Energy Trust of Oregon
Request for Proposals:
Market Assessment of New Homes Program

RFP Issued:	**9/13/2024**
Intent to Bid Due:	**9/27/2024**
Proposals Due:	**10/14/2024**

Leila Shokat
Project Manager – Evaluation

421 SW Oak St., Suite 300
Portland, OR 97204
leila.shokat@energytrust.org

About Energy Trust

Energy Trust is a nonprofit organization selected and overseen by the Oregon Public Utility Commission to help utility customers of Portland General Electric, Pacific Power, NW Natural, Cascade Natural Gas and Avista lower energy costs, increase energy savings and generate renewable energy. Since 2002, our cash incentives, technical support, education, and strategic partnerships have helped customers save billions of dollars on their energy bills and achieve their energy goals.

The cumulative impact of our leadership has been a contributing factor in keeping our state's energy costs as low as possible, adding renewable power to the grid from small and medium-scale projects, and building a sustainable energy future. More information about Energy Trust's background, funding sources, strategic and action plans, policies and programs are available on our website at www.energytrust.org/about.

Some of Energy Trust's requirements in this RFP and in any subsequent negotiating and/or contracting phases are driven by governing law, the provisions of our grant agreement with the OPUC (the OPUC Grant Agreement) and our funding agreements with each utility.

Introduction

Energy Trust of Oregon is seeking proposals to conduct a market assessment for its New Homes program ("the program"). Energy Trust's New Homes program provides performance-based incentives to home builders for whole-home efficiency upgrades through its Energy Performance Score (EPS) track, which was started in 2012.

The EPS New Construction program track (EPS-NC) exists within the New Homes program in Energy Trust's Residential sector and is delivered by a Program Delivery Contractor (PDC). Since 2018, TRC has been the PDC for New Homes. The New Homes PDC leverages some services provided by the Residential PMC (currently CLEAResult) in delivering this program track, including marketing, customer service, and program administration. The PDC maintains a trade ally network consisting of home verifiers and home builders to deliver the program and reach customers. Additionally, the PDC provides HVAC and insulation subcontractor training and support to increase awareness of program requirements and encourage deeper energy savings.

To receive EPS-NC performance incentives, verifiers work with builder trade allies to improve the energy efficiency of their new home design, model homes with a qualifying modeling platform (currently REM/Rate and Ekotrope), and submit data to the program. Incentives are based on the home's modeled percent energy efficiency improvement above code. EPS-NC provides incentives for homes in Oregon and Washington, though will no longer offer incentives for homes in Washington starting in 2025. Additional incentives are available for early design assistance, as well as for homes that are designed to be ready for additional efficiency, demand-response, and renewables measures.

The New Homes program works with the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance (NEEA) to improve and advance the energy efficiency aspects of residential building codes in Oregon, which brings both electric and natural gas savings benefits. The program also works with the Oregon Building Codes Division (OBCD), providing information that informs residential building code update decisions. The program also coordinates with Building Towards Better through the Home Building Association of Greater Portland, to manage and deliver trainings and events to help builders and contraction trade contractors prepare for and exceed new codes. Energy Trust and NEEA's ongoing work to drive market adoption for above-code measures, their work with the OBCD to inform code advancement decisions, and their work to prepare the market to adopt new codes, provide both electric and gas market transformation savings. NEEA claims electric market transformation savings under their residential programs, while Energy Trust claims natural gas market transformation savings under the EPS-NC program track.

In 2023, Energy Trust published an Impact Evaluation of the New Homes program, covering program years 2012 to 2019. That report can be found on here: https://www.energytrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Energy-Trust-New-Homes-Impact-Evaluation-2012-2019-Final-wSR.pdf.

This Impact Evaluation found much lower than expected energy savings, due to a combination of higher than expected energy usage among program homes, and lower than expected electric usage among non-program homes. These results indicated to Energy Trust that non-program homes may have been built above energy code standards at the time of construction. In response to these results, Energy Trust decided to undertake the present market assessment, which aims to understand the extent to which the New Homes program has played a role in shifting the residential new construction market towards more energy efficient building practices. This will assist the program's decision making regarding appropriate baselines for claiming savings on program homes, as well as help direct the program's future market transformation efforts to continue driving the new construction market and code towards higher efficiency.

For more background on Energy Trust's New Homes program and the EPS-NC track, see the "Residential sector highlights" sections in Energy Trust's Annual Reports. Previous program evaluations can be found on Energy Trust's website at: https://www.energytrust.org/about/our-impact/reports-financials/.

Research Objectives

Following the 2012 to 2019 New Homes Impact Evaluation, Energy Trust seeks to understand the role of the New Homes program in the residential new construction market. This market assessment is expected to result in an understanding of how the New Homes program operates in the residential new construction market to advance energy efficient building practices, and how this influence works both for homes within the program, and for the market more broadly. Energy Trust is also interested in findings and recommendations that will help the program continue to adapt to and serve the market in the coming years. Another expected outcome of this research is a theory of change that outlines the program's market transformation objectives, the levers and resources the program uses to achieve them, and how the objectives can be monitored to understand the program's market transformation progress on an ongoing basis.

