



## **Maine Outdoor Recreation Economy Roadmap Communications and Public Relations RFP**

**May 23, 2023**

### **REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL:**

Maine Outdoor Brands (MOB) is seeking proposals for the services of a professional organization to manage public relations and communications during the development of a strategic roadmap for growth and diversification of Maine's outdoor recreation economy. This roadmap will identify trends, challenges, and opportunities and be shaped by industry, university, and state government stakeholders to act as a guiding document for future investment and actions.

### **Section I - Purpose and Background**

Maine's abundant natural resources, with 3,500 miles of coastline, western mountains, and pristine waterways, can be a cornerstone of the state's post-pandemic economic recovery and long-term prosperity, if capitalized effectively and sustainably. The outdoor industry saw significant impacts from COVID-19, from reduced sales to furloughed workers and disrupted supply chains. The effects of the pandemic were evident with the inflation-adjusted (real) GDP for the outdoor recreation economy decreasing 19.0 percent nationally from 2019 to 2020, with a 15.6 percent decrease in Maine, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis.

While the pandemic revealed many vulnerabilities, we also have seen a surge in outdoor recreation participation, simultaneously underscoring an opportunity and a need for long term resiliency planning. With a well-defined strategy, increased investment and support for new and existing companies, R&D, product innovation, commercialization and workforce development, our state's outdoor industry is poised to meet rising demand and create more jobs – helping drive a sustainable, environmentally responsible economy.

To achieve this, a bold vision, strategic planning, and state-wide leadership across a number of sectors is required. Developing a roadmap to advance Maine's Outdoor Recreation Economy shaped by industry, university, and state government stakeholders will act as a guiding plan to support shared goals around economic development, education and workforce training, conservation and stewardship, and public health and wellness.

A strategic roadmap will identify trends, challenges, and opportunities for growth and diversification of the outdoor recreation economy. It will also increase the awareness and understanding of the different sectors that define Maine's outdoor recreation economy. Our ultimate goal is a resilient, sustainable, and thriving outdoor recreation economy that offers good

paying jobs and an unmatched quality of life. The roadmap is a tool to achieve that vision, providing a guiding framework for stakeholders connected to Maine's outdoor economy and helping them align and act on key initiatives.

The roadmap will answer the following questions:

- What's the current state of this industry?
- What can be done to support this industry as a whole?
- How can we strengthen and leverage Maine's outdoor brand to increase the value of Maine outdoor products and experiences?
- How can we increase and sustainably manage growth of outdoor participation for Maine residents and visitors?
- How can we support the growth of Maine's outdoor product and service businesses?
- How can we grow Maine's workforce readiness and expand outdoor career pipelines?

Through this process, we will look to achieve the following goals:

1. Provide a baseline/current state analysis of the value of the outdoor economy to the State of Maine
2. Define Maine's outdoor recreation economy and its potential in a sector wide branding initiative
3. Identify key strategies and investment needed to fuel the growth of the outdoor economy state-wide for the next 10 years (See Addendum A for more detail)
4. Form partnerships and collaborations necessary to secure additional investment to implement the strategies identified

To be successful this effort will ultimately:

- Increase awareness and understanding of the different sectors that define Maine's outdoor recreation economy
- Create more jobs and support job retention in this sector
- Create and grow businesses in this sector
- Increase/attract public and private investment in this sector
- Support workforce initiatives to train and attract talent
- Increase capacity of historically excluded groups and regions
- Create other positive economic development

Guiding Principles:

- Resiliency. This roadmap should support the growth of an economy that is not just profitable, but also resilient to challenges such as labor shortages, supply chain disruptions, shifting market conditions, and the effects of climate change.
- Sustainability. This roadmap should support a transition to an industry that strives for environmental sustainability in its products and services.
- Inclusivity. The roadmap development process and outcomes will strive to be inclusive of stakeholders, particularly those who have been historically underrepresented or excluded from this space, so that we can build a future outdoor recreation economy that is diverse, equitable, inclusive, and just.
- Innovation. This roadmap will help foster an economy that embraces and leverages innovation to develop solutions to its challenges to growth.

## **Section II - Funding**

In March 2021, President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). ARPA funding will be a transformative investment in the community, with the goal of leveraging resources from other local, state, and federal dollars to optimize the potential overall community impact. This roadmap project is being funded through the ARPA Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation grant program. Through this grant program, EDA aims to assist communities and regions in recovery from the coronavirus pandemic's significant negative impact on the travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation sectors. It is designed to provide a wide-range of financial assistance to communities and regions to rebuild and strengthen their travel, tourism, and outdoor recreation industry through various infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects.

Funds awarded pursuant to the Act must be incurred and obligated by December 31, 2024. In addition, all funds must be expended to cover obligations and all work must be completed by December 31, 2026. The United States Treasury set specific guidelines on how funds can be expended using ARPA dollars. These principles include following the US Treasury Guidelines for funds use which include addressing the negative economic impacts of COVID-19 by responding to economic harms to workers, families, small businesses, and impacted industries. Maine Outdoor Brands will use federal funds in connection with this project, including compensation associated with the Communications and Public Relations position.

