**STATE OF MAINE REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**

**RFI SUBMITTED QUESTIONS & ANSWERS SUMMARY**

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| **RFI NUMBER AND TITLE:** | 202110158 - Statewide On-Line Energy Data Platform |
| **RFI ISSUED BY:** | Maine Public Utilities Commission |
| **SUBMITTED QUESTIONS DUE DATE:** | November 9, 2021, no later than 5:00 p.m., local time. |
| **QUESTION & ANSWER SUMMARY ISSUED:** | November 15, 2021 |
| **PROPOSAL DUE DATE:** | November 29, 2021, no later than 5:00 p.m., local time. |
| **PROPOSALS DUE TO:** | Jamie.A.Waterbury@maine.gov  |

**Provided below are submitted written questions received and the Department’s answer.**

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| **1** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | Do you happen to know the estimated funding source, or budget for this project?If so, has funding for an RFP been secured? |
| **Answer** |
| Responses from this RFI will be reported to the Maine State Legislature in January 2022. Follow-up legislation may determine next steps including funding. |

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| **2** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A |

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|  Does the Commission have an expected budget and term for the Platform solution?  |

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| **Answer** |
| See response to question 1. |

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| **3** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A |

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| Does the Commission plan to resource this project with IT and Business resources, or is the expectation that the Platform will be delivered by Respondents and the associated Maine utilities?  |

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| **Answer** |
| Follow-up legislation may determine next steps for how this project will proceed including how it is resourced, delivered and funded. |

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| **4** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A |

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|  Will the Commission prescribe any minimum bidder’s requirements for this RFP (e.g., utility experience requirements, security requirements, scalability requirements)?  |

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| **Answer** |
| Not as such since this is a relatively new field in the application development space, however experience would play a role in selection from any future RFP responses. |

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| **5** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | Should cost data be shared with anyone other than the end-use-customer? Should cost data be included in anonymized and aggregated data? Should cost data be shared with authorized third-parties?  |
| **Answer** |
| Cost data may be shared with the account owner, authorized 3rd parties, and may be included in aggregated/ anonymized data. |

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| **6** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | Must the Platform allow for automated submission of data to ENERGY STAR or only user-initiated submission? (e.g., can user setup submission process and let it run indefinitely?)  |
| **Answer** |
| The Commission is interested in hearing from respondents their recommendations and their rationale for either method.  |

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| **7** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | Can we mention in our response to the RFI that we offer demonstrations of our software as well? |
| **Answer** |
| Respondents may provide any information that is responsive to the RFI. |

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| **8** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | May companies from outside USA such as Canada and India apply for this? |
| **Answer** |
| Companies from outside the US may respond to this RFI. |

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| **9** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | Would respondents need to come to Maine for meetings? |
| **Answer** |
| Respondents would have the option to attend virtual meetings |

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| **10** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A |  Can we perform the tasks (related to RFP) outside USA |
| **Answer** |
| This is a Request for Information. At this stage in the process, Responses would not include tasks to be performed. |

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| **11** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| N/A | Can we submit the proposals via email? |
| **Answer** |
| Yes, please see the instructions on page 1 above, or in the RFI document, for submitting Responses. |

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| **12** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Page 3 |

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|  When does the Commission foresee a potential RFP being released for this solution following the issuance of a report to the Energy, Utilities and Technology Committee of the Legislature by January 31, 2022?  |

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| **Answer** |
| Assuming the Legislature moves forward with this effort, an RFP could be released as soon as the fall of 2022. |

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| **13** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part 1, Section B, Page 5 |

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|  What input has the Commission received on this RFI from the six Maine utilities included in this Platform solution?  |

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| **Answer** |
| To date, the Commission has held a meeting with one of the Maine utilities operating in the State of Maine to solicit their ideas and hear their concerns. |

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| **14** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part 1, Section B, Page 5 |

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| Has the Commission received confirmation from the six Maine utilities that they can and will provide data in a standard format such that the proposed Platform can deliver on the desired use cases?  |

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| **Answer** |
| If the Legislature moves forward with this effort, the Commission expects that it will adopt rules to address this issue.  |

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| **15** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part 1, Section B, Page 5 |

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|  Are the six Maine utilities mandated to provide the data required to enable the desired Platform solution?  |

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| **Answer** |
| See answer to Question 10. |

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| **16** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part 1, Section B, Page 5 | Is this a new requirement? Or is there an incumbent vendor providing these services?If there is an incumbent, would you be able to provide the contract number, vendor name, and term of the contract? |
| **Answer** |
| This is a new requirement. |

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| **17** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part 1, Section B, page 6 |

