Energy Trust of Oregon
Request for Proposals:

Independent Restaurant Energy Opportunities and Supply Chain Research

RFP Issued: January 17, 2024

Bidder's Workshop: January 24, 2024

Intent to Bid and Questions Due: February 2, 2024

Proposals Due: February 21, 2024

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Energy Trust of Oregon

About Energy Trust

Energy Trust of Oregon is an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to delivering energy efficiency and renewable power benefits to 2 million utility customers. We are funded by and serve Oregon customers of Portland General Electric, Pacific Power, Cascade Natural Gas and Avista, and Oregon and Washington customers of NW Natural. A non-stakeholder board of directors guides our work with input from three advisory councils, and we are overseen by the Oregon Public Utility Commission. Since 2002, our technical services, cash incentives and energy solutions have helped participating customers save $6.3 billion on their utility bills. 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.

Energy Trust's Existing Buildings program[1] provides energy efficiency services and incentives for upgrades and retrofits in commercial and multifamily buildings. The program began in March 2004 and is implemented by a program management contractor, currently TRC. The program has four main tracks: Custom, Lighting (including downstream, direct-install, and midstream/buydown), Standard (prescriptive, midstream/buydown, and direct install), and Strategic Energy Management (SEM). In addition, the program has a relatively new small business initiative that serves small, independently owned businesses, the purpose of which is to increase participation among a group of customers that have not been well served by Energy Trust in the past. Through this initiative, the program provides increased incentives for efficient HVAC, water heating, insulation, refrigeration, grocery, and food service equipment measures. In addition, the program offers a direct install lighting service that provides free lighting equipment and installation to qualifying small businesses. Uptake in these offers has been modest and Energy Trust continues to underserve small businesses. This study will attempt to provide Energy Trust with the information it needs to understand the independent restaurant sector and better serve these businesses.

Introduction

Energy Trust is seeking a Research Team with a commitment to research justice and inclusivity to conduct a culturally competent study of independent food service businesses in Oregon, with diverse ownership, to characterize their energy opportunities and the supply chains through which they obtain energy-using restaurant equipment.

This project explicitly acknowledges that Energy Trust, the efficiency sector, equipment manufacturers, and distributors have collectively overlooked the needs of many small businesses when designing energy efficient products and services. This study is an opportunity for Energy Trust to commit to research justice by incorporating equitable representation throughout the project, from study design and research implementation, to subsequent communication of findings and utilization of the outcomes. This study strives to obtain a deeper understanding of the

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[1] Descriptions of the Existing Buildings program and its services can be found at the following link: https://www.energytrust.org/programs/equipment-upgrades-retrofits/

independent restaurant population while demonstrating a more equitable, inclusive, diverse, and accessible way of undertaking research.

This research seeks to address historic inequities by learning from, and improving energy efficiency services to, customers that Energy Trust and other entities have not served well in the past. The timing coincides with larger efforts at Energy Trust, and at the state and Federal levels, to meet increasing energy and climate goals, support deeper understanding of underrepresented utility customers, and address systemic inequities. To achieve these goals, the energy efficiency sector must better meet the needs of overlooked and vulnerable customer groups like independent restaurants.

<u>Independent Restaurant Market</u>

Small businesses are among the most energy burdened and are underrepresented among Energy Trust's Existing Buildings program participants. Among small businesses, restaurants experience some of the highest energy burdens and EUIs.[2] Restaurants also employ many women and people of color and have higher levels of ownership and management by Black and Indigenous people and people of color than other small business sectors. Restaurants often lease their brick-and-mortar spaces, so may have little control over decisions that could impact HVAC or other energy uses related to building characteristics and face major barriers to participating in energy programs as a result. Little information has been formally collected on how owners and managers of independent restaurants make equipment purchasing decisions, what options are available to them, and how energy consumption is considered at the time they make these decisions. This lack of deep understanding has resulted in many programs and institutions that do not directly address these customers' needs. This research aims to fill such information gaps.

This study will focus on a segment of the food service sector, defined as independent, non-franchised, casual dine-in or take-out restaurants with ethnically-specific menus that are operated in commercial spaces (excludes home-based food service, food carts, and temporary stalls). Throughout this RFP, this group will be referred to as "independent restaurants".[3] There are many different types of independent restaurants categorized by the type of food they serve, for example, Mexican or Thai restaurants, bagel shops, and delicatessens. It will be important to obtain a diverse mix of restaurant types in the study sample, to capture a range of characteristics and equipment types, and so that the results can be analyzed by restaurant type and other factors, and compared to regional studies.

For many types of energy-using equipment used in independent restaurants, particularly restaurants with ethnically-specific menus and specialty kitchen equipment, there are no energy efficient or ENERGY STAR rated alternatives on the market that meet their business needs. Manufacturers that develop high efficiency commercial kitchen equipment invest their research and development efforts in areas with identified high market potential. The deficit of market research into how independent restaurants purchase and use equipment means they are often excluded in the calculations of market potential. The lack of energy efficient options for

[2] US Energy Information Administration. 2022. 2018 Commercial buildings energy consumption survey: consumption and expenditures highlights. US Department of Energy, Washington, DC. Retrieved online from: www.eia.gov/cbecs

[3] This description of the customer group focus is based on definitions and categories of food service businesses from the leading trade association, the National Association of Foodservice Equipment Manufacturers (NAFEM). Ownership: Independent, non-franchised; Service Type: sit-down, take-out; Price Point: casual; Menu Type: ethnically specific.

independent restaurants is reinforced by the general practice among many energy efficiency programs of developing offerings that promote existing technology and use existing certification and testing approaches to move the market. If the equipment is not available because manufacturers don't see a market opportunity, or if the equipment exists but the manufacturer does not see the benefit of validating its energy usage, then energy efficiency programs are not able to design meaningful services that independent restaurant owners can take advantage of and benefit from.