## **Section III – Identified Objectives and Scope of Work for the Consultant**

The purpose of this Request for Proposals (RFP) is to solicit competitive bids to develop and implement a communications and media relations strategy for the Maine outdoor recreation economy roadmap and industry.

Maine Outdoor Brands encourages respondents to use their expertise to address the needs of this project in unique and innovative ways.

1. Develop and implement a communications and public relations plan for the roadmap development process as well as Maine's outdoor recreation economy as a whole. This work should:
  - a. Explain why we are developing a roadmap and what is the process.
  - b. Identify best messages about the economic, environmental, and public health benefits of growing Maine's outdoor recreation economy.
  - c. Develop and implement a media relations strategy targeting local, regional and national media that supports the roadmap effort and Maine's outdoor recreation economy.
  - d. Provide media training and coaching for roadmap and outdoor recreation economy spokespeople.
  - e. Field media and public inquiries.
  - f. Develop and implement a plan for event promotion and social media content/calendar, and other opportunities to promote and build awareness of the roadmap effort and Maine's outdoor recreation economy.
  - g. Develop communications assets.
  - h. Build out a Roadmap webpage/website with messaging, resources, and information for target audiences.
2. Design and implement a system for evaluating impact, including strategic benchmarks

and evaluation metrics.

3. Participate in Steering Committee and relevant working group meetings as needed
4. In collaboration with the project management consultant and the core team, design the final roadmap document and manage the rollout campaign.
5. Work in coordination with the roadmap's project management consultant and marketing and branding consultant.

The consultant will report to the project's Core Team. The Core Team members come from Maine Outdoor Brands, Maine Marine Trades Association, Maine Technology Institute, the Office of Outdoor Recreation, the Bureau of Parks & Lands, and the University of Maine System. The Core Team will be responsible for ultimately developing a roadmap that is actionable, grounded in research, and informed by a broad set of stakeholders; and ensuring outreach and communications throughout the roadmap planning process.

The proposed project will be guided by a 15-20 person steering committee composed of a number of organizations statewide with a focus on outdoor recreation; state agencies; industry, economic, conservation and community leaders; and the University of Maine System. The steering committee will be solution-oriented; help lead this work by providing input and guidance on the focus, priorities, and actions identified in the roadmap; facilitate forward progress of the project to ensure it achieves the stated objectives; and act as an advocate for the roadmap project work and any other work that helps advance the outdoor recreation economy while the roadmap is being developed, including outreach to stakeholders. Additional work groups will include other industry stakeholders with specific expertise and/or interest in the topic areas of each work group.

## **Section IV – Consultant Criteria/Capabilities and Evaluation**

Maine Outdoor Brands is seeking firms with the following qualifications. Evaluation will be based on qualifications and references.

- **Experience of company and demonstrated results - 45%**
  - Extensive experience working with and developing public relations and communications materials and campaigns with public and private industry sectors, including an emphasis on sustainability and equity
  - Demonstrated related work experience and client references
  - Ability to communicate clearly in writing and in presentations
  - Ability to meet deadlines and pay attention to detail
  - Evidence of high level of commitment to client service in terms of quality, thoroughness of strategic approach, and follow through of project
  - A sound understanding of the outdoor recreation economy (preferred)
  - Experience in economic development efforts (preferred)
  
- **Strategic thinking/planning approach/innovative thinking - 35%**
  - Proposed approach for reaching target audience(s)
  - Proposed approach for developing core messages
  - Proposed communication assets and strategy for deploying them

- **Budget approach/cost effectiveness - 20%**

The committee may select project components from multiple proposals and seek to arrange opportunities for collaboration between suppliers.

## **Section V – Instructions on Preparation and Submission of Proposals**

The proposal should cover a 24 month period during the August 2023 - July 2025 time frame. The budget for this RFP is \$120,000. It should not exceed 20 pages (excluding appendices). It should specify how the Scope of Work will be approached and completed and should incorporate the following:

1. Your firm's name, address, telephone number, principal contact and email address.
2. Description and history of the Consultant/company
3. Brief of relevant prior experience of the Consultant/company
4. Links to previously produced relevant material showcasing the quality of your work and testimonials where applicable
5. Consulting team: name, title and a brief CV for the Team Leader and each team member, inclusive of their roles and responsibilities for the proposed project
6. Understanding of the scope of work and objectives
7. Outline of project approach, strategy for carrying out the scope of work and methodology
8. Detail the time to be spent on the project
9. Proposed budget including a breakdown of costs for the project
10. Identify any possible adjustments to the scope of work that would ensure a high value product
11. Any other information deemed appropriate for this project

Bidder understands that whoever is awarded the bid for the project shall file the required certification under the Byrd Anti-Lobbying Amendment.

### **Submission of Proposals**

Contractors are required to submit an electronic (PDF) copy of the proposal. The deadline for receipt of proposals is **12:00pm (EST) on July 10, 2023**. Submissions received after the deadline will not be accepted.

