Request for Proposals for Analysis and Evaluation of the Ecosystems for Startup Entrepreneurs and Company Growth in Massachusetts

RFP No. 2020-JAII-03

Massachusetts Technology Collaborative
75 North Drive
Westborough, MA 01581-3340
http://www.masstech.org

Procurement Team Leader: Pat Larkin

RFP Issued: October 16, 2019
Bidders’ Conference <optional>: November 18, 2019 @ 10:30AM
Questions Due: November 8, 2019
Answers to Questions Posted: November 22, 2019
Responses Due: December 12, 2019
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Massachusetts Technology Collaborative ("Mass Tech Collaborative"), on behalf of the Innovation Institute at Mass Tech Collaborative, is issuing this Request for Proposals for Proposals to conduct an analysis of the Massachusetts Entrepreneurial Ecosystem (RFP No. 2020-JAll-03) (the “RFP”) to solicit responses from qualified contractors (“Applicants”) with experience in the analysis of Entrepreneur Ecosystems.

Specifically, MassTech is seeking to partner with a consultant to analyze the current state of existing and emerging entrepreneurial ecosystems in Massachusetts and to couple that analysis with a strategy for supporting these ecosystems and helping them to serve their target populations in a more collaborative and efficient way.

Applicants will be competing against each other for selection to provide the services set forth herein (the “Services”). The submissions of all Applicants shall be compared and evaluated pursuant to the evaluation criteria set forth in this RFP, and a single Applicant may be selected.

Mass Tech Collaborative will be the contracting entity on behalf of the Innovation Institute. For the purposes of this RFP (and except where the specific context warrants otherwise), the Innovation Institute and Mass Tech Collaborative are collectively referred to as Mass Tech Collaborative. Mass Tech Collaborative will enter into a Services Agreement and Statement of Work with selected Applicants containing certain standard provisions (the “Agreement”), located at http://www.masstech.org/procurements.

Mass Tech Collaborative reserves the right to amend the Agreement at any time prior to execution. Applicants should review the Agreement as they are required to specify any exceptions to the Agreement and to make any suggested counterproposal(s) 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.

1.2 Mass Tech Collaborative and the Innovation Institute

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. Mass Tech Collaborative has three primary divisions: The Innovation Institute at the MassTech Collaborative, the Massachusetts Broadband Institute, and the Massachusetts e-Health Institute. For additional information about Mass Tech Collaborative and its programs and initiatives, please visit our website at www.masstech.org.

Established in 2004 as a division of Mass Tech Collaborative, the Innovation Institute works to support key industry clusters and to improve conditions for growth in the Commonwealth’s Innovation Economy. The ‘Innovation Economy’ can be described as the economy that transforms knowledge into new ideas, ways or patterns of thinking, products, processes and services that fuel economic growth, create employment and wealth, and generate significant improvements in the region’s standard of living. The Innovation Institute provides targeted, expert services, often accompanied by investments, to support the growth and enhance the competitiveness of key industry clusters in the Commonwealth’s knowledge
economy. Region by region, sector by sector, the Innovation Institute’s goal is to strengthen industry’s ability to create and retain jobs. The ability to allocate and invest capital in a flexible manner and address ever-changing market conditions is a vital advantage for the Innovation Institute’s work. The Innovation Institute also invests in building the research enterprise in Massachusetts.

The tools the Innovation Institute employs to invest in the Commonwealth’s economic success include:
- convening of policymakers and stakeholders to create a solid framework for sound policy decisions;
- objective, fact-based information, research and analysis;
- strategic, targeted investments; and
- cutting-edge policy initiatives.

The convergence of activities and investments lends itself to productive cross-sector collaborations and partnerships between the public and private sectors, enhancing the ability of Massachusetts to compete for business, talent and opportunities in the global marketplace. For more information about the Innovation Institute and its activities and investments, please visit the web site at www.masstech.org/innovation-institute.

2. SERVICES REQUIRED

2.1 Context

The entrepreneurial ecosystem has become increasingly prevalent throughout the innovation economy and represents an important category within today’s economic development efforts. This ecosystem has become increasingly important to the innovation economy as a larger percentage of the workforce has become interested in entrepreneurship due to the many tools and resources that make this a more desirable and achievable possibility.

