



Grant Solicitation for Tech Talent Diversity Initiative 2021

Solicitation No. 2022-JAII-01

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

Procurement Team Leader: William Fuqua

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|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Date Issued: | 10/25/2021 |
| Bidders' Webinar: | 11/10/2021 |
| Questions Due: | 11/16/2021 |
| Answers to Questions Posted: | 11/19/2021 |
| Responses Due: | 12/13/2021 by 11:59PM EST |

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

The Innovation Institute, a division of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative ("Mass Tech Collaborative" or "MassTech") is issuing this Grant Solicitation for **the 2021 Tech Talent Diversity Initiative** (Solicitation No.2022-JAII-01) (the "Solicitation") to solicit responses from qualified firms ("Respondents") interested in receiving grant funding to **increase the diversity of the Commonwealth's tech workforce (the "Project")**. Respondents will be competing against each other for grant funding and the submissions of all Respondents shall be compared and evaluated pursuant to the evaluation criteria set forth in this Solicitation; a single Respondent may be selected but MassTech hopes to make multiple awards.

Mass Tech Collaborative will be the contracting entity on behalf of the Innovation Institute for the purposes of this Solicitation, and (except where the specific context warrants otherwise) the Innovation Institute 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 Respondent(s) containing certain standard provisions (the "Agreement"), located **HERE**.

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. 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 generates significant improvements in the region's standard of living. The Innovation Institute provides targeted services, often accompanied by investments, to support the growth and enhance the competitiveness of key industry clusters in the Commonwealth's knowledge economy. For more information about the Innovation Institute and its activities and investments, please visit the web site at <https://innovation.masstech.org>.

2. The Grant

2.1 Grant Overview

Due to the success of the initial round of Tech Talent Diversity Initiative grants awarded in 2019, the Innovation Institute is looking to support new efforts that increase the number of individuals from underrepresented or diverse populations who attain internships or entry level employment opportunities within technology firms across the Commonwealth.

This RFP offers applicants the opportunity to propose creative project(s) that create a talent pipeline to technology startups and innovation companies by increasing the successful placement and retention of talent from historically underrepresented or diverse populations in tech internships, apprenticeships, and other tech sector jobs. This program is committed to identifying and supporting exceptional initiatives

capable of achieving this goal in a region or across the state as a whole.

The Innovation Institute looks to also improve levels of achievement and “quality of experience” at places of employment for individuals of diverse race and gender identities when placed into tech companies.

The Innovation Institute is open to any range of creative proposals that will contribute to these goals.

For the purposes of this program, venture capital and other types of firms whose primary business is to make investments in tech start-ups will also be considered as a part of the broader tech industry. Programs targeted at increasing the diversity of the workforce in these firms will be considered eligible for a Tech Talent Diversity Initiative grant.

This Tech Talent Diversity Initiative award offers civic, business, or nonprofit organizations a unique opportunity to address one or more of the following:

1. Streamline the identification and recruitment of diverse candidates for internships, entry level, or mid-career change positions;
2. Support candidates’ efforts to be placed in workforce opportunities;
3. Support successful work experience;
4. Improve employer practices toward increasing participation and retention rates among diverse populations, including efforts to address potential unconscious bias in employer hiring and retention activities.

There is no minimum or maximum age for internship and other job candidate populations that may be served by the proposed program.

2.2 Background

Massachusetts has both a thriving tech economy and a world-class network of educational institutions and training programs that produce tech talent at one of the highest rates in the country¹. However, not all residents of Massachusetts have equitable access to participate in the tech economy and the tech workforce is not representative of the demographics of the Commonwealth. In particular, there is low participation among women, African American, and Hispanic individuals in Massachusetts when looking at tech-related occupations compared to the workforce as a whole. As of 2019:

- Women hold 49.2% of jobs in the Commonwealth, but only account for 30.7% of computer, engineering, and science occupations.²
- African Americans hold 7.6% of jobs in the Commonwealth, but only 3.7% of computer, engineering, and science occupations.³
- Hispanic individuals hold 11.0% of jobs in the Commonwealth, but only 6.2% of computer, engineering, and science occupations.⁴

The Innovation Institute looks to support efforts to increase participation in the Commonwealth’s technology sector from historically underrepresented or diverse groups while taking full advantage of the Commonwealth’s workforce development programs. Massachusetts has a wide range of training programs and educational institutions, including non-degree ‘boot camps,’ vocational high schools, community colleges, and four-year colleges and universities that impart valuable tech skills and knowledge to students.

