

MAINE BEVERAGE REDEMPTION GROUP

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS TO COMPLETE A STUDY ON HOW TO INCREASE THE USE OF REFILLABLE AND REUSABLE BEVERAGE CONTAINERS IN MAINE

AUGUST 10, 2026

PART I INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The objective of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to solicit proposals from consulting groups or service organizations to conduct a study for the Maine Beverage Redemption Group (the MBRG or the Co-op) on how to increase the use in Maine of beverage containers, defined in 38 M.R.S. §3102 (2), that are refillable and reusable to 5% and 10% by 2030, 2040 and 2050 (the refillable study).

The MBRG is the non-profit entity that will be responsible for operating the state's bottle bill. The MBRG is comprised of the six commingling groups approved by the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Those commingling groups, in turn, are comprised of the individual initiators of deposit (IODs) that sell roughly 1 billion containers of aluminum, plastic and glass subject to Maine's returnable beverage container program. Approximately 800,000,000 of those beverage containers are recovered annually pursuant to this system.

For the past twenty years because of the governing law, commingling groups and IODs have operated independently in collecting the containers that their individual members sell in Maine. This has required the entities that accept beverage containers from Maine consumers (redemption centers, reverse vending machines, bag drop-off systems, etc.) to separate and sort those containers by brand. All of the IODs in Maine are now in commingling groups and these commingling groups have formed a non-profit cooperative, and this Co-op will be managing the collection of all beverage containers under a single organization. The primary objective is to phase out the process of sorting containers by brand and sort them by material type. The Co-op has hired an administrator to assist in fulfilling this responsibility and currently anticipates that this transition will take place in October 2026.

There are additional provisions in the governing statute and in the Department approved plan that Co-op is seeking to fulfill. Among these is a requirement that the Co-op engage a

3rd party to conduct the refillable study. The specific language of the statute 38 M.R.S. § 3017 3-B (F-1) is as follows:

After consultation with the department and interested persons, the cooperative shall contract with a 3rd-party entity to complete a study by July 15, 2026 to determine the feasibility of achieving goals of 5% refillable and reusable beverage containers sold in the State by 2030, by 2040 and by 2050 and 10% refillable and reusable beverage containers sold in the State by 2030, by 2040 and by 2050 and to determine the infrastructure and investments that would be necessary to support those goals and shall provide the results of the study, along with any related recommendations, to the department. After reviewing the results of the study and any recommendations of the cooperative, the department shall include the results of the study, along with any additional comments or recommendations from the department, in the report required by [section 3115, subsection 3](#) that is due by February 15, 2027.

The Co-op has consulted with department and with multiple interested persons regarding the refillable study over the past four months. In addition, several MBRG Board members, representatives and interested parties participated in a symposium entitled 'Reuse in Maine's Beverage Sector' hosted by the DEP and Reuse Maine on May 5, 2026.

Pursuant to 38 M.R.S. § 3108 (4-A), the Co-op will be making \$500,000 available on a yearly basis to its member commingling groups and IODs to increase their use of refillable and reusable beverage containers and packaging for those containers in the State. This may include, but is not limited to,

- (a) Activities and infrastructure relating to the development and implementation of models for refillable beverage container washing techniques, including, but not limited to, mobile washing stations, in-house washing stations and the establishment of a fixed washing facility in the State;
- (b) Development of or other activities relating to container, adhesive and label options for refillable beverage containers; and
- (c) Outreach to manufacturers, retailers, restaurants and consumers regarding the benefits of refillable beverage containers and the methods available for ensuring such containers may be safely reused.

The study will evaluate opportunities to increase refillable usage rates, assess the economic, environmental, operational, and behavioral factors that influence consumer participation and develop actionable recommendations for increasing refillable beverage container use.

B. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. From the time the RFP is issued until award notification is made, all contact with the Co-op regarding the RFP must be made through the Co-op Board of Directors. No other person is empowered to make binding statements regarding the RFP.
2. The MBRG reserves the right to reject any proposals, as well as the right to conduct or not conduct a similar proposal in the future. This request for proposals is in no way an agreement, obligation, or contract, and the MBRG is not responsible for the cost of preparation.
3. All proposals must adhere to the instructions and format requirements outlined in the RFP and all written supplements and amendments. Proposals should follow the format and respond to all questions and instructions specified below in the "Proposal Submission Requirements" section of the RFP.
4. Bidders will take note that in evaluating a proposal submitted in response to the RFP, the Co-op will consider materials provided in the proposal, information obtained through interviews/presentations (if any), and internal information of previous contract history with the Bidder (if any). The Co-op also reserves the right to consider other reliable references and publicly available information in evaluating a Bidder's experience and capabilities.
5. The proposal must be signed by a person authorized to legally bind the Bidder and must contain a statement that the proposal and the pricing contained therein will remain valid and binding for a period of 180 days from the date and time of the bid opening.
6. The RFP and the awarded Bidder's proposal, including all appendices or attachments, will be the basis for the final contract.
7. The Co-op, at its sole discretion, reserves the right to recognize and waive minor informalities and irregularities found in proposals received in response to the RFP.
8. All applicable laws, whether herein contained, are included by this reference. It is the Bidder's responsibility to determine the applicability and requirements of any such laws and to abide by them,
9. Although it is the intent of the MBRG to enter into an Agreements with a service provider to conduct the refillable study, acceptance of a proposal by the MBRG or satisfaction of the RFP's requirements do not guarantee that MBRG will enter into an agreement or contract with the service provider.
10. If a vendor submitting a proposal discovers any ambiguity, conflict, discrepancy, omission, or other error in this solicitation document, the vendor shall immediately provide the MBRG with written notice of the problem and request that the solicitation document be clarified or modified. Without disclosing the source of the

request, the MBRG may modify the solicitation document prior to the date fixed for submission of proposals by issuing an addendum to all vendors to whom the solicitation document was sent.

C. CONTRACT TERM

The terms of this RFP would be until the completion of the refillable study as well as potential subsequent meetings with the Co-op Board and the Co-op Administrator regarding the implementation of recommendations from the study.

PART II – SCOPE OF WORK

A. MARKET ASSESSMENT

- Evaluate Maine's existing DRS and determine where and how a refillable program or options for refillable containers can be incorporated into that system.
- Analyze current beverage consumption patterns.
- Define existing refillable container programs in other jurisdictions.
- Benchmark peer jurisdictions, institutions, or companies.
- Review relevant regulations and policies.

B. ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

- Program costs
- Economic feasibility
- Cost-benefit analysis
- Return on investment
- Consumer willingness to pay
- Business impacts

C. IDENTIFY BARRIERS TO REFILLABLE CONTAINER ADOPTION

- Consumer awareness
- Convenience
- Sanitation concerns
- Availability of refill infrastructure
- Retail participation
- Regulatory constraints

D. FINAL REPORT

- Executive summary
- Research findings and data analysis (as necessary)
- Recommendations for how the funding referenced in 38 M.R.S. § 3108 (4-A) can be most effectively used
- Recommendations for how a refillable program can be coordinated with the Maine's existing DRS
- Regional concerns (if any)
- Implementation roadmap

PART III. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

A. ELIGIBILITY TO SUBMIT

Parties interested in submitting bids to conduct the refillable study should have experience in the field of recycling and resource recovery and in advancing an efficient and effective circular economy. This ideally would include management or consulting services for extended producer responsibility (EPR) programs and deposit return systems (DRS), especially EPR and DRS systems that have refillable or reusable beverage containers as a component part. Additional qualifications would include consumer behavior expertise and market research capabilities.

B. QUALIFICATIONS

Interested parties should present a brief statement of qualifications. Describe the history of your organization, especially regarding skills pertinent to the specific work required by the RFP, experience with EPR, DRS, refillable and reusable container systems and any special or unique characteristics of your organization that would make it especially qualified to perform the required work activities. Please include a description of any projects that your organization has worked on within the past five (5) years that reflect success, experience and expertise needed in performing the work outlined in Part II – Scope of Services to Be Provided. This includes administrative, consulting or other work provided to EPR or DRS systems within the United States or outside of it, especially those that have a refillable or reusable container component.

Please provide a company profile, along with a list of the persons who will be directly responsible for carrying out the company's work pursuant to its proposal and a brief description of their individual experience.

C. REFERENCES

Please provide three references from among your organization's existing clients.

PART IV – MANAGEMENT FEES

Please provide a schedule of your organization's fees for conducting the refillable study described in this RFP. To the extent that any portion of the fees are not fixed, please provide the basis for the calculation.

PART V – SUBMISSION DIRECTIONS

A. PROPOSAL

Please direct any questions, and submit an electronic version of the proposal no later than 5 pm on September 30, 2026, with the subject line "Refillable Study Proposal," to:

Cheryl Timberlake at ctimberlake@capitolinsights.com and

Newell Augur at naugur@pierceatwood.com

B. INTERVIEWS

Finalists will be contacted to schedule an interview, to be conducted virtually with the Co-op's Board of Directors.