Research Project

This research will identify specific opportunities to meaningfully reduce energy usage at independent restaurants and investigate how they use energy throughout their operations. This research will also explore supply chains and the availability of efficient equipment options. The study will focus on identifying gaps in the equipment market and in the available services provided by Energy Trust. The study will add to the organization's understanding of the diversity of restaurant types and owners in Oregon by recruiting from restaurants with ethnically and culturally specific cuisines. Recommendations will be developed for how Energy Trust and the utility industry, and the manufacturers, distributors, service providers, agencies, and advocacy groups that serve independent restaurants might collaborate to create new products, services and systems to better serve this diverse group of businesses. This research should support future collaborations between key market actors to approach the independent restaurant sector differently, given the financial resources for energy efficiency and increased attention to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Research Goals

This study aims to achieve the following research goals and objectives:

Goal 1: Understand the characteristics of independent restaurants and their operations

- Provide a deeper understanding of the conditions, operations, and realities of independent restaurants in Oregon
- Catalog the energy using equipment and systems present in these businesses, particularly ethnically-specific kitchen equipment, and the operation of that equipment
- Compare independent restaurant characteristics with restaurants across the region, as sampled in the Commercial Building Stock Assessment study (CBSA)[4]
- Understand the use cases and needs of independent restaurants related to the energy using equipment present
- Identify potential energy savings opportunities present in independent restaurants

Goal 2: Understand equipment sourcing and supply chains for independent restaurants

- Identify trigger points when independent restaurant owners upgrade their equipment or properties, where they go to acquire equipment, and who they rely on for information and support

[4] https://neea.org/data/commercial-building-stock-assessments

- Understand the supply chain for major energy using equipment in independent restaurants, with particular focus on the research and development cycle of efficient alternatives for industry-specific energy using technologies

Goal 3: Identify the gaps in efficient equipment and efficiency services for independent restaurants

- Identify gaps in existing Energy Trust offers or available technology to improve the energy efficiency of independent restaurants
- Understand potential barriers to serving these businesses, beyond financial barriers, and how they could be overcome
- Gain understanding of where and how Energy Trust and others could intervene to influence the restaurant equipment market to better serve these restaurants

Assumptions and Expectations

This section describes some of the assumptions and expectations for the project that respondents should consider in their proposals.

Relationship to Research Advisor and Advisory Committee

Energy Trust has retained an external Research Advisor, focused on keeping equity at the forefront, ensuring a customer-centered study, helping with the research design, and supporting the selected Research Team. The Research Advisor will work with the selected Research Team to provide valuable input and expertise on the restaurant industry in Oregon and will help make connections with potential key contacts that will assist with recruiting. The Research Advisor will also serve as the primary liaison with the research Advisory Committee that was convened for this project and will coordinate their meetings, document review, and other activities.

The Advisory Committee helped to shape the project scope and RFP. The Advisory Committee will serve as a resource for the selected Research Team and Energy Trust, to provide input based on their restaurant and small business experience, advise on research approaches, make connections with industry contacts, review research deliverables, and help prioritize action in response to the study's findings and recommendations. The Research Advisor and Advisory Committee will also ensure that community-based and customer-centered approaches are used throughout the study. The seven committee members include business owners, community leaders, small business advocates, distributor representatives, and efficiency experts, with representation from the Portland Metro area, Willamette Valley, and Eastern Oregon. It is expected that the selected Research Team meet with the Advisory Committee periodically and be responsive to their input and guidance on the study. It will be important for the Research Team to meet with each committee member to discuss leveraging their industry contacts and relationships for the sampling and recruiting efforts.

It is expected that the Research Advisor, some Advisory Committee members, and Existing Buildings program outreach staff will be able to provide warm introductions to the selected Research Team for potential key contacts and some potential study participants that can be leveraged in the sampling and recruiting tasks. However, to achieve the desired sample size, it is anticipated that the selected Research Team will need to identify additional key contacts willing to help with recruiting.

Expectation for Partnering

We expect that the selected Research Team will consist of two or more firms, with unique capabilities, that will handle specific aspects of the research. For instance, a firm specializing in energy research and engineering may do much of the planning, sample design, and energy audits, but may need a partner to help conduct outreach to key contacts, recruit restaurant owners, and conduct owner interviews. Non-traditional partners that typically work outside of the energy efficiency and research domains are encouraged for this work, particularly if they have specialized expertise with restaurants, research justice, community engagement, language interpretation, recruiting, or other work areas described in this RFP.

Expectations for Equity and Inclusion

Energy Trust seeks a customer-centered, culturally responsive study that participants experience as a net benefit. It is important for the success of the study that the selected Research Team understands the cultures and languages of the principal communities in which they will be conducting research. The study will be conducted with restaurant owners from a variety of racial, ethnic, cultural and educational backgrounds. Cultural competency is the ability to engage respectfully with people from different cultural, social, economic and political backgrounds. A culturally competent approach that incorporates outside input and perspectives will be expected. The study should include a plan for engaging with restaurant owners and managers who are more comfortable speaking in their native language. Energy Trust has a contracted translation resource that the selected Research Team will have access to, and it is expected that this service will be used to translate study materials into Spanish and other languages encountered.

Some study participants may not respond to written communications and prefer in-person verbal interactions. Research activities should be designed to engender trust in the selected Research Team, and Energy Trust, and accommodate the schedules and constraints of independent restaurant owners, managers, and staff. Building trust will be a major part of recruiting study participants that may not be familiar with Energy Trust. The selected Research Team will obtain warm leads from trusted partners (like Advisory Committee members), conduct in-person outreach activities (like eating a meal at the restaurants), and discuss the purpose and logistics of the study with prospective participants. In short, the selected Research Team must embrace and appropriately address the diversity of restaurant owners and staff and create an inclusive study that will help Energy Trust develop more equitable services for independent restaurants. Deliverables should be provided in plain, accessible language that can be understood by a non-technical audience, including our Advisory Committee members, while conveying all of the necessary information.

Tasks

We anticipate that the selected Research Team will complete the research activities described in the tasks below, to successfully complete the study and achieve the research goals and objectives.

Respondent should address each task in their technical proposal and describe their approach. Respondent does not need to belabor minor or administrative tasks like the

kick-off meeting, reporting, or project management, but should instead focus their technical proposal on the core research tasks and methodologies.