It is widely agreed that entrepreneurs’ chances of success increase with access to the business knowledge provided by entrepreneurial support entities and programs along with the guidance of experienced professionals provided through mentorship, a critical foundational component for building a successful startup. Appropriately sized and designed programs that support entrepreneurs have increased the survivability rates of startups. Programs that are highly tailored to the unique growth stages of the populations that they serve and are designed to build the essential competencies for driving scale have proven to provide significant economic impact.

Massachusetts and the Innovation Institute have worked hard to support emerging entrepreneurship ecosystems in the regions and to ensure that those ecosystems that are more developed (such as those in Boston & Cambridge) are able to fulfill their potential and meet the increasing demand for the types of services they provide.

The current state of maturation within the state’s overall entrepreneurial ecosystem requires an in-depth analysis and evaluation. This ecosystem has grown dramatically in recent years and the programs that serve this ecosystem are many and varied. The analysis being sought through this solicitation will build an understanding of the existing programs and policies within this ecosystem and identify where there are gaps in the matrix and identify the best practices and program models that will provide benefit to the entire ecosystem regardless of the region or industries being served.
2.2 **Scope of Services**

A thorough and comprehensive analysis and assessment of the entrepreneurial ecosystem is necessary for distilling a purposeful product that will enable the creation of policies and programs that are best suited to support and grow this evolving ecosystem.

This analysis, while providing an overall assessment and evaluation of the ecosystem and the evolving needs of the entrepreneurs that it serves will also focus on the following aspects:

- **Next generation Entrepreneurship & Mentoring Program models:**
  - How is the ecosystem evolving?
  - What services are most needed and valued by entrepreneurs?
  - What are the program innovations that bring the most effective and efficient solutions to entrepreneurs?
  - How does the Commonwealth provide innovation-driven entrepreneurs with needed resources and assistance in an effective and efficient manner across the entire state?
  - What are the most effective models for the self-sustainability of these programs?
  - What are the effective diversity and inclusion efforts that should be utilized to address inequity within the entrepreneurship ecosystem?

- **Startup to Scale:**
  - How do we help entrepreneurs bridge this gap?
  - What are the appropriate interventions for addressing startups fresh out of their initial entrepreneurship/mentoring program(s)?
  - At what point should natural market forces take over?

- **Industry specific ecosystems:**
  - What are the programs that address the unique unmet needs of startups in a specific industry?
  - What are the industries that have unique unmet needs and how do we meet them?

The Entrepreneurship Ecosystem is at an inflection point that requires this type of thorough, neutral, and independent analysis of the effectiveness of any state supported interventions. The analysis that results from the services procured through this RFP will serve as an important vehicle for the Innovation Institute and the Commonwealth’s Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development. The analysis will encompass the development of an array of possible opportunities and interventions and will inform the Innovation Institute’s thinking and enable us to help the state identify how best to advance this ecosystem and realize its full economic development potential.

The Innovation Institute seeks a consultant that shows familiarity with the landscape of the ecosystem and can show, through previous work products, that it is capable of producing a thorough and compelling analysis that includes actionable findings. The analysis should:

- Build off of the basic classification of the dominant categories of the entities that operate within the Entrepreneurship Ecosystem that was established in the 2015 Index Special Analysis ([https://masstech.org/sites/mtc/files/documents/InnovationInstitute/Index/MAInnovationEconomy_2015.pdf](https://masstech.org/sites/mtc/files/documents/InnovationInstitute/Index/MAInnovationEconomy_2015.pdf)). This basic classification can be used to identify possible segments of the ecosystem where Massachusetts can play a role in further evolution or development.
- Result in a characterization of the most prominent opportunities that are suitable for state sponsored strategic interventions.
- Assess the diversity and inclusion of immigrants and entrepreneurs of color within the state’s entrepreneurship ecosystem.
- Survey the public sector support tools and initiatives intended to support and advance
Entrepreneurship ecosystems in states and regions. This should include examples of programs and interventions that can reasonably be regarded as being models of success that the Commonwealth can learn from and possibly emulate.