It is anticipated that this research will address the following research questions:

New home construction building practices in Oregon

- How do builders in Oregon comply with the residential new construction code?
    - What energy code compliance options do they use, and why?
    - Do builders vary the energy code compliance options they use between homes, and why?

  - What are the roles of subcontractors, builders, and inspectors in ensuring that homes meet code?
- When and how do builders in Oregon exceed the residential new construction code, with respect to energy-related elements of the code?
  - What additional elements do builders use when they build above code, and why?
  - What role do subcontractors play in supporting builders to build above code?
  - What factors motivate builders to build above code?
  - What resources do builders draw on to learn about the elements they use to build above code?
- How do builders and subcontractors in Oregon adapt to new code updates?
  - What resources do builders use to learn about changes to the code and how to comply with it?
  - What resources do subcontractors use to learn about changes to the code and how to comply with it?
- What factors do builders take into consideration when deciding on energy-efficiency related elements of a new home?
  - How, if at all, do these factors change when builders are building to meet code, building to exceed code, or adapting to a new code?
  - What sources of information do builders rely on to make these decisions?

Program influence on new home construction market in Oregon

- How does the program assist, enable, or influence builders, verifiers and subcontractors to build energy efficient new homes?
  - What are the roles of EPS verifiers, EPS account managers, and EPS quality assurance technicians in helping homes exceed code?
  - What trainings, incentives, or other program activities or resources are most influential in driving energy efficient building practices?
- How does the program work with the Oregon Building Code Division (OBCD) to provide information to inform code updates?
  - What has been the impact of this collaboration on residential code updates, from the perspective of the OBCD?
- How does the program work with manufacturers, distributors, and regional trade groups such as the Home Building Association of Greater Portland, to support the residential new construction market beyond direct program participants?
  - How, if at all, does this work support builders and subcontractors in adapting to new building codes?
  - What other effects, if any, result from these relationships?
- How, if at all, does participation in the EPS-NC program change builders' or subcontractors' installation practices?
  - Do these changes transfer to non-program homes that builders and subcontractors work on?
  - Are there certain practices that program home builders only use when building program homes? What are they, and why do builders not do these with non-program homes?

Future market opportunities

- What are the experiences of different market actors working with the program? From their perspectives, what could the program be doing differently to serve the market?

- What opportunities and barriers are there to expanding program participation to new builders?
- What could the program do to continue to encourage deeper energy savings in new homes?
- How does the program's current modeled approach align with how market actors operate, and with the current building code?
- What is the New Homes program's theory of change, and how should the program direct, understand, and track the impact of its market transformation efforts going forward?

Tasks

It is anticipated that the selected evaluator will be required to undertake the following major tasks for the market assessment and the submitted proposal should address these topics.

Task 1. Study Kick-off Meeting

The evaluator will host a one-hour kick-off meeting with Energy Trust and PDC staff to present and discuss the proposed evaluation research plan. The evaluator will give an overview of the study goals, methodology, and schedule, allowing time for discussion and questions. The selected evaluator may use this opportunity to ask any questions of Energy Trust evaluation and program staff to further clarify the study's goals and key research questions.

The kick-off meeting will be a valuable opportunity for the selected evaluator to meet the program team and discuss areas where the program could support outreach for study recruitment, or provide contact lists for use during recruitment. The selected evaluator will provide an agenda ahead of the kick-off meeting and distribute notes after the meeting.

Deliverables:

- Kick-off meeting agenda
- Notes from kick-off meeting documenting decisions
- Draft and final work plan

Task 2. Review Program Documents and Data and Develop Work and Sampling Plans

Energy Trust will gather, and the evaluator will review, program documents including past evaluation reports and market research, surveys, the program implementation manual, and monthly and annual reports. The Energy Trust Evaluation Project Manager will also compile relevant program data including project volume and project documentation from recent years.

Along with discussion in the kick-off meeting, these data and documents will help the evaluator identify the market actors involved in the program, including lists of builders, subcontractors and verifiers. The evaluator will use this information to guide their sampling plan for market actor interviews. These materials will also provide insight into how the program serves the new home construction market and will serve as the basis for the development of interview guides.

Based on comments and discussion during the kick-off meeting, as well as findings from their review of program data and documentation, the evaluator will develop a final work plan that will be the basis for all evaluation activities. The work plan will include:

- Evaluation goals and research questions

- Evaluation methodologies
- Sampling plan (see below)
- Schedule of tasks and deliverables (see below)

Sampling plan. The evaluator will develop a sampling plan for builder and subcontractor interviews based on the proposed methodologies, program materials provided, and discussion at the kick-off meeting. Energy Trust expects that the selected evaluator will develop the sampling plan such that responses from builders and subcontractors can be used to compare building practices across the following four categories of homes:

- Homes built through the EPS-NC program;
- Homes within Energy Trust territory not built through the EPS-NC program, built by builders who have participated in the program;
- Homes within Energy Trust territory not built through the EPS-NC program, built by builders who have not participated in the program; and
- Homes built outside of Energy Trust territory, built by builders who have not participated in the program.