All proposals should be submitted to:

Rebecca Gilbert, Program Manager  
University of Maine System  
[rebecca.gilbert@maine.edu](mailto:rebecca.gilbert@maine.edu)  
cc [info@maineoutdoorbrands.com](mailto:info@maineoutdoorbrands.com)

With the subject line: *RFP Submission Maine OREC Roadmap Communications & PR*

## Questions

Should you have any questions regarding this proposal or the preparation of the submissions or if emailing a proposal, please direct them to:

Rebecca Gilbert, Program Manager  
University of Maine System  
[rebecca.gilbert@maine.edu](mailto:rebecca.gilbert@maine.edu)  
cc info@maineoutdoorbrands.com

All questions must be received by **5:00pm (EST) June 20, 2023**

Responses to all questions will be compiled in writing and posted on the Maine Outdoor Brands website no later than ten (10) calendar days prior to the proposal due date. It is the responsibility of all interested parties to go to this website to obtain a copy of the Question & Answer Summary. Only those answers issued in writing on this website will be considered binding.

## VI. Project Timeline

Milestone	Completed/Proposed Completion
Initial conversations with a small group of stakeholders and industry leaders, covering priorities for the outdoor recreation economy as well as roadmap governance and process	Fall 2021 - Summer 2022
Begin collecting available reports, studies, and data	Fall 2021 - Summer 2022
Foundational planning report completed (see priorities identified in Addendum A)	Summer 2022
Core team forms	Fall 2022/Winter 2023
Initiate RFP process for lead consultant/project manager and communications consultant	Spring 2023
Initial research underway	Summer 2023
Consultant contracts begin	Summer 2023
Scoping with project team and establishment of work plan and timeline	Summer 2023
Steering Committee convenes	Fall 2023
Listening sessions + focus groups	Fall 2023
Working groups convene	Fall 2023

Maine Outdoor Economy Summit	Nov. 29 – Dec. 1, 2023
Synthesis of initial research/findings	Winter 2023 – 2024
Roadmap first draft	Fall 2024
Maine Outdoor Economy Summit	Nov. 2024
Roadmap complete	Early 2025

## Addendum A

### Priority A. Strengthen and leverage Maine’s outdoor brand to increase the value of Maine outdoor products and experiences.

Roadmap actions:

- Complete a Baseline Economic Impact Study that defines the state’s outdoor industry and quantifies the value it brings to the state of Maine.
- Develop a branding and marketing initiative to communicate and market Maine’s outdoor recreation industry, positioning Maine as a world-renowned place for the outdoor industry, offering high quality jobs, products, and experiences. This work will be done with a marketing consultant and will build off of the Maine Office of Tourism Development plan and coordinate with other relevant state-wide marketing efforts.
- Accelerate domestic and international trade efforts for Maine outdoor gear and equipment via a marketing analysis, training for companies, and collaborative marketing exposure at trade shows.

### Priority B. Increase and sustainably manage growth of outdoor participation for Maine residents and visitors

Roadmap Actions:

- Develop a state-wide baseline for participation rates, in collaboration with the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan and national partners
- Identification of current barriers, trends, and opportunities around access to outdoor recreation
- Identification of key strategies for increasing and managing outdoor participation growth over the next 10 years, including identification of new investment, policies or other support needed
- Identify opportunities to increase recreation amenities in Maine communities to meet growing demand, increase access for residents, limit crowding and promote sustainable tourism in collaboration with Maine Office of Tourism’s Destination Management Plan

### Priority C. Support growth and innovation of Maine’s outdoor product manufacturing and service businesses

Roadmap Actions:

- Identification of priority clusters and key strategies for growth and innovation, including identification of new investment, policies or other support needed. This will include:
  - A supply chain and manufacturing analysis to assess sustainability and innovation, growth potential and barriers for priority clusters
  - Identify regulatory and policy opportunities and risks facing outdoor experience providers, including landowners, municipalities, land managers, guides/outfitters, camps, sporting camp operators
- Assessment and support of the innovation/entrepreneurial ecosystem and needs for supporting outdoor businesses to start and scale-up in Maine

**Priority D. Grow Maine’s workforce readiness, expand outdoor career pipelines and stay nationally and globally competitive in attracting and retaining workers**

Given the early lifecycle stage of Maine's outdoor recreation industry, and the intelligence gathered since 2018 from MOB and the Maine Office of Outdoor Recreation, the roadmap must include strategies associated with improving the future workforce of this industry. This work must coincide and align with the many other efforts across the state working to improve Maine's workforce.

**Roadmap Actions:**

- Develop a baseline analysis of workforce related data across the industry, including jobs, wages, demographics
- Identification of key strategies for strengthening Maine’s outdoor economy workforce in the next 10 years, including identification of new investment, training, policies or other support needed.
- Accelerate a Workforce Development Initiative that could include:
  - Identification and promotion of career pathways, job opportunities, and strategies for attracting and retaining talent across the industry.
  - Identify and promote industry-supported models to meet workforce needs including training programs, internships, professional development opportunities, and other approaches that can build a resilient and sustainable pool of talent.
  - Inventory current outdoor industry related training and degree program.
  - Assess interest, overall demand, and challenges for pursuing outdoor careers in Maine amongst prospective employee