- Construct, vet and prioritize a highly refined set of strategic, actionable recommendations for advancing the Massachusetts Entrepreneurship Ecosystem.

3 EVALUATION PROCESS AND CRITERIA

3.1 Process

The Mass Tech Collaborative shall evaluate each Application that is properly submitted. As part of the selection process, Mass Tech Collaborative may invite finalists to answer questions regarding their Application in person or in writing. In its sole discretion, Mass Tech Collaborative may also choose to enter into a negotiation period with one or more finalist Applicant(s) and then ask the Applicant(s) to submit a best and final offer.

3.2 Criteria

Applications will be reviewed against the specific criteria listed below to determine the extent to which they meet the objectives of the engagement as outlined above. The following criteria represent examples of the criteria that will be used to evaluate proposals:

- Demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the local, regional, and statewide entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- Demonstrated understanding as to how the proposed analysis is part of, integrated into, and/or aligned with broader, comprehensive strategies for economic development.
- Demonstrate understanding as to how the analysis will help identify and address ways to enhance economic conditions and expand economic opportunity for entrepreneurs in underserved regions and populations and within specific industries.
- Demonstrate understanding as to how the analysis will build capacity and support conditions within the entrepreneurial ecosystem for business formation, and/or job creation.
- Applicant presents highly qualified individuals to perform the proposed work and is able to substantiate the applicant’s expertise and qualifications in the proposed effort.
- Clarity and quality of proposed approach that demonstrates understanding of requirements and the significance of the project.
- Experience of project team and sufficient bandwidth to deliver on the project on budget and on schedule.
- Examples that demonstrate experience developing in depth analysis accompanied by actionable findings.
- Overall pricing and rates proposed.

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

The order of these factors does not generally denote relative importance. The goal of this RFP is to select and enter into an Agreement with the Applicant that will provide the best value for the Services to achieve MassTech Collaborative’s goals. Mass Tech Collaborative reserves the right to consider such other relevant factors as it deems appropriate in order to obtain the “best value”.

4 APPLICATION PROCESS

4.1 Application and Submission Instructions

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

a. All Applications must be submitted in electronic format (Word Doc, PRD, Excel Spreadsheet).

b. Required Submissions- All Applications must include the items listed below:

- Application Cover Sheet (Attachment A)

- Application, which shall include:
  
  o A description of the firm responding to the RFP (including descriptions of proposed subcontractors, if any) and the firm’s qualifications to perform the Services.
  
  o The proposed approach to providing the Services which are to be completed by June 30, 2020. Additionally, Applicants are invited to propose alternative(s) which provide substantially better or more cost-effective performance than achievable under the stated RFP scope of services.
  
  o Using the Budget Template (Attachment C) provide the total not-to-exceed costs for providing the Services based on projected hours, proposed hourly rates, and any other appropriate costs. List additional fees, overhead charges, or reimbursable expenses, if any. As a general policy, the Mass Tech Collaborative does not pay mark-ups on reimbursables or out-of-pocket expenses. The Mass Tech Collaborative also does not pay for word processing, overtime or meals. For travel costs, the Mass Tech Collaborative pays the IRS rate per mile.
  
  o Two references for work previously performed by the Applicant that is substantially similar to the Services. References should include a contact person, address and phone number.

- Authorized Application Signature and Acceptance Form (Attachment B). By executing the Authorized Applicant’s Signature and Acceptance Form and submitting a response to this RFP, Applicants certify that they (1) are in compliance with the terms, conditions and specifications contained in this RFP, (2) acknowledge and understand the procedures for handling materials submitted to the Mass Tech Collaborative as set forth in subsection d. below, (3) agree to be bound by those procedures, and (4) agree 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 RFP or upon the Applicant’s selection.

- Exceptions to the Services Agreement and Statement of Work, located at http://www.masstech.org/procurements, if any.
c. Applications **must** be delivered as follows:

**Electronic applications must be submitted to:**

proposals@masstech.org (please include the RFP number in the subject heading).

d. Any and all responses, Applications, data, materials, information and documentation submitted to Mass Tech Collaborative in response to this RFP 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 an Applicant wishes to have the Mass Tech Collaborative treat certain information or documentation as confidential, the Applicant 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 Applicant. 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 Applicant shall clearly label the relevant information and/or documentation as “CONFIDENTIAL” in the Application and **shall only include the confidential material in a 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.