In order to obtain insights on these categories of homes, the evaluator will need to speak with builders who have participated in the program, builders within Energy Trust territory who have not participated in the program, and builders outside of Energy Trust territory. Subcontractors from these three categories will also be interviewed.

The sampling plan will include, at a minimum, the stratification scheme and number of builders and subcontractors to be selected within each stratum. The sampling plan should anticipate unresponsive firms, particularly for non-participant builders and builders outside of Energy Trust territory. Data on project volume and builder participation from 2023 and 2024 is included in **Appendix C.**

Energy Trust expects that the evaluator will interview roughly twenty to thirty builders who have participated in the program, and fifteen builders for each of the other two strata (builders in Energy Trust territory who have not participated in the program, and builders outside of Energy Trust territory). For subcontractors, the selected evaluator will aim to interview twenty who have worked on program homes, and fifteen each for the other two strata. These sampling targets are a starting point, and Energy Trust will work with the selected evaluator to determine whether changes are needed during workplan development.

Schedule of tasks and deliverables. The selected evaluator will develop a schedule of tasks and deliverables. Energy Trust is interested in obtaining results in Q2 of 2025.

The evaluator will provide the draft work plan to the Energy Trust Evaluation Project Manager for review and incorporate feedback before finalization.

Respondent proposals should describe respondents' approach for using program documentation and discussion during the kick-off meeting to determine the feasibility of the interview targets provided here. Proposals should highlight any areas of concern or potential challenges and propose solutions to those.

Deliverables:

- Draft and final work plan
- Section in report outlining sampling methodology and sample selection

Task 3. Conduct Staff Interviews

The selected evaluator will conduct 7 interviews with approximately 15 program staff at Energy Trust and its PDC, including a mix of individual and group interviews. Interviews are expected to last approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour each, depending on the role of the staff member. The Energy Trust Evaluation Project Manager will provide staff lists and contact information, as well as suggested groupings for staff interviews.

Staff interviews will be used to understand how the program operates in the market, including its work with trade ally builders and verifiers, subcontractors, the OBCD, NEEA, manufacturers, distributors, trade groups, and others in the new home construction market. The evaluator will obtain feedback on their findings from the document and program activity review as well as gain new insights on these program operations.

Interviews will provide important information regarding the program's activities and interactions with various market actors and how those activities are intended to encourage greater energy efficiency within the residential new home construction market. Staff interviews will be a key source of information for constructing a program logic model and theory of change (Task 6).

The evaluator will provide a draft interview guide to the Energy Trust Evaluation Project Manager for review and will incorporate feedback before finalizing. To achieve thorough interviews that make the best use of staff time, the selected evaluator should develop a single interview guide with flexibility to skip between different focus areas according to the staff's areas of work. These interviews should cover all applicable research questions related to the program's market transformation work, collaborations with various market actors, and program design and processes that can be addressed by program staff.

Respondent proposals should include respondents' general approach to interviews, including interview and question structure.

Deliverables:

- Draft and final staff interview guide
- Section(s) in final report on findings from staff interviews

Task 4. Conduct Market Actor Interviews

Using the sampling plan from Task 2, the selected evaluator will conduct interviews with participating builders, verifiers, subcontractors, and distributors. There are currently over 180 builders and 20 verifiers who have worked with the program over the last three years. The program also relies on subcontractors who specialize in particular equipment types or systems, for example HVAC contractors and insulation contractors, to ensure that energy efficiency elements of program homes are installed correctly to save energy.

The sampling plan from Task 2 will be used for builder and subcontractor interviews. These interviews will go into detail on how builders comply with energy efficiency elements of the Oregon new home construction code, how builders and subcontractors learn about how to comply with new code updates, and how builders and subcontractors make energy efficiency related home construction decisions within and outside of the program. Interview guides should be flexible and contain primer questions with skip logic to ensure that all questions are relevant to a particular interviewee's area of expertise.

Verifiers are very knowledgeable about building practices within the EPS-NC program, and work with builders throughout a project to encourage energy efficient building practices. Verifier interviews will be used to understand the decision-making process that goes into deciding how to build a home that exceeds code, and what factors influence those decisions. It is expected that 10 verifiers will be interviewed for this task.

Distributors are a key source of information for the program about what options builders are taking to comply with the new code. The evaluator will conduct 15-minute interviews with up to 7 distributors to seek information on sales of particular equipment types, and how sales have or have not shifted since the new code went into effect in Oregon.