In addition, proposals should identify any key challenges the respondent foresees in implementing these tasks and recommend solutions.

Task 1. Study Kick-off Meeting and Work Plan

After the contract is awarded, the selected Research Team will attend an informal, virtual kick-of meeting with the Energy Trust project manager, one or two internal Energy Trust staff, and the Research Advisor, to make introductions and discuss the project timeline, methodologies, and coordination with the Advisory Committee. After this initial meeting, the selected Research Team will attend a virtual meeting of the research Advisory Committee to formally kick-off the research project. Energy Trust will schedule and manage logistics for this meeting, and in addition to the research Advisory Committee members, it is expected that internal Energy Trust staff, Existing Buildings program management staff from TRC and the project Research Advisor will attend this meeting. This will be an opportunity for the selected Research Team to meet the stakeholders for the study and to discuss the project goals and their proposed research methodologies with the group. The selected Research Team will present key elements of their research plan at the kick-off meeting and incorporate any feedback received into their draft work plan. The selected Research Team will also take notes at the kick-off meeting and provide them to all attendees.

The draft work plan will be provided to Energy Trust and reviewed by study stakeholders. Energy Trust's Evaluation Project Manager will compile input from study stakeholders and provide guidance on how to incorporate it into the final work plan. The selected Research Team will provide a final work plan to Energy Trust that must be reviewed and approved by Energy Trust prior to commencing work on the project.

Deliverables:

- Attend kick-off meeting
- Meeting notes
- Draft and final research work plan

Task 2. Literature Review

The selected Research Team will review the published literature on independent restaurant equipment, energy use, and energy efficiency, barriers to participation in utility efficiency programs, independent restaurant equipment supply chains, and other related research. This should include market research and interviews conducted by Energy Trust and recent studies completed in California and the Pacific Northwest. Energy Trust will provide an initial list of work that the selected Research Team should expand on. This review should also include a review of efficiency measures offered by Energy Trust relevant to restaurants, including those that may currently be in development. During the analysis phase of the project (Task8), the selected Research Team will be expected to collect additional information about energy consumption and cost differences between standard and efficient versions of key energy using equipment found in the field. This may include a review of manufacturer and distributor websites and equipment catalogs or other relevant sources. This will be particularly important for equipment where a significant energy savings opportunity may exist. After they have conducted the review, the selected Research Team will write up a summary of relevant findings and themes that will be included with the research report. This literature review will provide context for the findings and will provide the selected Research Team with additional insight into the market they are studying that may be helpful during their research activities.

Deliverable:

- Section on literature review in report
- Information for analysis of measures in Task 8

Task 3. Key Contacts and Sampling

The selected Research Team will design and develop a network sampling approach[5] based on key contacts. Rather than emphasizing representativeness, this qualitative sampling method will focus on identifying a broad range of independent restaurant types and owners within the definition provided above. The selected Research Team will build a list of network sampling seeds, or key contacts, that have relationships with restaurant owners and are willing to help recruit for the study. Key contacts may include restaurant owners, but are more likely to be service company representatives, industry specific manufacturer or distributor representatives, business advocates, culturally specific chamber members, industry association staff and others with connections to independent restaurants. The Research Advisor, Existing Buildings program outreach staff, and members of the Advisory Committee will leverage their networks to assist in identifying key contacts and provide introductions to the selected Research Team. Members of the Advisory Committee may also serve as key contacts themselves.

The Research Team should invite Advisory Committee members to participate in this process in the way they choose, which may range from not providing any information to providing warm introductions to potential key contacts to serving as a key contact. In addition, the Research Advisor, Existing Buildings program staff, and the selected Research Team may identify key contacts from their own networks. All sources will be combined to build a list of key contacts that will be the basis for network sampling of independent restaurant owners.

Once an initial batch of key contacts have been identified, the selected Research Team will meet with each of them to brief them about the research project, build trust, and agree upon the role they will be expected to play. The key contacts will be asked to identify restaurant owners they have relationships with, who operate small, independent priority restaurants. If a key contact is a restaurant owner themselves, they may be included in the sample as well. The selected Research Team may need to conduct additional outreach if the initial group of key contacts does not yield sufficient research participants to reach the study recruitment targets. However, there will also be additional rounds of network sampling where study recruits may serve as key contacts in turn.

It will be critically important to the success of the study that the selected Research Team meets with prospective key contacts, communicates the intentions of the proposed research, addresses any questions, and gains their support. If this is achieved, then the key contacts will be more comfortable leveraging their personal relationships to further the study, which will require them to introduce the selected Research Team to restaurant owners in their networks and endorse the study. For such a big request, the selected Research Team must demonstrate to prospective key

[5] This article provides a review of network sampling: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Douglas-Heckathorn/publication/317140025_Network_Sampling_From_Snowball_and_Multiplicity_to_Respondent-Driven_Sampling/links/61b7cdb61d88475981ea55e4/Network-Sampling-From-Snowball-and-Multiplicity-to-Respondent-Driven-Sampling.pdf

contacts that they can be trusted to handle important relationships and that restaurant owners will have a positive experience with the study that will reflect well on the key contacts.

The selected Research Team will reimburse key contacts for their time and contributions either through a fixed incentive or some other method. The form and amount of reimbursement for the key contacts will be determined in consultation with Energy Trust and the Advisory Committee. Reimbursement must be clearly provided by the selected Research Team, not Energy Trust, and the selected Research Team will be solely responsible for any required tax reporting.

The selected Research Team will generate a sample list large enough to recruit 60 to 70 priority restaurants, split between the Portland Metro area and rural communities in the Willamette Valley and Eastern Oregon. Based on the sample list that the selected Research Team builds from the key contacts, they will establish recruiting targets by type of restaurant, building ownership status, and geographic region, to ensure that a diverse mix of restaurants is included in the study. Existing Buildings has a small business engagement and audit initiative currently ongoing, and customers involved in those efforts should be identified and removed from recruiting lists for this research project to avoid confusion. If network sampling does not yield a sufficient sample for recruiting, Energy Trust can supply data for restaurants that participated in Existing Buildings direct install lighting projects in the past but have not completed other types of energy upgrades.

