



Customer Service: Phone, Email, and Web Inquiry Support
Request for Proposal (RFP) 3399
Up to \$900,000 Available

Proposals Due: October 20, 2016 by 5:00 PM Eastern Time*

The New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) seeks proposals providing services to maintain and respond to phone, email, and web inquiries related to NYSEDA's services. The successful proposer will be responsible for answering and referring inquiries to designated NYSEDA staff, assisting customers in navigating the www.nyserda.ny.gov website, and collecting customer information that will be provided to NYSEDA. The successful proposer will also provide market intelligence and trends, foster lead generation, and support data and metrics tracking that encourages continuous improvement of these services for NYSEDA.

The initial contract period will end December 31, 2019 with three (3) 1-year options to renew at NYSEDA's sole discretion.

Proposal Submission: Electronic submission is preferable. NYSEDA will also accept proposals by mail or hand-delivery. If submitting electronically, proposers must submit the proposal in either PDF or MS Word format with a completed and signed Proposal Checklist and Disclosure of Prior Findings of Non-Responsibility, in PDF format. Proposal PDFs should be searchable and should be created by direct conversion from MS Word, or other conversion utility, rather than scanning. For ease of identification, all electronic files must be named using the proposer's entity name in the title of the document. Proposals may be submitted electronically by following the link for electronic submissions found on this RFP's webpage, which is located in the "Current Opportunities" section of NYSEDA's website (<http://www.nyserda.ny.gov/Funding-Opportunities/Current-Funding-Opportunities.aspx>). Instructions for submitting electronically are located as Attachment D to this RFP.

If mailing or hand-delivering, proposers must submit (2) paper copies of their proposal with a completed and signed Proposal Checklist, along with a CD or DVD containing both a PDF or MS Word digital copy of the proposal, following the above guidelines. Mailed or hand-delivered proposals must be clearly labeled and submitted to:

Jillina Baxter, RFP 3399
NYS Energy Research and Development Authority
17 Columbia Circle
Albany, NY 12203-6399

If you have technical questions concerning this solicitation, contact Sarah Rambacher at (518) 862-1090, ext.3604 or sarah.rambacher@nyserda.ny.gov. If you have contractual questions concerning this solicitation, contact Elsyda Sheldon at (518) 862-1090, ext. 3232 or elsyda.sheldon@nyserda.ny.gov.

No communication intended to influence this procurement is permitted except by contacting Sarah Rambacher (Designated Contact) at (518) 862-1090, ext. 3604 or sarah.rambacher@nyserda.ny.gov. Contacting anyone other than this Designated Contact (either directly by the proposer or indirectly through a lobbyist or other person acting on the proposer's behalf) in an attempt to influence the procurement: (1) may result in a proposer being deemed a non-responsible offeror, and (2) may result in the proposer not being awarded a contract.



* Late proposals will be returned. The electronic submission system closes at exactly 5pm. Incomplete proposals may be subject to disqualification. It is the proposer’s responsibility to ensure that all pages have been included in the proposal. Faxed or emailed proposals will not be accepted. Proposals will not be accepted at any other NYSERDA location other than the address above. If changes are made to this solicitation, notification will be posted on NYSERDA’s web site at <https://www.nyserda.ny.gov>.

I. Introduction

NYSERDA offers objective information and analysis, innovative programs, technical expertise, and support to help New Yorkers increase energy efficiency, save money, use renewable energy, and reduce reliance on fossil fuels. A public benefit corporation, NYSERDA has been advancing energy solutions and working to protect the environment since 1975. Visit <https://www.nyserda.ny.gov> to learn more about NYSERDA’s offerings.

NYSERDA receives inquiries via the phone, email, and web and seeks a strategic Partner to respond to, navigate, and triage customer requests in order to ensure satisfaction and continuous engagement with NYSERDA. The Partner shall have in-depth knowledge on a defined list of programs (represented by the list below although some programs have multiple components) to respond to and properly refer inquiries to the appropriate NYSERDA program. All other inquiries shall be triaged through an appropriate channel as determined by NYSERDA.

All inquiries fit within three levels of service: respond, navigate, and triage. The outcomes of inquiries for which the Partner will respond include a verbal response, referring the customer to the appropriate page on the <https://www.nyserda.ny.gov> website, printing and mailing or emailing relevant information to the customer, directing the customer to the appropriate resource, or determining that the inquiry is not for NYSERDA. Inquiries for which the Partner will navigate include ambiguity or complexity and will need to ask a series of questions in order to accurately connect the customer with the information they are requesting; these inquiries will subsequently fall within respond or triage. The current average length of time per call, which contemplates a broader level of support across all programs at NYSERDA, is 4.6 minutes. Inquiries for which the Partner will triage include sending customers immediately to the appropriate NYSERDA program resource or to a designated resource at NYSERDA for inquiries the Partner is unsure of the appropriate path. The anticipated length of time for triaging calls is 1 minute.