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|  RFI states “Respondents should assume that all required data from the utilities will be provided in a standard format” – Should it be assumed that the format is consistent across utilities or that each utility will provide their own data in their own documented format?  |

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| **Answer** |
| If the Legislature moves forward with this effort, the Commission expects to adopt rules to address this issue.  |

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| **18** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part 1, Section B, Page 6 |

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| Will the required utility data provided by the utility vendors be limited to use and demand, or will billing cost information be included as well? Could you provide examples of the 'standard' data file format(s) to be provided by each utility vendor for import to the Platform?  |

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| **Answer** |
| The Commission would like to hear Respondent's recommendations regarding cost information in such a platform and the experiences that led them to those recommendations. This is also true with a standard data format, which while needing to be compatible with existing industry standard formats, the Commission welcomes Respondent recommendations. |

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| **19** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part 1, Section C.2, Page 7 |

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|  Use Case Number 1. Will there be any restrictions on whom can access anonymous, aggregated data? Will there be any blacklisted domains, IP address ranges, etc. or will all internet users have access to anonymous, aggregated data?  |

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| **Answer** |
| Respondents are asked to relate their experience with allowing no restrictions on whom can access anonymous, aggregated data beyond the necessity to register and authenticate as a user with a login. |

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| **20** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part 1, Section C.2, Page 7 |

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|  Use Case Number 1. Is access to the Platform being granted at the Building Level, or being granted to data aggregated at a different/higher level than Building?  |

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| **Answer** |
| The Commission wishes to hear Respondent recommendations in this area. A threshold level of aggregation has not yet been set but it is expected to be needed to offer desired energy usage information while protecting the privacy of account owners. |

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| **21** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part 1, Section C.2, Page 8 |

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|  Use Case Number 2. Should it be assumed that the authorization process will be managed electronically (e.g., each owner or tenant will use the Platform to grant access to the Authorized Party) or that the authorization process will be a combination of online and offline processes? Will the authorization process be consistent across utilities (e.g., same information can be used to with each utility vendor to validate that a received authorization is valid, or will the authorization process be unique to each utility vendor)? If the process includes offline authorization, will the Commission manage the offline component, or will the supplier be responsible for this process including email support to end-use-customers for authorizations?  |

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| **Answer** |
| The Commission is open to suggestions based on Respondent experience in these areas. We suspect that a combination of online and offline processes may be necessary given the different utilities involved though the Commission would strive to make the authorization process consistent across utilities. It has not yet been determined who would manage any offline process or if this would be requested of the solution provider.  |

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| **22** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part 1, Section C.2, Page 8 | Use Case Number 4. Indicates that “Sustainability managers in cities and towns wish to access energy use data by building in their town.” If building owners do not provide facility information in the Platform, how will the facility information be determined? Will the Platform need to create virtual buildings that represent each physical address represented on utility bill accounts? Will building information be provided from another source? If building information is not available for utility accounts, will the use information be reportable? How should use that is not attributed to facilities be classified? Are any other integrations required to populate and maintain building information for specific cities and towns? |
| **Answer** |
| The Commission wishes to hear recommendations and/or best practices from Respondents in these areas. At a high level, Respondents should assume that adequate data from utilities will be made by available through detailed Commission rules.  |

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| **23** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part 1, Section C.2, Page 9 | Use Case Number 4. Indicates that “Creation of Threshold for access to building information without expressed authorization for access from each owner or tenant. Additionally, policy should take into consideration the sensitivity of other data such as very large or military customers.” Will the threshold for access to building information without expressed authorization be consistent for all building types in the Platform? How will multiple tenants be attributed to the same facility—does this relationship already exist in the utility vendor systems or will additional logic be required to automatically relate utility accounts to specific facilities? If this data already exists within utility vendor systems, how will this data be provided and updated? If the minimum threshold is not met, should the data be removed from rollup information or be included in general form only? How will supplier identify sensitive data (e.g., very large or military customers)? Will the Commission provide a list of locations and utility accounts that are considered sensitive? Should sensitive data be completely removed/ignored, or should it be included in general values only? Will building owners of sensitive data be allowed to see details of their utility accounts in the Platform, or should the Platform always treat this data as sensitive for all user types?  |
| **Answer** |
| The Commission wishes to hear recommendations and/or best practices from Respondents in these areas.  |