The selected evaluator will design separate interview guides for builders, subcontractors, and verifiers. It is anticipated that all interviews except distributor interviews will last approximately 30 minutes. Each of these groups will be offered incentives for their time, in the amount of $50 for the 15-minute interviews, and $75 for the 30 minute interviews. All incentives must be clearly provided by the evaluator, not Energy Trust, and the evaluator will be responsible for any and all tax reporting related to paying incentives.

The New Homes program and PDC staff will provide warm introductions to participant builders, verifiers, and distributors, and the evaluator will follow up with outreach by email and phone to recruit and schedule participants for interviews. The PDC will also provide non-participant lists where applicable to assist the evaluator in building lists for interview recruitment. The PDC may also provide lists of subcontractors, and it is expected that the evaluator will need to supplement this with additional subcontractor interviewees, potentially through introductions via builders or trade groups.

The draft builder, subcontractor, and verifier interview guides will be provided to the Energy Trust Evaluation Project Manager for review and comment by the project manager as well as PDC, program, and engineering staff prior to finalization.

Respondent proposals should include respondents' approach to building a list of subcontractors for interview recruitment. Respondents should also present a general recruitment plan for interviews, paying attention to the need for different recruitment strategies for participants and non-participants. The PDC will not be able to provide warm introductions for non-participant interviewees.

Deliverables:

- Draft and final interview guides for builders, verifiers, distributors and subcontractors
- Section(s) in final report on methodology and findings of market actor interviews

Task 5. Conduct Interviews with Program Collaborators

The selected evaluator will conduct interviews with key program collaborators, including representatives from the Oregon Building Codes Division (OBCD), Northwest Energy Efficiency

Alliance (NEEA), and the Home Building Association of Greater Portland. It is anticipated that the collaborator interviews will include the following:

- Individual or group interview with a representative or representatives from OBCD
- Individual or group interview with a representative or representatives from NEEA
- Individual or group interview with a representative or representatives from the Home Building Association of Greater Portland

These interviews will address research questions related to the program's role in the new home construction market, advancing energy efficient building practices, and informing updates to the residential new home construction code in Oregon. These interviews will aim to cover all relevant activities the program engages in with these collaborators. The selected evaluator will use insights gained through the data and document review in Task 2, as well as the staff interviews in Task 3, to inform the interview guides for each collaborator.

Interview guides should be tailored to understand each collaborator's work with Energy Trust, and Energy Trust's role in the new home construction market more broadly. Another objective of this task is to understand any program activities outside of direct incentive payments that may influence energy efficiency elements of new home construction in Oregon. This could take the form of informing code updates, supporting the new home construction market in adapting to code updates, or other ways the program is involved in the market.

Draft collaborator interview guides will be provided to the Evaluation Project Manager for review and comment by evaluation, PDC, and program staff before finalization. The Energy Trust Evaluation Project Manager will assist the selected evaluator in identifying and reaching out to relevant representatives of these collaborator groups. Recruitment may include warm introductions by the EPS-NC program and implementation staff where they have existing relationships.

Deliverables:

- Draft and final interview guides for program collaborators
- Section(s) in final report on methodology and findings of collaborator interviews

Task 6. Construct Program Market Transformation Logic Model and Theory of Change

Using the findings from staff, market actor, and collaborator interviews, the selected evaluator will construct a program market transformation logic model and theory of change. The logic model should draw on findings from the documentation review, as well as all interviews, and should detail the following:

- The resources the program brings or will leverage in the market
- The activities the program undertakes, or will undertake
- The short-term outputs, or direct consequences, of these activities
- The audience or audiences the program targets
- The long-term outcomes expected from program activities and outputs

The theory of change will also draw on these sources, particularly interviews, and will illustrate how the program's activities and outputs within the market are expected to result in these outcomes. One key element of this theory of change will be identifying indicators of program success.

Drafts of the program logic model and theory of change will be provided to the Energy Trust Evaluation Project Manager for review and comment by the Project Manager, program staff and others as appropriate before finalization.

Respondent proposals should detail respondents' approach to using results of market research to construct a market transformation logic model.

Deliverables:

- Draft and final program logic model and theory of change
- Section(s) in report presenting the program logic model and theory of change

Task 7. Analysis and Reporting

The evaluator will analyze the findings of all research tasks as they relate to the key research questions and objectives. Given that the New Homes program does not currently have a market transformation logic model, there are no existing indicators to specifically report on for the program's market transformation impact. However, Energy Trust is interested in understanding the program's activities and influence in the new home construction market. To address this, the evaluator may draw comparisons to other market transformation programs, to contextualize the potential influence of Energy Trust activities in the market.