### 4.2 Application Timeframe

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Date:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RFP Released</td>
<td>October 16, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions Due</td>
<td>November 8, 2019 @ 5 PM EST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bidders’ Conference, or Site Visits</td>
<td>November 18, 2019 @ 10:30AM EST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question and Answer File Posted</td>
<td>November 22, 2019 @ 5 PM EST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applications Due</td>
<td>December 12, 2019 @ 3 PM EST</td>
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<tr>
<td>Notification of Award</td>
<td>January 31, 2020 @ 3 PM EST</td>
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### 4.3 Questions

Questions regarding this RFP must be submitted by electronic mail to proposals@masstech.org with the following Subject Line: “Questions – RFP No. 2020-JAll-03”). All questions must be received by 5:00 p.m. EST on November 8, 2019. Responses to all questions received will be posted on or before 5:00 p.m. on November 22, 2019 to Mass Tech Collaborative and CommBuys website(s).
4.4 **Bidders’ Teleconference/Webinar**

Teleconference to be held on November 18, 2019 @ 10:30AM EST. Details to follow.

5.0 **GENERAL CONDITIONS**

5.1 **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 RFP, as may be amended from time to time by Mass Tech Collaborative, does not commit Mass Tech Collaborative to select any firm(s), award any contracts for services pursuant to this RFP, or pay any costs incurred in responding to this RFP. Mass Tech Collaborative reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to withdraw the RFP, to engage in preliminary discussions with prospective Applicants, to accept or reject any or all Applications received, to request supplemental or clarifying information, to negotiate with any or all qualified Applicants, 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 RFP that arise prior to an award decision by the Mass Tech Collaborative, Applicants 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 RFP. Applicants may contact the Procurement Team Leader for this RFP in the event this RFP is incomplete.

d) The Mass Tech Collaborative may provide reasonable accommodations, including the provision of materials in an alternative format, for Applicants with disabilities or other hardships. Applicants 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) Applicant’s Application shall be treated by the Mass Tech Collaborative as an accurate statement of Applicant’s capabilities and experience. Should any statement asserted by Applicant 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 Applicant’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 RFP.

g) Mass Tech Collaborative’s prior approval is required for any subcontracted services under any Agreement entered into as a result of this RFP. The selected Applicant 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 Applicant 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 Applicant.

h) Submitted responses must be valid in all respects for a minimum period of sixty (60) days after
the deadline for submission.

5.2 Posting of Modifications/Addenda to RFP

This RFP has been distributed electronically using the Mass Tech Collaborative and COMMBUYS websites. If the Mass Tech Collaborative determines that it is necessary to revise any part of this RFP, or if additional data is necessary to clarify any of its provisions, an addendum will be posted to the websites. It is the responsibility of each potential Applicant to check the Mass Tech Collaborative, MBI and COMMBUYS websites for any addenda or modifications to the RFP. The Mass Tech Collaborative accepts no liability and will provide no accommodation to Applicants who submit a response based on an out-of-date RFP.
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<tr>
<th>Name of Respondent</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mailing Address</td>
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<td>Primary Contact for Clarification</td>
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<td>Authorized Signatory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legal Status/Jurisdiction (e.g., a Massachusetts Corporation, LLC, LLP, etc.)</td>
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Attachment B

Massachusetts Technology Collaborative

Authorized Applicant’s Signature and Acceptance Form

The undersigned is a duly authorized representative of the Applicant listed below. The Applicant has read and understands the RFP requirements. The Applicant acknowledges that all of the terms and conditions of the RFP are mandatory, and that Applicant’s response is compliant with such requirements. The Applicant specifically acknowledges the application of the procedures regarding disclosure of sensitive information as set forth in Section 4.1 (d) of the RFP, and specifically agrees that it shall be bound by those procedures.

The Applicant understands that, if selected by the Mass Tech Collaborative, the Applicant and the 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 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.

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

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

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

Applicant:  

(Printed Name of Applicant)

By:  

(Signature of Authorized Representative)

Name:  

Title:  

Date:  

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