¹ Annual Index of the Massachusetts Innovation Economy, 2019

² U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2019

³ U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2019

⁴ U.S. Census American Community Survey, 2019

However, some of the individuals completing these training programs continue to experience a lack of access to high-quality employment in tech sectors.

Tech industry leadership has repeatedly stated the goal of increasing the diversity of their workforce on the grounds of fairness, but also the strong business case that a more diverse workforce leads to increased creativity, more innovation, better consumer understanding, richer brainstorming, and better decision making.⁵ Work experience such as internships and apprenticeships can also help students decide to pursue a tech career earlier in their education while creating solid connections with future employers.⁶

Making sure all residents of Massachusetts have access to these experiences will help make the tech workforce more representative of the Commonwealth's population.

2.2 Grant Requirements and Guidance

Eligibility:

Eligible applicants must be a civic, business, or nonprofit entity located in Massachusetts.

Guidelines:

Applicants should consider the following guidelines when generating their proposals.

1. *Innovation and effectiveness of intervention:* Efforts to place diverse candidates may address the candidates for employment and/or the hiring and talent management practices of tech sector employers. Proposals that systemically address both will be more competitive. Additionally, proposals that can show an effective methodology and proven model will be considered more competitive.
2. *Demonstration of collaboration and stakeholder support:* Workforce and economic development are most successful when multiple entities come together, share a vision, collaborate, and work to create a greater whole. Therefore, the Innovation Institute will look for proposals showcasing support and/or collaboration from multiple organizations, including a combination of public, nonprofit, and private for-profit organizations.
3. *Generating Public or Private Match:* The Innovation Institute will look positively upon Proposals that identify either cash or in-kind match from their participating partners. While match is not required, it can be a strong indicator the proposed project has regional organizational support, can leverage additional investment, and demonstrates a broad-based commitment to the effort. In addition, matching resources may create a more robust project with a higher likelihood of success.
4. *Outcomes:* Applicants will be evaluated on both the quality of, and the applicant's capability to measure, the impacts of the program. Please describe the key metrics you will use to measure success which may include: number of candidates served and their background; number of candidates placed in full time positions, apprenticeships or internships; annual retention rates of those individuals; and any other appropriate metrics.
5. *Level of Funding:* The Innovation Institute has reserved up to \$500,000 for this program to be expended over two years. The Innovation Institute expects to make more than one award.

⁵ 5 Reasons Why Workplace Diversity is Good for Business; Altman, Ian; Inc. Magazine; March 15 2017

⁶ How Work Based Learning Connects Students with Mentors and Experience; Perry, Andrew; Brookings Institution; October 17th 2018

6. *Proposal Structure:* Applicants should structure their proposal to address the following:
 - a. Describe, in your own terms, the unmet need that your proposal is looking to address.
 - b. Description of the proposed program – this should address:
 - i. Why you think your proposal is a highly effective approach to address the challenges of diversity in tech?
 - ii. One or both of the following:
 1. How does your proposal effect talent from diverse backgrounds?
 2. How does it affect the businesses hiring talent from diverse backgrounds?
 - c. Who are the partners in this project and what are their roles?
 - d. How do you plan to measure success both quantitatively and qualitatively?
 - e. What is the applicant's past history, if any, of working within diversity in tech talent or other comparable disciplines? Please describe any past successes.
7. Applicants whose programs serve individuals primarily pursuing further education, instead of immediately entering the workforce, are required to include a work experience component for their participants.

