



**Grant Solicitation for Regional Planning Agencies to  
Support Municipal Digital Equity Planning Enrollment and  
Regional Asset Mapping**

Solicitation No. 2023-MBI-08

**Massachusetts Technology Collaborative**  
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<http://www.masstech.org>

**Procurement Team Leader: Joshua Eichen**

**Date Issued: 4/18/2023**

**Questions Due: 5/1/2023**

**Answers to Questions Posted: Revised 5/11/2023**

**Responses Due: Rolling through 6/30/2023**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Overview

The Massachusetts Broadband Institute (“MBI”), a division of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative (“Mass Tech Collaborative” or “MassTech”) is issuing this Grant Solicitation for Regional Planning Agencies to Support Municipal Digital Equity Planning Enrollment and Regional Asset Mapping (Solicitation No. 2023-MBI-08) (the “Solicitation”) to solicit responses from Regional Planning Agencies in Massachusetts (“Respondents”) interested in receiving grant funding to support municipal officials enrolling in MBI’s Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program and to conduct a regional asset mapping inventory in alignment with MBI’s statewide broadband and digital equity planning activities. All Massachusetts Regional Planning Agencies (“RPAs”) are eligible to receive funding and are listed in Section 2 (the “Project”).

Mass Tech Collaborative will be the contracting entity on behalf of the MBI for the purposes of this Solicitation, and (except where the specific context warrants otherwise), the MBI and Mass Tech Collaborative are collectively referred to as Mass Tech Collaborative or MassTech. Mass Tech Collaborative will enter into a **Grant Agreement and Statement of Work** with selected Respondents containing certain standard provisions (the “Agreement”), located [HERE](#).

### 1.2 Mass Tech Collaborative and the MBI

Mass Tech Collaborative is an independent public instrumentality of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts chartered by the Commonwealth to serve as a catalyst for growing its innovation economy. Mass Tech Collaborative brings together leaders from industry, academia, and government to advance technology-focused solutions that lead to economic growth, job creation, and public benefits in Massachusetts. For additional information about Mass Tech Collaborative and its programs and initiatives, please visit our website at [www.masstech.org](http://www.masstech.org).

The MBI was created in 2008 by An Act Establishing and Funding the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (the “Broadband Act”). The primary mission of MBI is to extend affordable, robust, high-speed Internet access to all homes, businesses, schools, libraries, medical facilities, government offices and other public places across Massachusetts, with a focus on the hard-to-serve areas of western and central Massachusetts. For more information about MBI and its programs and activities generally, please visit the web site at [www.massbroadband.org](http://www.massbroadband.org).

## 2. The Grant

### 2.1 Grant Overview

The goal of the Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program is to enable municipalities, or other local bodies of government, to engage in planning activities related to digital equity and bridging the digital divide. These planning activities will result in strategic documents designed to identify the community's needs, interest, and key assets and provide a framework that will guide future municipal decision-making and potential investments and activities that will increase access and usage of the internet for the populations most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In many parts of the state, a regional approach to digital equity planning is preferred as implementation will largely happen at a regional scale. However, many municipalities lack capacity to prioritize coordination around digital equity. RPAs can play a vital role to raise awareness, solicit engagement, forge municipal partnerships, and submit regional or sub-regional applications, ultimately boosting overall participation in the program.

As part of the Digital Equity Act, funded by the U.S. Treasury, MassTech is developing a Statewide Digital

Equity Plan to promote the achievement of digital equity, support digital inclusion activities, outline specific measures aimed at addressing identified barriers, and build capacity for efforts by the Commonwealth relating to the adoption of broadband by residents. The Statewide Plan will be informed in part by the Municipal Digital Equity Plans, as well as asset mapping activities to be undertaken by the RPAs.

Developing a clear inventory of the State's existing digital equity assets is a critical first step toward closing the digital divide in Massachusetts. MassTech seeks to leverage the RPAs positions as regional conveners and trusted partners to key stakeholders (municipalities, community anchor institutions, school districts, libraries, and other entities) in collecting a baseline inventory of digital equity assets, including programs, plans, and leadership. MassTech will provide RPAs guidance in executing these activities, including written process descriptions, in person/virtual information sessions, and a digital tool to use in consolidating collected data points in alignment with MassTech's ongoing Asset Mapping activities as a component of the Statewide Digital Equity Planning process.