The evaluator will provide the Energy Trust Evaluation Project Manager with an evaluation report in draft form. All evaluation reports must include, at a minimum, executive summary, methodologies, findings, and recommendations sections. Findings and conclusions shall be based on the information collected by the evaluator and referenced in the report. The use of tables and graphs is recommended for material that does not lend itself well to narrative form, as well as for important findings. Where applicable, non-confidential data, phone conversations, sources, publications, and other media used in the report must be referenced and cited. It is anticipated that respondents or sources can be promised confidentiality in terms of attribution of responses. The draft will be reviewed and commented on by Energy Trust and other parties deemed appropriate by Energy Trust. Based upon these comments, the evaluator shall make revisions and deliver to Energy Trust a final version of the report within three weeks of receiving all comments. Achieving an acceptable final report may take more than one iteration between the evaluator and Energy Trust.

In addition to the report, the evaluator will also prepare slides and present a summary of the evaluation findings at a public webinar hosted by Energy Trust. The evaluator will prepare the slides in advance of the webinar and provide them to Energy Trust for review. The evaluator should plan for the presentation to take approximately 20 minutes with another 10 minutes allotted to answer questions from attendees.

Respondents should detail their analytical approach to understanding and presenting potential market transformation influence of a program in the absence of an explicit market transformation logic model.

Deliverables:

- Draft and final evaluation report
- Draft and final presentation slides
- Delivery of presentation at Energy Trust webinar

Task 8. Project Management and Invoicing

The evaluator will manage all aspects of the project and ensure that it stays on schedule and within budget. They will host regular virtual meetings throughout the evaluation project to keep the Energy Trust Evaluation Project Manager informed of progress, upcoming research activities, and requests for assistance or data. In addition to these regular meetings, the evaluator will provide frequent project updates by email, especially if any issues arise. The evaluator will proactively advise on ways to maximize the quality of the evaluation and interview response rates prior to, during, and post data collection.

The evaluator will be required to submit monthly status reports presenting:

1. Current and total amounts invoiced to date compared to the approved budget
2. A summary of accomplishments during the previous month
3. Current month's activities and plans
4. Variances in the project schedule or budget, including any necessary explanations
5. If applicable, any issues or concerns to be addressed, with proposed solutions
6. Compliance with the supplier diversity requirement, including the current and total amounts invoiced to date for COBID-certified subcontractors relative to total contract spending

These reports are due by the 10th of every month and must accompany the invoice, starting with the first month after work begins.

Deliverables:

- Regular project update meetings
- Monthly status reports

Schedule

It is anticipated that a kick-off meeting for this project will be held in mid-November. The draft report will be delivered to Energy Trust in Q3 of 2025. A final report will be delivered within three weeks of having received all comments and edits on the submitted draft. The evaluator will be required to provide a monthly evaluation update to Energy Trust by the 10th of every month.

Budget

It is anticipated that the budget for the evaluation work as described in this RFP will be approximately $150,000; however, Energy Trust reserves the right to revise budget assumptions at any time

Proposal Requirements

Proposals must be clear, complete and concise. Pages must be numbered, sections must be clearly titled, and fonts must not be smaller than 11 point. Respondent's proposal must contain the following elements; failure to include any required elements may result in the rejection of respondent's proposal. Please note that the 26-page limit for the proposal does not include the supplemental information requested – work product examples, resumes of key staff and subcontractor team members, conflict of interest disclosure, insurance coverage information, and representations page. These should be included in attached appendices.

1. Proposal Information

Firm qualifications.

Proposals should provide an overview of the lead firm and any subcontractors. We encourage respondents to create a team of firms with specialized expertise to fill different project roles where applicable. Proposals should describe the respondent team's qualifications and experience doing similar work and identify specific aspects of the study where the respondent team's experience will be particularly relevant or important. **Not to exceed five (5) pages.**

Staffing and subcontracting plan.

Describe the project team structure, role of each key team member, subcontractor roles, COBID numbers for COBID certified subcontractors (see *Supplier diversity requirements section below)* and the management plan. **Not to exceed two (2) pages.**

Technical proposal:

A project proposal for the process evaluation, including proposed approach to the specific tasks identified in the "Tasks" section above as well as the firm's proposed approach to the evaluation overall, and a management plan, **not to exceed ten (11) pages**.

Supplier diversity requirements:

Proposals should indicate if respondent's firm or subcontractors are certified with the Certification Office for Business Inclusion and Diversity (COBID) of Oregon or US Small Business Administration (SBA) as one or more of the following certifications that qualify under Energy Trust's Supplier Diversity Program (SDP).