Proposals should describe the approach to recruiting key contacts and developing a sample list that will meet the study objectives. Proposals should also address how respondents will gain the trust of key contacts to endorse the study and the selected Research Team.

Deliverables:

- Recruiting targets
- Section on sampling methods in report

Task 4. Recruiting

Once a variety of independent restaurant types and owners has been identified across regions, the selected Research Team will begin recruitment. Outreach to sampled restaurants may be targeted to shape the final sample, achieve the recruiting targets developed in Task 3, and ensure a balance between regions, as well as a variety of different types of restaurants. Recruiting will start with the key contacts reaching out to sampled restaurant owners, at the direction of the selected Research Team, and providing warm leads and introductions to the Research Team. The selected Research Team will take over recruiting for each batch of prospective recruits once warm introductions have been made. Outreach and recruiting efforts should be led by members of the selected Research Team that are familiar with independent restaurants and are based in Oregon, to ensure cultural competence, familiarity with the industry, and a smooth and successful recruiting process. These team members will also be expected to be part of the field staff for the restaurants they recruit, to ensure continuity.

The selected Research Team will attempt to recruit restaurants through a range of responsive modes, starting with low effort and progressing to high effort methods. For instance, some restaurant owners may not be comfortable with the idea of a study, or interested in committing time to it, without first meeting with the selected Research Team and discussing it. The selected Research Team will need to build rapport with restaurant owners and communicate the value of participating before proceeding with scheduling. It is important that input and suggestions from the restaurant owners be taken into account and addressed appropriately. In some cases, key contacts may agree to serve as an ambassador and personally introduce the selected Research

Team to the restaurant owners. Once contact has been made, the selected Research Team will describe the study, the site visit process, and compensation, and invite the contact to participate in the study. The selected Research Team will recruit 60 to 70 independent restaurants into the study representing a broad range of restaurant types and owner demographics. If more restaurants are needed to achieve the recruiting targets, previously recruited restaurant owners will be asked to identify additional owners. Network sampling and recruiting will continue in this way until the recruiting targets are achieved.

For restaurant owners interested in participating, the selected Research Team will describe the purpose of the research, what it will entail, any potential risks or benefits from the research, and the incentive options being offered to participate. Restaurant owners will be offered incentives for participating in the research that are sufficient to compensate them for their time. The form and amount of the participation incentives should be suggested by the selected Research Team, but will be discussed with and agreed upon by Energy Trust and the Advisory Committee at the kick-off meeting. These incentives must be clearly provided by the selected Research Team, not Energy Trust, and the Research Team will be solely responsible for any required tax reporting. The selected Research Team will also set clear expectations with restaurant owners about how their information will be used and that developing new technologies and services resulting from the study may take years to realize. This should follow a truncated informed consent process, similar to what is used in human subjects research, to ensure the research is conducted ethically and does not coerce or cause harm to study participants. Many businesses in this priority group have understandable concerns about how their information may be used to threaten their business.

Energy Trust will setup and host a study web page on its website, using content provided by the selected Research Team so that prospective study participants can learn more about the study and check its authenticity. Energy Trust will use its contracted resource to translate the content into multiple languages so that it is accessible to a wide range of prospective study participants.

In addition to the financial incentives to compensate them for their time, restaurant owners will be offered an energy audit report summarizing the biggest opportunities for savings in their restaurant. They will also be provided information about Energy Trust's Existing Buildings programs and the no-cost services it offers to small businesses, which may provide them with shorter term benefits. If desired, the restaurant owner will be provided a warm introduction to a member of the Existing Buildings Outreach Team who can support the process. Once restaurant owners have been successfully recruited, the selected Research Team will schedule a mutually agreeable date and time to conduct a site visit. They will need to be flexible on timing to work around the restaurant owners' and managers' schedules and potentially avoid business hours. The selected Research Team will reach out to each recruited restaurant prior to the scheduled site visit to confirm their participation in the study and the timing of the visit.

The selected Research Team may be able to directly coordinate with Existing Buildings program outreach staff at TRC to obtain support for recruiting activities, particularly with restaurant owners that outreach staff already know. If this can be arranged, it may somewhat simplify recruiting for the selected Research Team and increase recruiting success, but it is unlikely to dramatically impact study costs or recruitment rates.

Proposals should describe the recruiting approach in detail and focus on the strategy that will be used to gain the trust of restaurant owners, communicate the value of the study and what's in it for them, invite them to join the study, and schedule site visits that will work for them. In addition, respondents should suggest incentive designs that they believe will be effective tools for engagement, fairly reimburse people for their time, and do not

arouse suspicion of a scam. Respondents should also describe how they would utilize the assistance of Existing Buildings outreach staff, if that were an option.

Deliverables:

- Study web page content
- Section on recruiting methods in report

Task 5. Site Data Collection Instruments

The selected Research Team will develop interview guides and protocols for restaurant owners that cover key research topics and address all the relevant research goals. The interview questions should include lines of inquiry about how equipment is used in restaurants, where owners find and purchase equipment, and how owners make decisions about energy-related equipment and upgrades, among others. The interview guides will also include business firmographic and owner demographic questions. The restaurant owner interviews will happen in-person during the site visits and should be planned accordingly.

The selected Research Team will develop on-site energy equipment audit data collection forms and protocols to guide the collection of information during site visits. They will start with the CBSA data collection guides and protocols and then add or modify items as needed to support the research. This approach will ensure some regional comparability to CBSA data and streamline the development of these tools. The data collection form and protocols should facilitate a flexible inventory and characterization of energy using equipment and operation and building characteristics. These should include, but are not limited to, cooking and kitchen equipment, refrigeration, water heating, HVAC systems, lighting, and shell characteristic. The guides should cover key research topics related to the energy opportunities in restaurants and address all relevant research goals. They may include options for short term metering of certain equipment types to better understand their operation. Different sets of data collection instruments may need to be developed for restaurant types with very different operations, but in general, these tools should be flexible enough to handle a wide range of situations.