Below is a list of NYSERDA programs with anticipated call volume and the level of support requested through this solicitation.

Program	Level of Service	2017	2018	2019
Products	Respond	700	700	700
Residential Existing Homes	Respond	10,000	10,000	10,000
Communities	Respond & Navigate	800	800	800
Multifamily	Respond & Navigate	1,100	1,200	1,200
NY-Sun	Respond & Navigate	1,700	1,700	1,700
Commercial	Respond & Navigate	900	900	900
All Other Programs	Triage	2,300	2,200	2,200
	Total	17,500	17,500	17,500



As indicated in the respond category description above, an outcome to an inquiry may require the Partner to mail or email information to the customer, such as an application. The anticipated volume of supporting fulfillment to customers is provided below. Additionally, anticipated volume of inquiries to the NYSERDA email and website is also provided below.

	Level of Service	2017	2018	2019
Fulfillment	Postal Mail	1,250	1,250	1,250
	Email	2,000	2,000	2,000
NYSERDA email / web inquiries	Respond	1,750	1,750	1,750
	Triage	350	350	350

II. Program Requirements

The primary components of the Statement of Work are:

- Phone, Email, and Web Inquiries
- Market Intelligence Reporting
- Lead Generation and Connection to Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system

As a public benefit corporation, NYSERDA serves as a catalyst – advancing energy innovation, technology, and investment; transforming New York's economy; and empowering people to choose clean and efficient energy as part of their everyday lives. To promote this vision, NYSERDA has a diverse portfolio of programs focused on sectors and technologies.

Phone, Email, and Web Inquiries

The Partner will be the initial contact for many New York residents and businesses interested in engaging with NYSERDA. By understanding a customer's objectives, expectations, and needs, the Partner shall identify and eliminate complexity and ambiguity as to which offering the customer is best suited.

NYSERDA will provide adequate training to the Partner in order to support customer inquiries.

Additionally, the Partner shall use and maintain a script, created in conjunction with NYSERDA, that highlights the appropriate sequence of questions in order to accurately connect the customer with the information they are requesting. The script will provide clear direction on how to respond, navigate, and triage inquiries providing value to the customer by receiving the correct information at the appropriate time. The Partner shall answer questions as directed and highlight additional relevant information on new and recently updated offerings based on the customer profile. If the Partner is unable to answer and respond directly the customer's question, the Partner shall triage customers at the appropriate time to the correct individual within NYSERDA that can provide the requested information. Alternatively, if the information requested is provided on NYSERDA's website, the Partner shall send customers to the appropriate webpage on NYSERDA's website for immediate consumption of accurate and comprehensive information. In general terms, the services provided by the Partner shall:

- Highlight recent changes in offerings based on the customer profile
- Reduce confusion for customers and address complexity by identifying and applying the appropriate line of questions
- Some common examples of areas where the Partner will need to address customer confusion are:

- Mixed-use buildings (residential, commercial, multifamily)
- Residents living in condominium buildings
- Manufacturers with a new idea / product to bring to the market
- Customers interested in both energy efficiency and renewable offerings
- Send customers to NYSERDA's website for immediate consumption of accurate & comprehensive information
- Maintain program scripts including sequencing of questions, updates, and revisions to offerings
- Provide biweekly list of questions to NYSERDA that the Partner was unable to answer

Market Intelligence Reporting

The Partner shall have consistent interaction with New Yorkers, understanding trending energy topics and commonly requested information from NYSERDA. The Partner shall take the insight gained from their daily interactions with the general public and share it with NYSERDA on a frequent basis, so that programs can include this valuable market insight into their decision making processes for current and future offerings. The Partner shall provide samples of call recordings and emails that include trends in topics and referrals to NYSERDA.

- Act as a partner, market surveillance, and spot initial trends and customer feedback
- Provide feedback, such as common themes of requests, direct to program leads with samples of inquiries received via phone, email, and web

Lead Generation and Connection to Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system

NYSERDA is in the process of implementing Salesforce, a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and project workflow system, which involves using technology to organize, automate, and synchronize business processes such as marketing and customer service and across programmatic areas. The Partner shall work with NYSERDA staff and other NYSERDA Contractors, where applicable, to maximize the CRM potential by entering data directly into the Salesforce platform. The Partner shall track information from the caller such as name, address (or at minimum zip code), email address, referral source, call reason, call resolution, program, length of call and / or other information as appropriate to track given the circumstance of the call. Data collection requirements will be based upon the nature of the call; however, all activity shall be tracked within Salesforce. NYSERDA will work with the Partner to determine appropriate level of data collection and reporting by customer profile. Additionally, all relevant materials, such as scripts and triage protocols, will be hosted in the CRM, providing the most up-to-date and accurate information for the Partner's use.