Qualifying COBID certifications:

- Minority Business Enterprise
- Women Business Enterprise
- Veteran Business Enterprise
- Service-Disabled Veteran Business Enterprise
- Emerging Small Business,

Qualifying SBA certifications:

- Small Disadvantaged Business
- Women Owned Small Business
- Economically Disadvantaged Women Owned Small Business
- Business Development Program (8a)
- Veteran Owned Small Business
- Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business
- Historically Underutilized Business Zone Certification (HUBZone)

It is not required for a minimum value of any resulting contract to be directed towards SDP qualifying firms. However, Energy Trust still encourages interested firms to create teams that include SDP qualifying firms. **As such, proposals which direct at least 15% of the value of a resulting contract may receive up to a 5% bonus during scoring.** Any teaming should be reflected in the staffing and subcontracting plan and budget proposal. **Not to exceed one (1) page.**

Proposed schedule of deliverables:

Provide a schedule of major activities and deliverables listed in the Tasks section above, with approximate dates. The schedule should assume that a project kick-off meeting will be scheduled within three weeks of awarding the contract. Energy Trust anticipates launching this project in October 2024. The draft report should be delivered in April 2025. A final report will be delivered within two weeks of having received all comments and edits on the submitted draft. These schedule assumptions may be reassessed once the project begins. **Not to exceed two (2) pages.**

Detailed budget proposal:

A detailed budget proposal broken out by task and by individual performing the work. Key staff should be identified by name, with billing rates for each. Assume that billing will be on a time and materials basis, up to a “not-to-exceed” cap. Proposals should describe the underlying budget assumptions and any drivers of cost that can be modified without compromising the integrity of the evaluation.

It is anticipated that the budget for the scope described in this RFP will be approximately $150,000; however, Energy Trust reserves the right to revise its budget assumptions at any time. We ask bidders to propose as competitive a budget for the project as they can, while being realistic about the scope that they can complete within that budget. If the proposed budget will exceed the $150,000 threshold listed here, we will consider it, but ask that bidders provide a rationale for why it is necessary. In addition, we ask bidders proposing to exceed the budget threshold listed here to provide alternative budget scenarios where they could stay within the budget by making certain trade-offs – either by dropping tasks, reducing complexity in places, or reducing sample sizes and precision for the evaluation.

Proposals should summarize the budget in a table, breaking out the estimated hours and costs by task and staff member. Please use the following budget template. Staff and subcontractors listed in the budget should be identified by name, with billing rates for each. **Not to exceed two (2) pages**.

Budget Template

Staff Name	Firm	Hourly Rate	Hours Per Task			Total Hours	Total Cost
			Task 1	Task 2	Task…		
Staff Member 1							
Staff Member 2							
Staff Member…							
Subcontractor 1							
Subcontractor…							
Total Hours Per Task							
Direct Costs							
Total Cost Per Task							

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) experience:

Proposals should describe respondent's efforts and experiences in integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion into their business operations, both internally and externally, and their experience conducting culturally responsive research and evaluation work. Energy Trust seeks to contract with organizations that share its commitment to building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace and business environment, and that apply a diversity and equity perspective to their work. Respondents must provide responses to each of the questions listed in **Appendix B**. **Not to exceed two (2) pages.**

Data security and confidentiality:

Proposals should provide any data security certifications (e.g., ISO-27001 or SOC 2) that are held and maintained by the respondent ***and*** any subcontractors engaged in the project. Energy Trust recognizes that these certifications can present significant barriers for some firms. If your organization or subcontractor does not hold any relevant data security certifications, please provide a brief description of the **systems, policies, and procedures** used to ensure that Energy Trust provided data and data collected throughout the evaluation are kept secure and confidential during fielding, data transfers, storage, and analysis. **Not to exceed one (1) page.**

2. Work Product Example

Proposals should include **one past report** that showcases the respondent team's work on a similar project, as well as their data presentation and reporting capabilities. If needed, the names of people and organizations may be redacted from the report to allow sharing it. The work product example should be included as either a link to a publicly available document or attached as an appendix to the proposal. **No page limit, but please keep materials to a minimum.**

3. Resumés

Proposals should include resumés of all key team members, from the lead firm and any subcontractors who will be performing work. These should be included in an appendix to the proposal. **No page limit.**

4. Insurance coverage information.

Energy Trust requires its contractors to maintain, at a minimum, workers compensation insurance, adequate commercial general liability insurance coverage, and automobile liability insurance. Cyber liability coverage may also be required. Provide a description of the insurance coverage provided by respondent for performing the impact evaluation work, including:

- Whether such coverage is on a “comprehensive” or “commercial” form
- Whether such coverage is on a “claims made” or “occurrence” basis
- All endorsements excluding coverage of any nature, if any
- All limits, including aggregate limits and the current remaining coverage amounts under those limits
- Effective date

This information should be provided in an appendix to the proposal. **No page limit.**

5. Conflict of Interest Disclosure

Respondent must disclose any direct or indirect, actual or potential conflicts of interest respondent or its subcontractors may have with Energy Trust in its proposal. A “direct or indirect conflict” is defined as any situation in which an individual or a member of their family or close business or personal acquaintance, is employed by Energy Trust or the OPUC, or may be reasonably construed to have a direct or indirect personal or financial interest in any business affairs of Energy Trust, whether because of a proposed contract or transaction to which Energy Trust may be a party or may be interested or is under consideration, or whether such conflict is purely conceptual, because of similarity of business interests or affairs.