2.3 Evaluation Process and Criteria

Selection of a Respondent to receive funding as set forth within this Solicitation may be based on criteria that include but are not limited to:

- (a) *Strength of Concept:* Applicants will be evaluated on their ability to articulate challenges or describe unmet needs related to increasing internship, entry level, or mid-career change employment opportunities in the technology sector for individuals from diverse populations in the Commonwealth. The concept will be reviewed on the strength of the interventions both on the merits of their ability to attract talent from diverse backgrounds and the ability to support sound business practices that increase participation rates among diverse populations within the tech sector to the extent that either is addressed in the proposed project. If the participants in the proposed program are not intended to immediately enter the workforce, discuss how the program and especially its work experience component will result in future employment in the tech sector.
- (b) *Prospects for Success:* Applicants will be evaluated on the strength of project teams and prior professional experience that demonstrates the Applicant's ability to carry out the recommended intervention. Please provide evidence of success in the prior experience. Where appropriate please provide information on the qualitative and quantitative measures used to evaluate success of this prior experience.
- (c) *Partnerships:* Applicants will be evaluated on the strength of partnerships with industry organizations and collaboration and integration with existing training and internship/apprenticeship programs. Where possible applicants should articulate how they would leverage the existing training and internship/apprenticeship placement resources in the Commonwealth to maximize impact and efficiency. Program infrastructure should not be duplicated where it already exists.

- (d) *Strength of Project Plan:* Applicants will be evaluated on their plan for the use of funds, articulated program milestones, and ability to produce measurable outcomes, such as increased placement of candidates from underrepresented groups, in the given timeframe.

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 Solicitation is to select and enter into an Agreement with the Respondent(s) that will most closely align with MassTech Collaborative's goals stated in this Solicitation. Mass Tech Collaborative reserves the right to consider such other relevant factors as it deems appropriate.

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 Respondent(s) and then ask the Respondent(s) to submit additional information.

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. All Applications must be submitted electronically
- b. 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 Respondent's qualifications to perform the Project.
 - The details of Respondent's proposed Project.
 - The total not-to-exceed costs for the Project based on projected hours, proposed hourly rates, as well as any other appropriate costs, in the Budget Template ([Attachment C](#)). List additional fees, overhead charges, or reimbursable expenses, if any. For travel costs, the Mass Tech Collaborative pays the IRS rate per mile.

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

 - Exceptions to the *Grant Agreement and Statement of Work*, located at [HERE](#), if any.
- c. Applications **must** be delivered as follows:

Electronic version submitted to-

proposals@masstech.org (please include the Solicitation 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 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.

| Task | Date: |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Solicitation Released | 10/25/2021 |
| Bidders' Webinar | 11/10/2021 @ 3PM EST |
| Questions Due | 11/16/2021 @ 5 PM EST |
| Question and Answer File Posted | 11/19/2021 @ 5 PM EST |
| Applications Due | 12/13/2021 @ 11:59 PM EST |
| Notification of Award (target date) | 1/14/2022 |

All applicants will be notified of final decisions via e-mail to the identified Project Director. We anticipate that funding decisions will be made by January 14, 2022.

3.3 Questions

Questions regarding this Solicitation must be submitted by electronic mail to proposals@masstech.org with the following Subject Line: "Questions – Solicitation No. 2022-JAII-01". All questions must be received by 5:00 p.m. EST on 11/16/2021. Responses to all questions received will be posted on or before 5:00 p.m. on 11/19/2021 to Mass Tech Collaborative and Comm-Buys website(s).

3.4 Bidders' Webinar

A bidders' webinar will be held on 11/10/2021 at 3:00PM. All potential Respondents interested in participating in the bidders' webinar must register with Mass Tech Collaborative by 5:00 p.m. on 11/8/2021 in order to obtain the webinar information. To register, please email Christina Bui at

bui@masstech.org. Mass Tech Collaborative will transmit the webinar information to all registered bidders 24 hours in advance of the webinar. Mass Tech Collaborative will post summary responses to procedural questions and issues addressed at the bidders' webinar on the Mass Tech Collaborative and the Comm-Buys websites.

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 that they have questions about the completeness of this Solicitation.
- 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 and COMMBUYS websites. 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 websites. It is the responsibility of each potential Respondent to check the Mass Tech Collaborative, the Innovation Institute and COMMBUYS websites 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 & Application Title | | | |
| 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 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 [or insert appropriate budget]