



Request for Proposal (RFP)
Development for Aquaculture Workforce Programs for FocusMaine

Issue Date: May 19, 2025

Proposal Due Date: June 13, 2025

Contact: Courtney Crossgrove, courtney@focusmaine.org

I. Introduction

FocusMaine is a nonprofit organization dedicated to propelling the growth of Maine's most promising industries and transforming Maine into a hub for top talent. Through targeted investments and partnerships, FocusMaine strengthens sectors such as agriculture, aquaculture, and life sciences to foster business expansion, innovation, and long-term economic sustainability. More information on FocusMaine can be found at www.focusmaine.org.

In 2022, FocusMaine, in partnership with Educate Maine, launched Aquaculture Pioneers, an internship program designed to provide 10-12 weeks of hands-on experience in Maine's aquaculture industry. Since its inception, the program has supported 44 interns and, in 2023, it became Maine's first Certified Pre-Apprenticeship Program.

Also in 2023, the Maine Aquaculture Association (MAA) and the Gulf of Maine Research Institute (GMRI) launched the state's first nationally accredited Aquaculture Apprenticeship Program. Under the guidance of an experienced business owner and/or employee, Apprentices complete a 2,000-hour paid apprenticeship program along with 144 hours of coursework at Southern Maine Community College.

These two programs are central to Maine's strategy to develop a skilled, sustainable aquaculture workforce. Both have been primarily supported by public and philanthropic funding and have proven beneficial to employers and trainees alike. As we look to the future, ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of these programs is critical.

FocusMaine is seeking proposals from experienced consultants or firms with expertise in fundraising, financial strategy, and stakeholder engagement to help chart a path to long-term sustainability for Maine's aquaculture workforce programs.

Final contract terms will be negotiated upon selection and will include scope, budget, schedule, and other necessary elements, subject to legal review. The contract is estimated to start July 7, 2025, and last through December 31, 2025.

II. Scope of Work

The selected consultant or firm will be responsible for the following tasks, reporting to FocusMaine and in close coordination with EM, GMRI, and MAA:



- **Project Planning:** Develop a detailed project plan and timeline that outlines key milestones and check-in points to guide activities throughout the contract period. The contractor is expected to adhere to this plan to ensure timely and effective project delivery.
- **Stakeholder Coordination:** Collaborate with designated internal program staff (FocusMaine, EM, GMRI, and MAA) and external partners, including employers, to inform and guide the work outlined below. Facilitate regular communication among stakeholders to ensure alignment on goals, expectations, and progress.
- **Financial Modelling:** Review the program's current financial model and conduct a landscape assessment of financial models used by similar intermediary programs that serve seasonal, small, or start-up businesses in the U.S. and internationally. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of these models and recommend the most viable option moving forward, one that supports both the program's sustainability and meets employer needs.
- **Solicit Industry Feedback:** Gather input from farms on potential funding models, including the role, importance, and appropriate scale of stipends.
- **Funding Opportunity Identification:** Conduct thorough research to identify a range of potential funding opportunities from federal, state, philanthropic, and private sources. Prioritize opportunities based on alignment with program goals, funding timelines, and likelihood of success.
- **Fundraising and Grantmaking Efforts:** Draft and submit persuasive fundraising materials, including grant proposals, letters of inquiry, and donor pitch decks. Ensure all applications are complete, compelling, and submitted on time, and that they meet all funder requirements.

III. Qualifications and Experience

Respondents should have demonstrated experience in researching and developing successful funding proposals for nonprofit organizations, with a strong understanding of budget planning, fundraising strategy, and stakeholder coordination. Familiarity with workforce development initiatives is highly desirable.

The ideal consultant will possess the following qualifications:

- Experience researching and developing financial models/budgets for nonprofit programs.
- A proven track record of securing funding from a range of sources, including federal, state, philanthropic, and private entities.
- The ability to engage diverse stakeholders in collaborative planning and decision-making.
- Ability to synthesize financial and strategic input into clear, compelling, and actionable documents.
- Proficiency in identifying and evaluating funding opportunities, including the use of grant research platforms such as Grants.gov and Foundation Directory Online.



- Demonstrated proficiency with Microsoft Office, Google Workspace/G-Suite, Zoom, etc.
- A collaborative team player with the ability to work independently.

Preference will be given for experience in workforce development. While familiarity with Maine's aquaculture sector is not required, it is considered an asset.

IV. Proposal Submission Requirements

Interested applicants should submit a proposal that is no longer than 5 pages that includes:

- **Cover Letter:** A brief introduction and summary of relevant experience.
- **Professional Experience and Resume:** Description of financial modeling and fundraising experience, including examples of success
- **Approach and Methodology:** Outline of the consultant's approach to both financial modeling and fundraising
- **Fee Structure:** Detailed breakdown of pricing, hourly rates, flat fees, or other structures
- **References:** Contact information for professional references or past clients.

Submission: Proposals must be submitted in .pdf format via email to Courtney Crossgrove at courtney@focusmaine.org, with the subject line: "Development for Aquaculture Workforce Proposal – [Your Organization Name]"

All proposals must be signed by an authorized representative of the submitting organization.

Please Note:

- No indirect charges will be allowed.
- Specific contract terms and conditions will be negotiated with the selected consultant.
- If subcontracting or outsourcing is required, this must be clearly stated, including the names and descriptions of all subcontracted organizations. All costs must be itemized and all-inclusive, covering any subcontracted work.

V. Proposal Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- **Demonstrated experience and success in fundraising** – 20%
- **Demonstrated experience in developing sustainable financial models for non-profit programs** – 20%
- **Experience in workforce development** – 20%
- **Quality and clarity of the proposal** – 20%
- **Cost-effectiveness and value** – 20%

Proposals with material deficiencies, omissions, or inconsistencies will not be considered.



VI. Timeline

- **Proposals Due:** June 13, 2025
- **Interviews Scheduled:** June 16-24, 2025
- **Consultant Selected:** July 1, 2025
- **Contract Start Date:** July 7, 2025 (expected)
- **Contract End Date:** December 31, 2025

Final contract terms will be negotiated upon selection and will include scope, budget, schedule, and other necessary elements, subject to legal review.

VII. Contact Information

For any questions regarding this RFP, please contact:

Courtney Crossgrove
Program and Metrics Manager, FocusMaine
courtney@focusmaine.org