Respondent’s disclosure must specifically address any existing contracts between Energy Trust and the respondent, its staff, or any of its proposed subcontractors. If a potential conflict of interest is identified by the respondent, then the respondent should propose strategies to mitigate the conflict. If no conflict is identified by respondent, the respondent will explicitly provide such a statement in their RFP response. The determination of whether a conflict of interest exists and whether the proposed mitigation plan adequately addresses the conflict is left to the sole discretion of Energy Trust. This information should be provided in an appendix to the proposal. **No page limit.**

6. Representations and Signatures Page

Respondent’s proposal must contain the signature of a duly authorized officer or agent of the respondent company submitting the proposal. Respondent’s duly authorized officer or agent shall sign **Appendix A** certifying to the representations stated on **Appendix A.** The signed page should be provided as an appendix to the proposal.

Proposal Selection Criteria

Proposals will be judged on the criteria listed below. As noted above, failure to meet the proposal requirements may result in the rejection of a proposal without scoring.

- Technical proposal
- Qualifications of proposed team and staffing plan, including subcontractors (if applicable)

- Proposed budget
- Supplier Diversity Program eligibility (bonus to score only)
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion responses
- Data security and confidentiality
- Work product example

Schedule & Administration of Proposal Selection Process

RFP Schedule:

- **September 13, 2024** RFP issued
- **September 27, 2024** **Intent to bid due**
- **September 27, 2024** Questions/request for additional information due
- **October 2, 2024** Clarifications/question responses posted to website
- **October 14, 2024** **Proposals due**

Requests for Additional Information and Proposal Submission

Any questions and/or requests for clarification regarding this RFP, as well as stating intent to bid on the project, must be submitted via email to the contact named below by **September 27, 2024**. Responses to questions and requests for additional information will be posted on Energy Trust's website no later than **October 2, 2024**. Energy Trust cannot accommodate individual phone, mail, or fax inquiries about the RFP. All questions must be submitted via email.

Stating intent to bid does not obligate a respondent to submit a proposal. Only electronically submitted proposals (in PDF form) will be accepted; faxed or print proposals will not. A signed letter of transmittal (cover letter) is required and should be scanned and submitted along with the proposal. All proposals must be received by 5pm Pacific Time on **October 14, 2024**. Energy Trust will not be obligated to consider information received outside this time interval for the purposes of this RFP. Please submit proposal to:

Leila Shokat
Project Manager – Evaluation
Energy Trust of Oregon
Email: leila.shokat@energytrust.org

Revisions to RFP

If it becomes necessary to revise any part of this RFP, an addendum will be issued by Energy Trust and will be posted on the website. Respondents should contact Energy Trust if they find any inconsistencies or ambiguities to the RFP. Clarification given by Energy Trust may become an addendum to the RFP.

Withdrawal and Modification of Proposals

Respondents may withdraw their proposal and submit a revised proposal prior to the response deadline. After the response deadline, respondent-initiated changes will not be accepted. Respondents may withdraw their proposal from consideration at any time.

Proposal Evaluation and Notification for Negotiations

Energy Trust will review the proposals as received and may initiate negotiations with the leading respondent(s).

RFP GOVERNING PROVISIONS

All submitted proposals are subject to the following additional provisions.

Right to Accept or Reject Proposals, Multiple Awards

Energy Trust reserves the right to make multiple awards, reject any and all proposals and to waive any nonconformity in proposals received, to accept or reject any or all of the items in the proposal, and award the contract in whole or in part as it is deemed in Energy Trust's best interest. Energy Trust may also choose to negotiate any of the details of proposals prior to contracting.

Confidentiality

Respondents shall clearly identify only those portions of their proposals that they do not want revealed to third parties and label such portions as "Confidential Information". Except as required under law or for regulatory purposes Energy Trust will maintain confidentiality of such information. Energy Trust will not accept proposals or other documents that are marked to indicate the entire document is the confidential or proprietary information of the sender or that restricted handling is required. Normal business practices will be observed in handling proposal materials.

Ownership and Return of Proposals

All materials submitted in response to this RFP shall become the property of Energy Trust and shall not be returned to the respondent.

No Verbal Addendums

No verbal agreement or conversation made or had at any time with any officer, agent, or employee of Energy Trust, nor any oral representation by such party shall add to, detract from, affect or modify the terms of the RFP, unless specifically included in a written addendum issued by Energy Trust.

Proposal Costs

Each proposal prepared in response to this RFP will be prepared at the sole cost and expense of the respondent and with the express understanding that there will be no claims whatsoever for reimbursement from Energy Trust.

Waiver of Claims

Respondent waives any right it may have to bring any claim, whether in damages or equity, against Energy Trust or its officers, directors, employees, or agents, with respect to any matter arising out of any process associated with this RFP.