This inventory assessment will be used to inform any future municipal digital equity plans as well as to roll up into MassTech's Statewide Digital Equity Plan.

MassTech will provide a grant to the selected Applicants(s) to be used to increase enrollment in the Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program and conduct regional asset mapping activities in alignment with the Statewide Digital Equity Plan development. Grant funds may be applied to eligible outreach and data collection expenses, including but not limited to:

- ✓ Staff time to engage in outreach and enrollment activities to increase participation in the Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program.
- ✓ Development of materials (PowerPoints, web content, print materials, etc.) to support staff engagement activities as described above.
- ✓ Direct costs associated with event costs including meeting space, refreshments, audio visual rental, etc. to assist coordination and outreach activities.
- ✓ Staff time to conduct the regional asset mapping.

**All Massachusetts RPAs are eligible to apply:**

- ✓ Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC)
- ✓ Cape Cod Commission (CCC)
- ✓ Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC)
- ✓ Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG)
- ✓ Martha's Vineyard Commission (MVC)
- ✓ Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC)
- ✓ Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)
- ✓ Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)
- ✓ Nantucket Planning and Economic Development Commission (NPEDC)
- ✓ Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG)
- ✓ Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC)
- ✓ Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC)
- ✓ Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD)

**2.2 Grant Requirements and Guidance**

Applicants shall submit a plan on their approach to the following tasks:

**Municipal Digital Equity Planning Outreach Tasks**

1. Promoting the Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program to municipalities

2. Assisting municipalities with applications to the Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program
3. Coordinating regional approaches to the Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program

### **Asset Mapping Tasks**

4. Utilizing pre-developed tools provided by MassTech to identify and catalogue providers of digital equity-related services (i.e. digital literacy or technology classes, access to free internet or WiFi, device distribution, ACP enrollment, etc.) in the RPA's catchment area.
5. Evaluating the capacity of existing providers of digital equity-related services.

Mass Tech Collaborative expects that each Applicant will work directly with municipalities in their jurisdictions to promote program enrollment and data collection.

### **Period of Performance**

MassTech requires that the Asset Mapping inventory activities be completed no later than August 2023.

MassTech requires that Municipal Digital Equity Planning Outreach Tasks be completed no later than December of 2023.

## **2.3 Evaluation Process and Criteria**

Respondents shall be awarded funding as set forth within this Solicitation based on their ability to perform the services within the timeline set forth in 2.1

Any RPA may submit an Application regardless of whether they have any engagement in any planning activities with municipalities developing digital equity plans. The Application, as described in more detail below, focuses on the proposed outreach activities and the Applicant's general approach to the work. Grant amounts under this program shall not exceed \$15,000 for each RPA. MassTech encourages all RPAs to submit proposals to conduct both activities outlined in this Solicitation (Support Municipal Digital Equity Planning Enrollment and Regional Asset Mapping). As such, the grant award amount may be reduced if only one activity is performed.

The goal of this Solicitation is to enter into an Agreement with each Applicant that can achieve the programmatic objectives within the stated timeframes. Mass Tech Collaborative reserves the right to consider such other relevant factors as it deems appropriate.

Lack of debarment status by either the state or federal government is also required.

## **3. APPLICATION PROCESS**

### **3.1 Application and Submission Instructions**

Respondents are cautioned to read this Solicitation carefully and to conform to its requirements. Failure to comply with the requirements of this Solicitation may serve as grounds for rejection of an Application.

- a. Required Submissions- All Applications must include the items listed below:
  - ✓ Application Cover Sheet (Attachment A)
  - ✓ Application, which shall include:

- A description of Respondent (including descriptions of proposed subcontractors, if any) and.
- The covered geography of the applying RPA (list of municipalities)
- A statement describing how the funds will be used that includes:
  - Proposed approach to encouraging municipalities to apply for the Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program. The approach should specify what opportunities for regional collaboration exist among smaller communities or sub-regions, and how the RPA intends to encourage Gateway Cities to participate in the program.
  - Proposed approach for conducting an asset mapping inventory of existing or ongoing digital equity activities in the region.
- The RPA's anticipated timeline for enrolling municipalities in the Municipal Planning Program and key milestones.
- The RPA's anticipated timeline for executing an asset mapping activity.

Authorized Application Signature and Acceptance Form ([Attachment B](#)), which contains specified certifications by Respondent. **Please read the certifications carefully before signing.**

- ✓ Completed Budget Template ([Attachment C](#)) specifying the proposed use of the funds and basis of cost estimates
- ✓ Exceptions to the **Grant Agreement and Statement of Work**, located [HERE](#), if any.

