# Maine Business Success in Global Markets: Spring 2027 International Marketing Cohort

## Summary

Maine International Trade Center (MITC) is seeking proposals from qualified marketing firms or consultants to help Maine small- and/or medium-sized businesses expand their global, digital visibility. Supported by U.S. Small Business Administration STEP funding, this initiative aims to increase international sales and partnerships through strengthened digital marketing capabilities and increased brand visibility.

## Background

Maine businesses pursuing global customers and partners need international marketing capabilities and investment in digital (and increasingly AI) visibility. From website localization and translation to ecommerce and AI/GEO visibility, many Maine companies could use support to expand their reach.

Inspired by an iteration of the program focused on national marketing, the selected vendor will design and deliver a 3-to-4-month international marketing cohort program for approximately 6-10 eligible Maine small businesses.

The program should combine cohort-based workshops with individualized coaching on the following topics:

| Key Topics |
|---|
| International Customer Prioritization |
| Website Internationalization |
| International Marketing Analytics & ROI |
| **Optional Topics** |
| Trade Show or Conference Preparation & Execution |
| Global Online Advertising Strategy |
| Global E-Commerce Platform Strategy |
| AI/GEO Visibility |

**The budget range is $20,000-24,000**, depending mostly on program duration and the number of coaching hours available**.** Proposals should recommend the number, length, and format of the workshops, as well as the amount and structure of individual coaching available to participants.

Participation in this marketing cohort must be accessible to eligible Maine businesses statewide. Workshops and individual coaching sessions should be offered online (via Zoom or MS Teams). Recordings of workshops should be available for cohort participants.

## Objectives

- Collaborate with MITC to recruit 6-10 export-ready, eligible Maine small businesses to attend workshops and individual coaching. *Vendor will support recruitment through providing MITC promotional content, while MITC will manage participant registration.*
    - Participating businesses will meet applicable STEP eligibility, which MITC can confirm. *Eligibility (per SBA) includes having less than 500 employees, being export ready, been in business for at least one year, and having at least 51% of their product manufactured or service performed in Maine.*
- Programming will:
    - Focus Maine small businesses on 1-2 international marketing learning objectives connected to sales outcomes
    - Improve digital marketing infrastructure and skills (for example, website, data analytics, etc.)
    - Strengthen participants' ability to reach and engage international customers.

## Scope of Work

The selected vendor will offer workshops and/or individual coaching to participating small businesses on the required key subtopics (and optional subtopics as requested by the businesses or desired by the vendor):

| Key Subtopics | |
|---|---|
| International Customer Prioritization | Help participants prioritize international customer segments and sales opportunities based on buyer characteristics and practical barriers to entry. |
| Website Internationalization | Assess participants' websites for internationalization and localization opportunities, based on their selected target markets. |
| International Marketing Analytics & ROI | Assess participants' existing metrics and propose practical metrics to evaluate international marketing performance, lead quality, and ROI. |
| **Optional Subtopics** | |
| Trade Show or Conference Preparation & Execution | Advise participants on global tradeshow outreach and increased visibility; propose digital marketing techniques specific to tradeshows/conferences. |
| Global Online Advertising Strategy | Guide participants on planning targeted, paid ad campaigns to reach priority international audiences. |
| Global E-Commerce Platform Strategy | Recommend and provide guidance on evaluating and optimizing e-commerce platforms with global reach; advise participants on usage and analytics. |
| AI/GEO Visibility | Assess participants' digital discoverability, including SEO and/or AI/GEO; provide practical recommendations to strengthen visibility in target international markets. |

## Deliverables

Progress reporting: Written bi-weekly progress reports & final impact report

- Must include: (1) engagement metrics (name/number of eligible businesses attending workshops & name/number of eligible businesses engaging in individual coaching), (2) identified focus areas and workshop topics, and (3) individual coaching summaries.
- Could also include: other quantitative or qualitative reporting data suggested by the vendor

## Proposal Requirements

See template below. *NOTE: Proposal not to exceed six pages.*

## Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Potential to benefit Maine SMEs pursuing international sales
- Experience with international marketing and SMEs
- Cost-effectiveness and clarity of budget
- Capacity to deliver measurable results

## Timeline

RFP Release Date: Week of November 16, 2026
Proposal Deadline: December 21, 2026

Vendor Selection: Week of January 5, 2027
Anticipated Vendor Onboarding: Upon Award

Anticipated Program Window: Early February to June 2027
Cohort Duration: 3-4 months within the program window
Final Report Due: June 28, 2027

## Submission Instructions

Submit proposals in PDF format to rfp@mitc.com with the **Subject Line:** "RFP Submission – Spring 2027 International Marketing Cohort"

# Proposal Template *NOTE: Proposal not to exceed six pages.*

**SPRING 2027 INTERNATIONAL MARKETING COHORT**

## 1. Company Profile and Relevant Experience & Expertise

- **Organizational Overview**: Provide a concise description of your firm.
    - Specify your **relevant expertise** in the three required subtopics: international customer prioritization, website internationalization, and international marketing analytics/ROI.
- **Past Work Examples**: Share 1–2 examples of past work which demonstrates success in helping SMEs expand their international sales through digital marketing initiatives. Highlight measurable outcomes and project duration.
    - Please specify any experience with the key/optional subtopics - tradeshow preparation/execution, international online advertising strategy, international e-commerce platform strategy, or AI/GEO visibility.

## 2. Proposed Methodology, Format & Timeline

- **Project Timeline**: February–June 2027, with clear milestones for assessment, strategy development, implementation, and reporting. *The program will be 3-4 months between February and June.*
- **Methodology**: Outline your approach to supporting MITC's participant recruitment efforts, assessing individual marketing needs, delivering workshops, offering individual coaching, and maintaining participant engagement. Explain how your methodology will strengthen digital capabilities, improve brand visibility, and drive sustainable growth.
    - MITC can be a resource in recruiting eligible Maine SMEs. Participants will need to register directly with MITC.
    - Vendor should recommend an approach to assessing participant needs and measuring progress. Individual coaching offerings can be defined in your proposal and can have reasonable limitations given the budget. Only eligible Maine SMEs will be eligible for individual coaching and workshop attendance.
- **Anticipated Outcomes**: Provide projections for measurable results such as:
    - Participation: number of workshop attendees, coaching hour utilization, etc.
    - Outcomes: Increased actual or projected international sales, increased leads, expanded marketing metric analysis capabilities, increased visibility on platforms, AI search tools, etc.

## 3. Team Bios & Roles

- **Key Personnel & Capacity**: Clearly define who will lead strategy, manage deliverables, and oversee reporting. Demonstrate the ability to implement the project within the proposed timeframe, including resource availability.

## 4. Budget Breakdown & Pricing Model

The budget range is $20,000-24,000, depending mostly on program duration and the number of coaching hours available**.** Proposals should recommend the number, length, and format of the workshops, as well as the amount and structure of individual coaching available to participants.

- **Detailed Budget**: Present a transparent breakdown of costs by major activity (e.g., assessments, strategy development, training, reporting).
- **Pricing Model**: Specify whether pricing is fixed-fee, milestone-based, or hourly.