The selected Research Team will also develop a communication product with similar content to the study web page, that describes the study and provides contact information for the selected Research Team and Energy Trust, should any problems arise. This may take the form of a study information sheet, but the Advisory Committee will provide input on the form, the format and the content of this product before it is developed, to adapt it to the needs of study participants. As with all study materials, it should be made available in multiple languages. This info sheet must also be reviewed by Energy Trust's internal communications team and should conform with Energy Trust brand guidelines. Information should also be provided about the Existing Buildings program and its current services, along with contact information for a program representative, should they wish to follow-up about participating. The information will be provided to all study participants at the site visit for reference.

Energy Trust will use its contracted resource to translate all interview guides and information sheets that will be used with study participants into multiple languages and formats, so they are accessible to a wide range of study participants.

The data collection instruments and study information sheet will incorporate input from meetings with the Advisory Committee to ensure that the right questions are being asked and that the interviews and site visits are approached in the most appropriate way. The selected Research Team will provide draft site data collection instruments to the Evaluation Project Manager. The Advisory Committee and other research stakeholders will review these documents and provide feedback to the selected Research Team. The selected Research Team will incorporate the feedback before finalizing the data collection instruments and beginning fielding.

Proposals should describe how respondents will develop rigorous data collection protocols and tools that meet the objectives of the study, are flexible and work in a variety of situations, create conditions for inclusive site visits and interviews, and allow for efficient on-site data collection.

Deliverables:

- Draft and final study information sheet
- Draft and final owner interview guides and protocols
- Draft and final site data collection forms and protocols

Task 6. Conduct Site Visits and Owner Interviews

The selected Research Team will plan and conduct site visits at 60 to 70 restaurant locations from the recruited research participants, aiming for no more than 3 to 4 hours at each site. Field staff from the selected Research Team should be familiar with the communities they will be visiting and conversant in the language and cultural norms of the restaurant owners to ensure research participants experience the process as participatory, inclusive, and safe. Field staff should also have experience working with the types of restaurants included in the sample so that they know what to expect on site. At least one of the field staff on-site must have been involved in communicating with the participant during the recruiting process, to ensure continuity.

Field staff will be fully trained on the interview and energy equipment audit protocols and will utilize the data collection instruments developed in Task 5 to conduct data collection. However, field staff will have the flexibility to probe on interesting findings or follow leads to uncover relevant information not included in the data collection instruments, as needed. If it becomes clear that important items are missing from the data collection instruments, then they may be modified to better capture relevant data at subsequent site visits. The selected Research Team will hold regular check-ins with their field staff to identify potential problems with data collection instruments and field protocols or challenges with site access, customer cooperation, or other issues that arise, so that they can be quickly resolved. Energy Trust and the Advisory Committee should be informed of major issues that arise and consulted about proposed solutions and adjustments to data collection instruments and protocols.

As noted in Task 4, the site visit schedules should accommodate the availability of the owner and staff and their business hours. At some sites it may not be possible to conduct the visits during business hours, or there may only be specific time windows during the day that will work. A few days prior to each scheduled site visit, field staff will contact the restaurant owner or manager by phone to review the purpose of the research, any potential risks and benefits, the incentive being offered to participate, and the site visit protocol. Field staff will check-in with the owner to ensure that the timing of the scheduled site visit is still okay and that they are willing to proceed with participation in the study. If the timing will no longer work, then the site visit may be rescheduled. If the restaurant owner no longer wishes to participate then the field work will be cancelled. If the owner agrees to move forward, then the site visit will proceed as scheduled.

On arrival at the restaurant, field staff will provide the restaurant owner with printed information about the study that also contains information about the Existing Buildings program and its services, particularly the no-cost services. After introductions have been made, field staff will move on to conduct the interview with the owner or manager. The interviews should follow the interview guide and protocol, but field staff will have the flexibility to engage in conversation with the restaurant owner/manager, probe on interesting findings, and follow leads to uncover relevant information not covered in the guide. Interviews should be recorded, if acceptable to the owner/manager, to help field staff fill in their notes after the visit. The information obtained in the interview may help guide the energy equipment audit.

Once the interview is completed, field staff will tour the restaurant location and conduct an energy equipment audit with data collection activities following the established protocol. The energy equipment audit will include recording the building characteristics, inventorying all energy using equipment, and recording key information and operational details about the equipment. At the end of the site visit, field staff will provide the restaurant owner with the incentive for participating and ask if they might be interested in potential follow-up research in the future. The selected Research Team will provide a list of restaurant owners, with contact information, that indicate interest in follow-up research. After the site visit, field staff will write up and deliver an energy audit report to the restaurant owner that summarizes the key findings and contains a prioritized list of the largest energy saving opportunities in the restaurant.

Field staff must become knowledgeable about Energy Trust's Existing Buildings program and their services and incentives for small businesses and restaurant equipment, especially no-cost services, so that they can accurately describe them. Field staff will ensure that the restaurant owner is aware of these Existing Buildings services and explain how they work. If restaurant owners or staff are interested in these services, or have specific questions about them, field staff will put them directly in contact with a program representative. Field staff will also explain to restaurant owners that Energy Trust may not have many services available that will work for their business and that is the problem this research is trying to address.

Good customer service and professional conduct during the site visits is of critical importance to maintain a positive relationship between Energy Trust and small business customers and to protect the relationships the key contacts entrusted to the Research Team. If a problem arises during a site visit, field staff will contact the Research Team for guidance and it will be escalated to Energy Trust, if needed. If at any point during a site visit a restaurant owner indicates that they want to withdraw from the study or want the field staff to leave, then field staff will leave immediately. The selected Research Team will attempt to recruit replacements for any restaurants that opt out of the study to achieve the target number of completes.

Proposals should describe the number of anticipated site visits and the approach to the site visits, interviews, and equipment audits in detail, and how respondents will ensure that they meet the research objectives. Proposals should also highlight the human dimensions of their process and how they will ensure a positive experience for participants that they view as a net benefit.