- b. Applications **must** be emailed to [proposals@masstech.org](mailto:proposals@masstech.org) (please include the Solicitation number in the subject heading).
- c. Any and all responses, Applications, data, materials, information and documentation submitted to Mass Tech Collaborative in response to this Solicitation shall become Mass Tech Collaborative's property and shall be subject to public disclosure. As a public entity, the Mass Tech Collaborative is subject to the Massachusetts Public Records Law (set forth at Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 66). There are very limited and narrow exceptions to disclosure under the Public Records Law. If a Respondent wishes to have the Mass Tech Collaborative treat certain information or documentation as confidential, the Respondent must submit a written request to the Mass Tech Collaborative's General Counsel's office no later than 5:00 p.m. fourteen (14) business days prior to the required date of Application submission set forth in Section 4.2 below. The request must precisely identify the information and/or documentation that is the subject of the request and provide a detailed explanation supporting the application of the statutory exemption(s) from the public records cited by the Respondent. The General Counsel will issue a written determination within ten (10) business days of receipt of the written request. If the General Counsel approves the request, the Respondent shall clearly label the relevant information and/or documentation as "**CONFIDENTIAL**" in the Application and **shall only include the confidential material in the hard copy of the Application**. Any statements in an Application reserving any confidentiality or privacy rights that is inconsistent with these requirements and procedures will be disregarded.

### 3.2 Application Timeframe

The application process will proceed according to the following schedule. The target dates are subject to change. Therefore, Respondents are encouraged to check Mass Tech Collaborative's website frequently for updates to the schedule.

<b>Task</b>	<b>Date:</b>
Solicitation Released	4/18/2023
Questions Due	5/1/2023 @ 5 PM EST
Question and Answer File Posted	Revised 5/11/2023 @ 5 PM EST
Applications Due	Rolling through 6/30/2023

This Solicitation shall remain open and the Mass Tech Collaborative shall accept Applications on a rolling basis until June 30. The Mass Tech Collaborative will evaluate Applications on a rolling basis as they are received. Eligible RPA's that are interested in receiving a grant are encouraged to submit Applications as soon as possible.

### **3.3 Questions**

Questions regarding this Solicitation must be submitted by electronic mail to [proposals@masstech.org](mailto:proposals@masstech.org) with the following Subject Line: "Questions – Solicitation No. 2023-MBI-08". All questions must be received by 5:00 p.m. EST on 5/1/2023. Responses to all questions received will be posted on or before 5:00 p.m. on 5/11/2023 to Mass Tech Collaborative and Comm-Buys website(s).

## **4.0 GENERAL CONDITIONS**

### **4.1 General Information**

- a) If an Application fails to meet any material terms, conditions, requirements or procedures, it may be deemed unresponsive and disqualified. The Mass Tech Collaborative reserves the right to waive omissions or irregularities that it determines to be not material.
- b) This Solicitation, as may be amended from time to time by Mass Tech Collaborative, does not commit Mass Tech Collaborative to select any organization(s), award any grant funds pursuant to this Solicitation, or pay any costs incurred in responding to this Solicitation. Mass Tech Collaborative reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to withdraw the Solicitation, to engage in preliminary discussions with prospective Respondents, to accept or reject any or all Applications received, to request supplemental or clarifying information, to negotiate with any or all qualified Respondents, and to request modifications to Applications in accordance with negotiations, all to the same extent as if this were a Request for Information.
- c) On matters related solely to this Solicitation that arise prior to an award decision by the Mass Tech Collaborative, Respondents shall limit communications with the Mass Tech Collaborative to the Procurement Team Leader and such other individuals as the Mass Tech Collaborative may designate from time to time. No other Mass Tech Collaborative employee or representative is authorized to provide any information or respond to any questions or inquiries concerning this Solicitation. Respondents may contact the Procurement Team Leader for this Solicitation in the event this Solicitation is incomplete.
- d) The Mass Tech Collaborative may provide reasonable accommodations, including the provision of materials in an alternative format, for Respondents with disabilities or other hardships. Respondents requiring accommodations shall submit requests in writing, with supporting documentation justifying the accommodations, to the Procurement Team Leader. The Mass Tech Collaborative reserves the right to grant or reject any request for accommodations.
- e) Respondent's Application shall be treated by the Mass Tech Collaborative as an accurate statement of Respondent's capabilities and experience. Should any statement asserted by Respondent prove to be inaccurate or inconsistent with the foregoing, such inaccuracy or inconsistency shall constitute sufficient cause for Mass Tech Collaborative in its sole discretion

to reject the Application and/or terminate of any resulting Agreement.

