's failure to join the action and secure a protective order shall constitute a waiver of its claim that the information is confidential. The MCA will comply with the order issued by the reviewing court.

#### **4.7 Debarment Certification**

The applicant shall be required to submit the following certification as part of the contract:

By submitting to this RFP, I certify to the best of my knowledge and belief that the aforementioned organization, its principals, and any subcontractors named in this Proposal:

1. Are not presently debarred, suspended, proposed for debarment, and declared ineligible or voluntarily excluded from bidding or working on contracts issued by any governmental agency.
2. Have not within three (3) years of submitting the Proposal for this contract been convicted of or had a civil judgment rendered against them for:
  - i. fraud or a criminal offense in connection with obtaining, attempting to obtain or performing a federal, state, or local government transaction or contract.
  - ii. violating Federal or State antitrust statutes or committing embezzlement, theft, forgery, bribery, falsification or destruction of records, making false statements, or receiving stolen property;
  - iii. are not presently indicted for or otherwise criminally or civilly charged by a governmental entity (Federal, State, or Local) with the commission of any of the offenses enumerated in paragraph (b) of this certification; and
  - iv. have not within a three (3) year period preceding this Proposal had one or more federal, state, or local government transactions terminated for cause or default.

Failure to provide this certification may result in the disqualification of the Applicant's Proposal at the discretion of MCA.