Deliverables:

- Deliver participation incentives to restaurant owners
- Deliver energy audit reports to restaurant owners
- List of restaurant owners interested in follow-up research with contact info
- Sections on site visit methods and findings in report

Task 7. Market Actor Interviews

The selected Research Team, in consultation with the Advisory Committee, will identify key market actors that serve the small food service sector in Oregon. Based on the type of equipment observed in independent restaurants during the site visits, the selected Research Team will select relevant restaurant equipment manufacturers and distributors and identify representatives to contact. Equipment designers, contractors and service providers serving this sector, small business advocates, and small business market experts may also be identified and selected for interviews. Once prospective market actors have been identified, the selected Research Team will find a suitable representative within each organization to complete the interview and obtain their contact information. In some cases, the Advisory Committee may be able to assist in identifying potential interview subjects.

The selected Research Team will develop interview guides for market actors that cover key research topics and address relevant research goals. The interview questions should address the supply chains for major energy using equipment in independent restaurants with particular focus on research and development for efficient alternatives. They should also try to reveal how Energy Trust and other organizations might intervene in the market to influence the efficiency of the equipment available to independent restaurants. In addition, the questions should explore why efficient versions of certain equipment types do not exist and what key market actors need to know to make investments in future energy efficient products. The interview guides will also include business firmographic questions to better understand how each firm fits into the larger market. The interview guides may reference findings from the site visits or restaurant owner interviews that raised questions that the market actors are well suited to answer. Energy Trust will use its contracted resource to translate the interview guide, as needed, so that it is accessible to a wide range of market actors.

The market actor interview guide will incorporate findings from the literature review and input from meetings with the Advisory Committee to ensure that the right questions are being asked. The selected Research Team will provide the draft interview guide to the Evaluation Project Manager. The Advisory Committee and other research stakeholders will review these documents and provide feedback. The selected Research Team will incorporate the feedback before finalizing the data collection instruments and beginning fielding. Feedback on these interview guides may be collected at the same time as other items to be reviewed, to streamline the process somewhat.

Interviewers should have experience working with food service market actors so that they are familiar with their business models and can engage in an informed discussion. The interviewers will be fully trained on the market actor interview guide before recruiting begins. Interview recruiting will include calling or emailing interview targets, describing the study and its purpose, offering a completion incentive, and scheduling the interview. The form and amount of the completion incentive will be determined in consultation with Energy Trust and the Advisory Committee.

The selected Research Team will conduct in-depth interviews by phone, virtually, or in-person, with up to 25 market actors. We anticipate the interviews will take about 45 to 90 minutes each. The interviews should follow the market actor interview guide, but interviewers will have the flexibility to engage in the conversation with respondents, probe on interesting findings, and follow leads to uncover relevant information not covered in the guide. If it becomes clear that important items are missing from the interview guide, then they may be modified to better capture relevant information in subsequent interviews.

The selected Research Team will be responsible for delivering the completion incentives to each market actor. The completion incentives must be clearly provided by the selected Research Team, not Energy Trust, and the Research Team will be solely responsible for any required tax reporting.

Proposals should describe the approach to identify and recruit appropriate market actors for interviews, the interview process, and the types of questions respondents may be asked to meet the research objectives.

Deliverables:

- Draft and final interview guide
- Deliver completion incentives to interviewees
- Section on market actor interviews and findings in report

Task 8. Analysis

The selected Research Team will summarize the energy audit data, restaurant owner interview findings, and market actor interview findings. This will include qualitative analysis methods of categorizing interview responses and drawing out commonalities, themes, and findings of particular significance or interest. Quantitative analysis methods will also be used to summarize energy audit data, like distribution of equipment types, sizes, characteristics, use cases, operating hours, and other key findings, including frequencies, averages, ranges, and other statistics. The analysis activities should address the study goals and objectives and structure the data into coherent and usable findings.

The primary goal of the analysis is to reveal the major, and industry-specific, energy uses and savings opportunities and how they relate to the operations of the independent restaurants involved in the research. When possible, the selected Research Team will estimate the energy impacts of specific, major energy using equipment found in the field and the potential energy savings of a more efficient version, along with estimates of cost differences. This may require some additional data collection from manufacturer or distributor websites and catalogs. If more efficient versions of the major energy using equipment seen in the field are available, then they should be identified. The selected Research Team will also document any ancillary non-energy benefits that more energy efficient equipment might produce. The results should identify areas of discernible, systematic differences by geographic region (rural vs. urban), restaurant type, and building ownership status. Major qualitative differences between restaurant types or other grouping may be of interest, in some cases, even if not statistically significant. In addition, the selected Research Team will compare the characteristics of independent restaurants with those selected for the CBSA, to determine if independent restaurants are at all comparable to the general population of restaurants across the region.

Next, the selected Research Team will conduct a program gap analysis comparing the Existing Buildings catalog of energy efficiency measures with the savings opportunities identified. For savings opportunities where an applicable efficiency measure exists, the selected Research Team will dive in further to see if the measure requirements are compatible with the equipment specifications and conditions found in the field. If an efficiency measure both exists and is compatible with site conditions, then it will be identified as an easy win and further barriers to customer adoption will be explored in the data. If an applicable efficiency measure exists but is not compatible with site conditions, then the selected Research Team will explore whether changes could be made to the measure design or requirements to better fit the conditions of independent restaurants. The results of this program gap analysis will be reviewed with Existing Buildings PMC staff to better understand the status of existing efficiency measures applicable to restaurants and potentially new measures that may be under development.

In the case where Existing Buildings does not currently have an applicable efficiency measure, and there is a significant savings opportunity, the selected Research Team will draw from market actor interviews, the literature review, and other sources, to explore whether there is a gap in Energy Trust's services or if an efficient version of the equipment is simply not available on the market. Due to Energy Trust's measure-level cost-effectiveness investment criteria and constraints, not all savings opportunities can be adopted as efficiency measures and provided with incentives. The selected Research Team will provide rough estimates of the energy savings potential and incremental costs for specific energy efficient technologies so that Energy Trust can better understand the magnitude of the benefit-cost ratio.