- Connect to NYSERDA's CRM system to share lead information as identified above
- Maintain procedure documents on the CRM system

The Partner shall provide live operator support for NYSERDA programs via phone, email, and web inquiries. Hours of operation shall be based on level of program activity at any point in time; however, at a minimum, the Partner shall have a live, Standard American English speaking operator eight and one-half hours per Monday through Friday. The active time block is 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. (Eastern Time). In addition, the Partner shall provide access to Spanish-speaking operators or ensure a call back from staff fluent in Spanish within four hours of the initial call. Having access to operators fluent in other languages, including, but not limited to, Mandarin, Cantonese, Russian, Haitian-Creole, Korean, and Italian is also encouraged. In addition, the successful proposer will implement a quality control, quality assurance program that encourages continuous improvement and will share this program with NYSERDA.



III. Proposal Requirements

A completed and signed Proposal Checklist must be attached as the front cover of your proposal. **Late proposals will be returned and proposals lacking the appropriate completed and signed Proposal Checklist may be returned. Faxed or emailed copies will not be accepted.**

Proposals should not exceed fifteen pages, excluding attachments, or be submitted in an elaborate format that includes expensive binders or graphics. Unnecessary attachments beyond those sufficient to present a complete, comprehensive, and effective response will not influence the evaluation of the proposal. Each page of the proposal should state the name of the proposer, the RFP number, and the page number.

The proposal must be in the following format:

Section 1: Introduction and general information

Section 2: Statement of Work

Section 3: Proposer's past experience

Section 4: Qualification and experience of key personnel

Section 5: Timeline, staffing plan, data capture, and reporting strategy

Section 6: Budget

Attachment A: RFP – Proposal Checklist

Attachment B: Disclosure of Prior Findings of Non-Responsibility

Attachment C: Proposal Budget Form & Instructions

Attachment D: Instructions for Submitting Electronic Proposals

Attachment E: Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprise Article 15-A

Attachment F: Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise Article 17-B

Attachment G: Sample Agreement

Appendices: Additional Items

Section 1: Introduction and general information

Proposers should summarize their understanding of the objectives and requirements of the RFP. These objectives and requirements are discussed in Section II Program Requirements. Proposers should include a brief identification of key information about their organization and how they are qualified to perform the services requested under this RFP.

Proposers must include the following information in their response:

- Firm or organization name, address, telephone and fax number, e-mail address, website URL (if applicable), and contact person
- Year firm or organization was established
- Name and address of parent company (if applicable)

If any firm or organization is not based in New York State, discuss the mechanism which will guarantee its ability to deliver services efficiently and effectively within New York State.

Section 2: Statement of Work

The Statement of Work is a detailed plan of how the proposer will accomplish the objectives listed in Section II Program Requirements in this Request for Proposal. The Statement of Work is also the primary contractual document that identifies deliverables for the project. It is an action document that specifically delineates each step or procedure required to accomplish the objectives. Proposers should



address how they will manage a hotline of this size which should include a plan if telephone service is interrupted; and training and evaluation of operators.

Section 3: Proposer’s Past Experience

Include a description of the proposer’s experience providing services similar to the tasks in this RFP, especially as it relates to the energy sector / industry. Include examples of average response time, key performance indicators used, ability to analyze caller information that provides trends and themes that inform decision making, at a minimum. Names and contact information for at least three (3) references who can address the proposer’s experience as described in their proposal and performance in providing services comparable to those being requested in this RFP.

Section 4: Qualifications and Experience of Key Personnel

Provide a description of the responsibilities of each of the key persons in the execution of the proposed work plan, including any subcontractors. Include an organization chart showing the relationships among all personnel. Include a description of the experience and qualifications of each of the key personnel assigned to the project. While expertise in the energy sector / industry is beneficial, it is of paramount importance for the proposer to demonstrate the ability of the key personnel to handle phone, email, and web inquiries that includes critical thinking and continuous improvement of services.