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| **24** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part 1, Section C.2, Page 9 | Use Case Number 6. Will the Platform need to provide an option for the end-use-customer to authorize multiple third-parties simultaneously or will the end-use-customer provide each authorization individually? Will the Platform need to provide a mechanism for third-parties to request access from one or more end-use-customers (e.g., can third-parties solicit to have data shared with them)? Will only utility account information be shared with third-parties or will the building and building characteristics also be shared with third-parties? If the building details are shared with third-parties, will the building data be synchronized over time or will the building data be shared only once? If the third-party is submitting the building to ENERGY STAR, should the building owner be prevented from submitting the same building (e.g., should each building be submitted by only one party)? If the third-party modifies building attributes/settings, should these changes be synchronized back to the original facility?  |
| **Answer** |
| The Commission wishes to hear recommendations and/or best practices from Respondents in these areas.  |

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| **25** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part 1, Section C.2, Page 10 | Use Case Number 8. Will only residential customers be eligible to view interval data? Will commercial customers also see interval data? If a third-party is authorized to view data, will they also have access to interval data or only monthly use data?  |
| **Answer** |
| The Commission wishes to hear recommendations and/or best practices from Respondents in these areas, however we expect that both residential and commercial customers would see interval data. For the platform, the initial expectation is that monthly interval data would be included.  |

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| **26** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part 1, Section C.3, Page 10 | Since the New Hampshire system has been used as a model for RFI content, are the New Hampshire system requirements, design, and implementation details available for suppliers to review? Are other resources related to the New Hampshire implementation available to assist with scoping the Platform?  |
| **Answer** |
| The Commission looked at several states and had discussions with several stakeholders while developing this RFI. NH has a great deal of work and conceptual products available for review on their web site in case DE19-197 at <https://www.puc.nh.gov/Regulatory/Docketbk/2019/19-197.html> . NH has not yet gone forward with specific system design or implementation.  |

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| **27** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part 1, Section C.3, Page 10-11 |

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|  Given the collaboration with New Hampshire, does the Commission envision adopting a Software-as-a-Service based solution (vs. a custom solution) that enables a more standard, scalable Platform across both states?  |

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| **Answer** |
| The Commission is interested in all solutions responsive to this RFI including this solution. |

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| **28** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part 1, Section C.3, Page 10-11 |

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|  What other states has the Commission collaborated with when exploring the potential of a Platform solution for the State of Maine?  |

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| **Answer** |
| The Commission looked at several states including NH and NY and had discussions with several stakeholders while developing this RFI.  |

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| **29** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part 1, Section C.3, Page 11 | The RFI suggests that 'multi-utility data [can] be combined using tools such as APIs'. Is there an expectation from the Commission that custom API's will need to be developed as part of this project for third-party access to the data platform?  |
| **Answer** |
| This is a desired capability for the platform. The Commission welcomes your insights as to how this can be most effectively achieved.  |

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| **30** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part 1, Section C.2 and C.3, Page 7-11 |

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|  Who does the Commission envision owning the creation of standards and processes to enable the Use Cases outlined in the RFI (e.g., data models, authorization approaches, etc.)  |

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| **Answer** |
| Responses from this RFI will be reported to the Maine State Legislature in January 2022. Ownership and governance would be defined through the Legislative process. The Commission has the authority to compel utilities operating in the State of Maine to comply with standards and processes that are adopted. |

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| **31** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part 1, Section C.3.2, Page 12 | Aggregated Data: ▪ If utility accounts fall below thresholds required for aggregation, how will this data be presented? Will it still be identified within some of the categories provided (e.g., building use type, customer type, street, neighborhood, town, etc.) or will it be only aggregated by some larger identifier (e.g., zip code)? ▪ How will neighborhood information be determined? Will additional mapping be required from street address to neighborhood? Will all known neighborhoods and other grouping categories be known at time of implementation, or must the Platform adapt to changes to grouping classifications over time?  |
| **Answer** |
| The Commission wishes to hear recommendations and/or best practices from Respondents in these areas.  |

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| **32** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part 1, Section D.4, Page 12 | Is there a timeline for an RFP to be released?If not, what steps are expected to make a decision on releasing an RFP? |
| **Answer** |
| See answer to question 1. |

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| **33** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part 2, Section B.1.2, Page 15 | The question states "… implementations to "Pull" data from utilities…". Alternatively, could there be a provision to have the utilities "Push" the data to a designated location and in a designated format?  |
| **Answer** |
| Yes, this would be an acceptable solution as well. |

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| **34** | **RFI Section & Page Number** | **Question** |
| Part 2, Section B.2.7, Page 16 | The question states, "How does your solution satisfy requirements for certification from the Green Button Alliance and support the Green Button "Connect My Data" standard". Is there an expectation that the Platform will be fully compliant with the standard, and will be certified by the Green Button Alliance prior to deployment for user access?  |
| **Answer** |
| A determination as to a requirement for certification by the GBA has not been made. The Commission would like to hear the extent to which your solution complies with the standard and any additional information that could inform our determination of requirements.  |