If the gap analysis reveals that there is no efficient version of a major energy using technology available on the market, and it represents a significant savings opportunity, then the selected Research Team will explore the market actor interview findings and literature review to better understand the gap. For key technologies identified in the field with no efficient version, that represent major opportunities, the selected Research Team will estimate a range of potential energy savings and incremental costs for a hypothetical, efficient version of the technology, if sufficient data are available.

Proposals should outline how the analysis of study results will be conducted to ensure the study objectives are achieved. The gap analysis is of primary importance. Obtaining a better understanding of independent restaurant operations, supply chain, and the inner workings of the restaurant equipment market are also of interest.

Deliverables:

- Section on the analysis methods and findings in report

Task 9. Reporting and Presentations

Prior to producing a report, the selected Research Team will present the preliminary results to the Advisory Committee, Evaluation Project Manager, Research Advisor, and Existing Buildings team at an Advisory Committee meeting. Feedback from this meeting will be used to conduct additional analysis and will be incorporated into the preparation of the research report.

The selected Research Team will prepare a research report summarizing the findings from this research project. The report will address all of the research goals and objectives and focus on high impact findings. When possible, a graphical presentation of results in charts and tables, accompanied by explanatory text, is preferred. The main body of the report should not exceed 30 pages. Detailed methodologies and findings not suitable for the body of the report should be included in linked appendices, so they can be quickly and easily accessed when needed. The selected Research Team will draw conclusions and make recommendations based on the research findings. The report should include the following sections:

- Public-facing summary
- Introduction, including description of research purpose and goals
- Methods, including study design, recruitment, site visits, energy audits, interviews, and analysis
- Results, including charts and text highlighting the key findings
- Conclusions and recommendations relating to the research goals
- Appendices with detailed methodologies, detailed tables of results, and relevant verbatim quotes from interviews, not otherwise presented in the body of the report
- Additional appendices containing data collection instruments, recruiting materials, etc.

The selected Research Team will develop a full color, public facing research summary to accompany the report, that succinctly describes the study, the main findings, and the conclusions and recommendations. The research summary should provide similar content to an executive summary, but be presented in simpler language, make use of photos and graphics to communicate key points, be accessible to a general, public audience, and provide contact information for the Existing Buildings program. The research summary will be reviewed by Energy Trust's internal communications team to ensure that it conforms with Energy Trust brand guidelines. Energy Trust will use its contracted resource to translate the summary into one or more languages spoken by research participants. The selected Research Team will print and deliver the research summary to all study participants, including restaurant owners and market actors, in their preferred language.

Energy Trust staff, the Research Advisor, Existing Buildings staff, and the Advisory Committee members will review the draft report and provide detailed feedback to the selected Research Team. They will make the requested changes to the draft, including updates to their analysis, if needed, and provide a final report within three weeks of receiving comments. Achieving an acceptable final report may take more than one iteration between the selected evaluator and Energy Trust.

The selected Research Team will provide Energy Trust with a final, de-identified dataset of findings from each site visit and interview, accompanied by a data dictionary. The dataset should be cleaned and ready for analysis.

Lastly, the selected Research Team will create and deliver a 30-minute presentation of the research findings at a public webinar hosted by Energy Trust's evaluation team. All research participants, Advisory Committee members, Existing Buildings program staff, and Energy Trust staff will be invited to attend the webinar. These public webinars provide an opportunity for Energy Trust staff and stakeholders, and other industry professionals, to see the results of Energy Trust's evaluation and research projects. The webinars also help to disseminate research findings and lessons learned and make Energy Trust's programs more transparent.

Deliverables:

- Presentation of preliminary findings at Advisory Committee meeting
- Draft and final research report with public facing summary
- Presentation of findings at public webinar

Task 10. Project Management

The selected Research Team will be responsible for managing all components of the study, as described in the tasks above. They will be in regular communication with the Research Advisor and Evaluation Project Manager throughout the implementation of the study to discuss progress, methods, and tactical issues. They will proactively advise on ways to maximize the quality of the study throughout the project. They will also attend scheduled Advisory Committee meetings to present their research plans and progress, discuss higher level topics, and solicit feedback on specific topics. After each meeting, the selected evaluator will send out a concise set of notes summarizing discussion topics, decisions, and action items to attendees. These coordination activities will allow the selected Research Team to refine their approaches, resolve issues that arise, ensure that the project is on track to achieve its goals, and reinforce the project's community-based approach and customer-centric design. The selected Research Team must be flexible, responsive to stakeholder concerns, and work with the Advisory Committee and other stakeholders to deliver a community-based research project that provides meaningful results that can be used to improve efficiency services to independent restaurants.

As the study proceeds, the Evaluation Project Manager, Research Advisor, Existing Buildings team, and Advisory Committee will review deliverables from the selected Research Team, including the work plan, interview guides, the on-site data collection guide and protocols, memos, and draft reports. Members of this stakeholder group will provide feedback on these deliverables to the Evaluation Project Manager and discuss their feedback in follow-up meetings with the selected Research Team, as needed. Feedback will be moderated and filtered by the Project Manager and Research Advisor and provided to the Research Team within two weeks for plans and data collection tools, and within three weeks for memos and reports. This will ensure that the selected Research Team can receive and incorporate feedback without stalling the progress of the study.

The selected Research Team will be required to submit monthly status reports to Energy Trust presenting the following:

- A summary of activities and accomplishments during the previous month
- Current month's activities and plans
- Variances in schedule or budget, including any necessary explanations
- If applicable, any issues or concerns to be addressed with proposed solutions
- Compliance with Energy Trust supplier diversity requirements, including:
  - A breakdown of current and total amounts invoiced to date for COBID-certified firms relative to total contract spending
  - An updated supplier diversity contractor tracking spreadsheet (template to be provided by Energy Trust)

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 check-in meetings with notes supplied afterward
- Attendance at Advisory Committee meetings with notes supplied afterward
- Monthly status reports

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 each of the elements listed below. Failure to include any required elements may result in the rejection of respondent's proposal. Please note the **30-page limit** for the proposal content. This page limit does not include the supplemental information requested—the work product example, resumés, insurance coverage information, conflict of interest disclosure, and the representations and signature page. These additional items should be included in attached appendices.