Section 5: Timeline, Staffing Plan, Data Capture and Reporting Strategy

The Proposer should include

- A timeline for completing each component identified in their proposed Statement of Work
- A staffing plan identifying the key personnel and other resources for completing each component
- A description of the fields the Proposer suggests capturing under the following two scenarios:
 - Customer service will require follow up from NYSERDA, lead creation, or other type of interaction that extends past the call
 - Customer service is comprised of a conversation over the phone, short answers, direction to the appropriate location on the website, etc. where obtaining customer-related contact information may not be possible or even advisable
- Metrics and approach with regard to reporting trends and themes that will enable NYSERDA to have the greatest understanding and insight into customer service required and inform program strategy

Section 6: Budget

The proposer must complete a Proposal Budget Form (Attachment C) for an initial contract term ending December 31, 2019 with three (3) 1-year options to renew.

Additionally, the proposer must complete a representative Proposal Budget Form that breaks down an anticipated monthly budget based on the following conditions:

Level of Service		Estimated Volume
Respond		900
Respond and Triage		300
Triage		190
Fulfillment	Postal Mail	100
	Email	165
NYSERDA email / web inquiries	Respond	145
	Triage	30



Appendices: Additional materials to be submitted as appendices include:

- Resumes of key personnel who will complete tasks described in the Statement of Work

IV. Proposal Evaluation

Proposals that meet Proposal requirements will be reviewed by a Scoring Committee using the Evaluation Criteria below listed in order of importance. At NYSERDA's discretion, proposers may be requested to interview with all or part of the Scoring Committee to address any potential questions or clarifications outlined in the proposals. Proposers will be notified if they are requested to attend an interview.

Statement of Work – Does the proposer(s) demonstrate that their staff has the background to adequately answer and follow the protocols of respond, navigate, and triage for programs NYSERDA administers? Does the proposer demonstrate they can deliver services efficiently and effectively including the ability to receive and apply training from NYSERDA staff? Does the proposal address and demonstrate a clear approach to each objective as outlined in Section III of the RFP, Proposal Requirements? Does the proposer(s) apply an approach of continuous improvement for the services they will provide to NYSERDA? Does the proposer(s) provide a clear ability to grapple with ambiguity from customers to identify the appropriate outcome and assess common themes and describe them in a way to add value to NYSERDA?

Qualifications of Proposer(s) and Experience - Does the proposer(s) have relevant and necessary operational and business background and experience? Does the project team demonstrate recent experience in similar type projects and will there be a qualified main contact (e.g. Manager or Supervisor) that will spearhead the project? Does the proposer(s) have access to bilingual operators? Does the proposer have an appropriate quality control / assurance program in place? Does the proposer(s) have experience in the energy sector / industry?

Data Management & Connection to Systems – Does the proposer(s) clearly describe their approach to capturing relevant data based on various call circumstances to foster lead generation for NYSERDA? Does the proposer(s) have previous experience using Salesforce? If the proposer(s) use(s) their own software platform, does the proposer(s) provide a clear approach for the connection to Salesforce? Is their approach flexible to implement changes upon request?

Cost - Is the overall cost reasonable? How cost-effective is the proposal? How does the cost compare with other proposers and best practices? Are allocations of task hours justifiable?

NYSERDA may consider the following program policy factors in making award selection decisions:

- Promotion of job creation and / or preservation in New York State

The award selection process contains multiple phases including an initial eligibility review, ranking by a Scoring Committee of subject matter experts, considerations such as program policy factors and the amount of funds available to make the selection decisions.



V. GENERAL CONDITIONS

Proprietary Information - Careful consideration should be given before confidential information is submitted to NYSERDA as part of your proposal. Review should include whether it is critical for evaluating a proposal, and whether general, non-confidential information, may be adequate for review purposes. The NYS Freedom of Information Law, Public Officers law, Article 6, provides for public access to information NYSERDA possesses. Public Officers Law, Section 87(2)(d) provides for exceptions to disclosure for records or portions thereof that "are trade secrets or are submitted to an agency by a commercial enterprise or derived from information obtained from a commercial enterprise and which if disclosed would cause substantial injury to the competitive position of the subject enterprise." Information submitted to NYSERDA that the proposer wishes to have treated as proprietary, and confidential trade secret information, should be identified and labeled "Confidential" or "Proprietary" on each page at the time of disclosure. This information should include a written request to except it from disclosure, including a written statement of the reasons why the information should be excepted. See Public Officers Law, Section 89(5) and the procedures set forth in 21 NYCRR Part 501 <http://www.nyserda.ny.gov/About/-/media/Files/About/Contact/NYSERDA-Regulations.ashx>. However, NYSERDA cannot guarantee the confidentiality of any information submitted.