- f) Costs that are not specifically identified in the Respondent's response and/or not specifically accepted by Mass Tech Collaborative as part of the Agreement will not be compensated under any contract awarded pursuant to this Solicitation.
- g) Mass Tech Collaborative's prior approval is required for any subcontracted services under any Agreement entered into as a result of this Solicitation. The selected Respondent will take all appropriate steps to assure that minority firms, women's business enterprises, and labor surplus area firms are used when possible. The selected Respondent is responsible for the satisfactory performance and adequate oversight of its subcontractors. Subcontractors are required to meet the same requirements and are held to the same reimbursable cost standards as the selected Respondent.
- h) Submitted responses must be valid in all respects for a minimum period of sixty (60) days after the deadline for submission.
- i) Mass Tech Collaborative reserves the right to amend the Agreement at any time prior to execution. Respondents should review the Agreement as they are required to specify any exceptions to the Agreement and to make any suggested counterproposal in their Application. A failure to specify exceptions and/or counterproposals will be deemed an acceptance of the Agreement's general terms and conditions, and no subsequent negotiation of such provisions shall be permitted.

#### **4.2 Posting of Modifications/Addenda to Solicitation**

This Solicitation has been distributed electronically using the Mass Tech Collaborative website. If the Mass Tech Collaborative determines that it is necessary to revise any part of this Solicitation, or if additional data is necessary to clarify any of its provisions, an addendum will be posted to the website. It is the responsibility of each potential Respondent to check the Mass Tech Collaborative website for any addenda or modifications to the Solicitation. The Mass Tech Collaborative accepts no liability and will provide no accommodation to Respondents who submit a response based on an out-of-date Solicitation.

**Attachment A**  
**Application Cover Sheet**

Name of Respondent			
Mailing Address	City/Town	State	Zip Code
Telephone	Fax	Web Address	
Primary Contact for Clarification		Primary Contact E-mail Address	
Authorized Signatory		Authorized Signatory E-mail Address	
Legal Status/Jurisdiction (e.g., a Massachusetts Corporation, LLC, LLP, etc.)		Respondents DUNS No.	



**Attachment B**  
**Massachusetts Technology Collaborative**  
**Authorized Respondent's Signature and Acceptance**  
**Form**

The undersigned is a duly authorized representative of the Respondent listed below. The Respondent has read and understands the Solicitation requirements. The Respondent acknowledges that all of the terms and conditions of the Solicitation are mandatory. By executing this Authorized Respondent's Signature and Acceptance Form, Respondent certifies that they (1) are in compliance with the terms, conditions and specifications contained in this Solicitation, (2) acknowledges and understands the procedures for handling materials submitted to the Mass Tech Collaborative as set forth in section 3.1 d. of this Solicitation, (3) agrees to be bound by those procedures, and (4) agrees that the Mass Tech Collaborative shall not be liable under any circumstances for the disclosure of any materials submitted to the Mass Tech Collaborative pursuant to this Solicitation or upon the Respondent's selection.

The Respondent understands that, if selected by the Mass Tech Collaborative, the Respondent and Mass Tech Collaborative will execute an Agreement specifying the mutual requirements of participation. The undersigned has either (*please check one*):

- specified exceptions and counter-proposals to the terms and conditions of the [Grant Agreement](#); or
- agrees to the terms and conditions set forth therein;

The undersigned acknowledges and agrees that the failure to submit exceptions and counter-proposals with this response shall be deemed a waiver, and the Agreement shall not be subject to further negotiation.

Respondent agrees that the entire bid response will remain valid for sixty (60) days from receipt by the Mass Tech Collaborative.

I certify that Respondent is in compliance with all corporate filing requirements and State tax laws.

I further certify that the statements made in this response to the Solicitation, including all attachments and exhibits, are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Respondent: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Printed Name of Respondent)

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Authorized Representative)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Attachment C**  
**Budget**  
**Template**

SEE EXCEL SPREADSHEET