1. Proposal Content

1) *Qualifications.* Proposals should provide an overview of the Research Team, including the lead firm, its subcontractors, and a description of the team's qualifications to conduct this research, particularly key staff, including relevant experience doing similar work. **Not to exceed 4 pages.**

2) *Staffing and subcontracting plan.* Describe the Research Team's structure, role of each subcontractor, key team member roles, certification numbers for certified small businesses (see Supplier diversity requirements section below), and a management plan. ***We expect respondents to create a team of firms with specialized expertise and experience to fill different project roles. We also expect respondents to create a team with a local presence in Oregon with field staff that are familiar with the restaurant industry and the culture and language of study participants.*** **Not to exceed 3 pages.**

3) *Technical proposal.* Provide a detailed technical proposal describing respondent's proposed approach to the study overall and to the specific tasks identified in the "Tasks" section above. Respondents should focus on their approach to the project tasks and refrain from simply repeating the task descriptions listed above. **Not to exceed 14 pages.**

4) *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: Small Disadvantaged Business, Minority-Owned Business, Woman-Owned Business, Emerging Small Business, Veteran-Owned Business, or Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business.

   It is required that a minimum of 20% of the value of any resulting contract be directed towards COBID or SBA certified firms. Higher percentages and more diverse mixes of firms will be scored more highly in this area. Involvement of non-traditional firms on the Research Team to fill specific roles is encouraged. ***Please describe how this requirement will be met and list certification numbers for certified small businesses involved in the proposed Research Team.*** This should also be reflected in the staffing and subcontracting plan and budget proposal. **Not to exceed 1 page.**

   If respondents need assistance making connections with COBID/SBA-certified small businesses or potential research partners, Energy Trust can facilitate introductions with other firms interested in creating teaming arrangements. A web form is available on the Energy Trust Contracting Opportunities web page, accompanying the RFP, for bidders to indicate their interest in partnering and sharing their contact information with other potential bidders. An updated list of firm interested in partnering will be posted every few days while the RFP is open. Alternatively, interested bidders may email the Energy Trust project manager listed below.

5) *Proposed schedule.* 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 two weeks of awarding the contract. Energy Trust anticipates launching this project in March 2024. The preliminary results should be presented in November 2024 and the draft research report should be delivered in December 2024. A final report will be delivered within three weeks of having received all comments and edits on the submitted draft. The public webinar and public-facing research summary will be delivered by March 2025. These schedule assumptions may be reassessed once the project begins. **Not to exceed 1 page.**

6) *Detailed budget proposal.* Provide a detailed budget proposal, based on the proposed methods and staffing plan. Should be bid as a time-and-materials, "not-to-exceed" budget cap type contract. Proposals should describe the underlying budget assumptions and any drivers of cost that can be modified without compromising the integrity of the research.

   It is anticipated that the budget for the project described in this RFP will be approximately **$350,000**; however, Energy Trust reserves the right to revise its budget assumptions at any time. We ask that bidders propose a competitive budget for the project while being realistic about the scope that they can complete within that budget. If the proposed budget will exceed the $350,000 threshold, 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.

Proposals should summarize the budget in a table, breaking out the estimated hours and costs by task and by staff member. Please use the budget template provided below. Staff and subcontractors listed in the budget should be identified by name, with billing rates for each. In addition, proposals should provide an average cost per site visit, including all recruiting, travel, preparation, energy audit, interview, and participation incentive cost. **Not to exceed 3 pages.**

Budget template:

Staff Name	Title	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							

7) *Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and cultural competence experience.* Proposals should describe respondent's recent activities, policies, and investments aimed at integrating DEI into their business operations. Energy Trust seeks to contract with organizations that share its commitment to building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace and business environment, and that strive to ensure cultural competence in their research work. Respondents must provide responses to each of the DEI and cultural competence related questions in **Appendix B**. **Not to exceed 3 pages.**

8) *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 project are kept secure and confidential during fielding, data transfers, storage, and analysis. **Not to exceed 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 an appendix to the proposal; or, if the report is available on a public website, a working link to the report is sufficient. **No page limit, but please keep materials to a minimum.**

3. Staff 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 research 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 or actual 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 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, including proposed approach to specific research tasks and the project overall
- Qualifications of the project team and staffing plan (includes all subcontractors that will be involved in the project)
- Proposed budget and schedule of deliverables
- Plan to meet COBID/SBA certification requirements
- Responses to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and cultural competence questions
- Data security and confidentiality

RFP Schedule & Administration

RFP Schedule

- January 17, 2024 — RFP issued
- January 24, 2024 — Bidders' workshop
- February 2, 2024 — Intent to bid due
- February 2, 2024 — Questions/request for additional information due
- February 9, 2024 — Responses posted to website
- **February 21, 2024 — Proposals due**

Requests for Additional Information and Proposal Submission

Energy Trust will hold a bidder's workshop on **January 24, 2024** for firms interested in responding to the RFP or being part of a respondent team. Energy Trust will present information about the study, answer questions about the RFP, and help interested firms identify potential partners to team up with for their response.

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 **February 2, 2024**. Responses to questions and requests for additional information will be posted on Energy Trust's website no later than **February 9, 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 5 PM Pacific Time on **February 21, 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:

Dan Rubado
Sr. Project Manager – Evaluation
Energy Trust of Oregon
Email: dan.rubado@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. Respondent 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 for 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 work, 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.

The selected respondent will be required to sign Energy Trust’s Utility Customer Information (UCI) confidentiality agreements to gain access to customers’ energy consumption data, if needed. There is a contractor version of the UCI confidentiality agreement, which can be found here, for reference:

https://energytrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/LGL_FM0205C.pdf.

There is also an individual version of the UCI confidentiality agreement, which can be found here, for reference:

https://energytrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/LGL_FM0205I.pdf.

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 and Cultural Competence Questions for Respondents

DEI in business operations:

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 research and evaluation:

Culture shapes each step of the research 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 research 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 groups; how did the research project's goals, methods, or outcomes change?