Omnibus Procurement Act of 1992 - It is the policy of New York State to maximize opportunities for the participation of New York State business enterprises, including minority- and women-owned business enterprises, as bidders, subcontractors, and suppliers on its procurement Agreements.

Information on the availability of New York subcontractors and suppliers is available from:

Empire State Development
Division For Small Business
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12207

A directory of certified minority- and women-owned business enterprises is available from:

Empire State Development
Minority and Women's Business Development Division
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12207

State Finance Law sections 139-j and 139-k - NYSERDA is required to comply with State Finance Law sections 139-j and 139-k. These provisions contain procurement lobbying requirements which can be found at <http://www.ogs.ny.gov/aboutogs/regulations/advisoryCouncil/StatutoryReferences.html>

The attached Proposal Checklist calls for a signature certifying that the proposer will comply with State Finance Law sections 139-j and 139-k and the Disclosure of Prior Findings of Non-responsibility form includes a disclosure statement regarding whether the proposer has been found non-responsible under section 139-j of the State Finance Law within the previous four years.

Tax Law Section 5-a - NYSERDA is required to comply with the provisions of Tax Law Section 5-a, which requires a prospective contractor, prior to entering an agreement with NYSERDA having a value in excess of \$100,000, to certify to the Department of Taxation and Finance (the "Department") whether the contractor, its affiliates, its subcontractors and the affiliates of its subcontractors have registered with the Department to collect New York State and local sales and compensating use taxes. The Department has created a form to allow a prospective contractor to readily make such certification. See, ST-220-TD (available at http://www.tax.ny.gov/pdf/current_forms/st/st220td_fill_in.pdf).



Prior to contracting with NYSERDA, the prospective contractor must also certify to NYSERDA whether it has filed such certification with the Department. The Department has created a second form that must be completed by a prospective contractor prior to contacting and filed with NYSERDA. See, ST-220-CA (available at http://www.tax.ny.gov/pdf/current_forms/st/st220ca_fill_in.pdf). The Department has developed guidance for contractors which is available at <http://www.tax.ny.gov/pdf/publications/sales/pub223.pdf>.

Contract Award - NYSERDA anticipates making one award under this solicitation. It may award a contract based on initial applications without discussion, or following limited discussion or negotiations pertaining to the Statement of Work. Each offer should submit using the most favorable cost. NYSERDA reserves the right to accept, reject, or ask for changes to proposals based on the degree to which pricing and hourly rates are competitive with the rest of the market. NYSERDA will use the Sample Agreement to contract successful proposals. NYSERDA may at its discretion elect to extend and/or add funds to any project funded through this solicitation. NYSERDA reserves the right to limit any negotiations to exceptions to standard terms and conditions in the Sample Agreement to those specifically identified in the submitted proposal (see Proposal Checklist). Proposers should keep in mind that acceptance of all standard terms and conditions will generally result in a more expedited contracting process. NYSERDA expects to notify proposers in approximately (6) weeks from the proposal due date whether your proposal has been selected to receive an award. NYSERDA may decline to contract with awardees that are delinquent with respect to any obligation under any previous or active NYSERDA agreement.

Limitation - This solicitation does not commit NYSERDA to award a contract, pay any costs incurred in preparing a proposal, or to procure or contract for services or supplies. NYSERDA reserves the right to accept or reject any or all proposals received, to negotiate with all qualified sources, or to cancel in part or in its entirety the solicitation when it is in NYSERDA's best interest. NYSERDA reserves the right to reject proposals based on the nature and number of any exceptions taken to the standard terms and conditions of the Sample Agreement.

Disclosure Requirement - The proposer shall disclose any indictment for any alleged felony, or any conviction for a felony within the past five years, under the laws of the United States or any state or territory of the United States, and shall describe circumstances for each. When a proposer is an association, partnership, corporation, or other organization, this disclosure requirement includes the organization and its officers, partners, and directors or members of any similarly governing body. If an indictment or conviction should come to the attention of NYSERDA after the award of a contract, NYSERDA may exercise its stop-work right pending further investigation, or terminate the agreement; the contractor may be subject to penalties for violation of any law which may apply in the particular circumstances. Proposers must also disclose if they have ever been debarred or suspended by any agency of the U.S. Government or the New York State Department of Labor.

VI. Attachments:

- Attachment A: RFP – Proposal Checklist
- Attachment B: Disclosure of Prior Findings of Non-Responsibility
- Attachment C: Proposal Budget Form & Instructions
- Attachment D: Instructions for Submitting Electronic Proposals



Attachment E: Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprise Article 15-A
Attachment F: Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise Article 17-B
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