Energy Trust Rights Reserved

Energy Trust reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to reject any or all proposals in whole or in part, to waive any minor irregularities or informalities in a proposal, and to enter into any agreement deemed to be in its best interests. In addition to any other enumerated reserved rights and/or options as stated in this RFP, Energy Trust may in its sole discretion do any one or more of the following:

- Determine which proposals are eligible for consideration in response to this RFP.
- Disqualify proposals that do not meet the requirements of this RFP, in the sole determination of Energy Trust.
- Negotiate with any respondent to amend any proposal.
- Select and negotiate and/or enter into agreements with respondent(s) who, in Energy Trust's sole judgment, are most responsive to the RFP and whose proposals best satisfy the interests of Energy Trust, in its sole discretion, and not necessarily on the basis of price alone or any other single factor.
- Issue additional subsequent solicitations for proposals, including withdrawing this RFP at any time and/or issuing a new RFP that would supersede and replace this one.
- Vary any timetable or schedule, add or change any provisions discussed herein.
- Conduct any briefing session or further RFP process on any terms and conditions.
- Suspend or modify the RFP process at any time.
- Enter into relationships with more than one respondent.

Resulting Contract(s)

The selected respondent will be required to execute a written contract(s) with Energy Trust to perform the evaluation work. No award will be considered a commitment, and no obligations or legal relations shall exist between Energy Trust and the selected respondent until a final and binding contract has been executed by and between Energy Trust and the contractor. Time is of the essence with regard to this program evaluation, and prolonged contract negotiations will not be undertaken. In general, Energy Trust strongly prefers contracts that are consistent with Energy Trust’s standard terms and conditions; negotiations for such contracts can generally be completed quickly. In some cases, a few terms and conditions may need to be substituted or waived, in accordance with contract negotiations. Any party involved in these contract discussions can terminate negotiations at any time and for any reason. If it appears that contract negotiations are not proceeding in a timely manner, Energy Trust may opt to terminate the discussions and select another respondent.

Appendix A: Representations and Signature page

I, the undersigned declare that;

1. I am an authorized agent of the respondent and have authority to submit this proposal on behalf of the respondent.

2. The information provided in this proposal is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

3. I have read this Request for Proposals in its entirety and agree unconditionally to all of its conditions and requirements.

4. The respondent has not directly or indirectly induced or solicited any other respondent to submit a false or sham proposal.

5. The respondent has not solicited or induced any other person, firm, or corporation to refrain from proposing.

6. The respondent has not sought by collusion to obtain for itself any advantage over any other respondent or Energy Trust.

7. The respondent’s proposal is genuine; not made in the interest of, or on behalf of, any undisclosed person, firm, or corporation; and is not submitted in conformity with an agreement of rules of any group, association, organization, or corporation.

8. I understand and accept that the approval or rejection of respondent's request is within the sole discretion of Energy Trust and that there is no legal commitment until all due diligence has been performed and a properly authorized contract has been duly and properly executed.

9. I authorize the representatives of Energy Trust to investigate the business financial credit history of respondent, its affiliates, and all associated partners, principals and management and authorize the release of all said information.

10. I agree that I will report immediately in writing to Energy Trust any changes to the information contained herein at any time while I am under consideration for funding.

The information contained in this proposal and any part thereof, including its exhibits, schedules, and other documents and instruments delivered or to be delivered to Energy Trust is true, accurate, and complete. This proposal includes all information necessary to ensure that the statements therein do not in whole or in part mislead Energy Trust as to any material fact.

Date: ____

Authorized Signature: ____

Name and Title: ____

(please print)

Appendix B – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Experience

Diversity, equity, and inclusion experience

1. Provide specific recent examples of activities, policies or investments that demonstrate how respondent promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion within respondent's company in the areas of
    a. recruitment, hiring, retention and promotion;
    b. training and professional development;
    c. industry workforce development and support.

Cultural competence in evaluation

Culture shapes each step of the evaluation process—from the conceptualization of a study and its research questions; to decisions on what data to collect, how to collect it, and how to analyze it; to the interpretation and presentation of results. Culturally competent evaluation requires researchers to recognize their own cultural assumptions about a research project, continually consider cultural and contextual factors in their research design, and implement methodological adjustments to account for diverse research contexts.

2. Provide your plan to apply culturally competent research practices in this project.
3. Provide a specific example of your team's experience applying culturally competent research practices when working with diverse customer and stakeholder groups similar to this evaluation; how did the research project's goals, methods, or outcomes change.

Appendix C – Projects and Builders by Region, 2023 to Present

Year	Energy Trust Region	Projects	Builders[1]
2023	Central Oregon	290	51
	Eastern Oregon	10	4
	North Coast	15	4
	Portland Metro & Hood River	2,103	65
	Southern Oregon	229	31
	Willamette Valley	726	22
2024	Central Oregon	294	46
	Eastern Oregon	9	2
	North Coast	3	2
	Portland Metro & Hood River	1,593	56
	Southern Oregon	147	21
	Willamette Valley	619	15

[1] Total of Builders column is greater than 180, due to repeat participation across years and potentially across Energy Trust regions.