Proposals for Municipal Digital Equity Planning Consultant Prequalification
(No.2023-MBI-03)

Questions and Answers
October 6, 2022

Q1. What is the planned start date for the consulting services that should be used for pricing?	Q1A. 1/10/2023
Q2: Is the duration/period of performance for all 3 categories of service 1 year?	Q2A: Yes
Q3: What personnel should be listed in the other staff and rates tab of the Budget template?	Q3A: Any personnel not core to the project team that the Respondent may choose to bring into the project on an as needed basis.
Q4:Does the travel costs need to be broken down or given as a lump sum in the Budget template?	Q4A: The Budget template includes a total cost for travel so it should be listed as lump sum. Respondents should provide some description in their proposal narrative or within the budget template of the assumptions used to develop the travel costs.
Q5: What is the page limit for the response?	Q5A: There is no page limit
Q6: Is there a file naming convention required for the submission?	Q6A: No, but please note that the email submission must reference the RFP number in the subject line.
Q7:Would the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative consider extending the deadline for response?	Q7A:No.
Q8: What is the page limit for the quote response?	Q8A: See response to Question 5
Q9: What are the formatting requirements for the quote response (document type, font style, and size)?	Q9A: Please see section 3.1 of the RFP for all information regarding format.
Q10:Is it acceptable to use non-US (UK) references to exemplify performance similar to the Categories of Service?	Q10A: References from U.S. entities are preferred, however references from non-US entities will be considered to the extent that the

	referenced projects are deemed to be substantially similar to the Categories of Service sought through this RFP.
Q11How will the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative get in contact with the references and what will be the ask to the provided reference?	Q11A: The Massachusetts Technology Collaborative typically contacts references by email or phone. The scope of the reference inquiries is tailored to the specific nature of the procurement.
Q12: How many references are required to be submitted demonstrating performance of similar services?	Q12A: 3
Q13: Is "Demonstrated knowledge and expertise of digital equity issues nationally and in Massachusetts, and their connection to issue areas including but not limited to workforce development, economic development, healthcare, education, and civic engagement" a required criteria?	Q13A: As outlined in section 4.2 of the RFP that is an evaluation criteria that MBI will use when scoring applications.
Q14: Is "Demonstrated knowledge and expertise of the IIJA broadband funding streams and the associated requirements for the development of plans and the deployment of funds" a required criteria?	Q14A: As outlined in section 4.2 of the RFP that is an evaluation criteria that MBI will use when scoring applicants.
Q15: Is "Status as minority business enterprise, women's business enterprise or a labor surplus area firm" a required criteria?	Q15A: As outlined in section 4.2 of the RFP that is an evaluation criteria that MBI will use when scoring applicants.
Q16: Does Massachusetts Technology Collaborative have a target start date for this engagement?	Q16A: See answer to question 1
Q17: Under 2.2.1.II, "Digital Equity Existing Conditions Assessment," the RFP requires the consultant to analyze "the necessary baseline conditions" related to digital equity. Does this refer to some known metrics or definitions, or should the consultant be prepared to determine what "the necessary baseline conditions" are? Do you expect to require original data collection in order to establish this?	Q17A: Respondents should review Appendix A which outlines the statutory requirements of the Digital Equity plan for more information on metrics and definitions. MBI expects this phase of work to rely on review of existing data.

Q18: Under 2.2.1.III, "Digital Equity/Broadband Visioning and Unified Objective Development," the RFP says the consultant will need to "synthesize data and stakeholder input… to inform a unified vision for digital equity in the Commonwealth." Do you expect this vision to come principally from stakeholder input, or does it need to be it be spearheaded by, or at least endorsed by, elected or appointed high officials of the state of Massachusetts?	Q18A: MBI expects the unified vision to be informed by input from stakeholders through the community engagement activities as well as through the working group and other forum. This will be expected to include input from appropriate state officials.
Q19:Under 2.2.1.IV, "Implementation Strategy," the RFP tasks the consultant with developing a strategic plan for the implementation of digital equity and infrastructure initiatives. (a) Do you expect the strategic plan to involve subgranting funds to local organizations that engage in digital inclusion work? (b) Are you expecting to fund infrastructure as part of the State Digital Equity Plan?	Q19A: MBI expects to fund subgrants to local organizations. Please provide a proposed approach for engaging with and selecting community based organizations to support outreach and engagement activities. MBI does not expect to fund infrastructure as part of the State Digital Equity Plan.
Q20: The RFP calls for "a robust and comprehensive community outreach and engagement strategy," but recent MBI solicitations (RFQ 2023-MBI-03 for Municipal Digital Equity Planning Services and Solicitation 2023-MBI-04 fir Digital Equity Partnership) that recruited digital equity planning consultants to help Massachusetts municipalities also promise to drive community outreach related to broadband needs. Is the expectation that the selected DEA consultant will leverage these community planning activities as inputs to statewide planning? Do you think there's a risk that activities will be duplicative?	Q20A: MBI expects the consultant selected for RFP 2023-MBI-06 will incorporate input and to the extent possible align outreach and engagement with any ongoing municipal digital equity planning activities. MBI will work to coordinate these activities to ensure there is maximum impact and avoid duplicative work.
Q21: Do you have any guidelines or advice for the balance of face-to-face versus virtual engagement that should occur to satisfy Category of Service 3?	Q21A: MBI expects there will be a balance of virtual and in person activities associated with the Working Group.
Q22: Under 2.2.1.I, the RFP state that "Consultants should be prepared to translate elements of this plan into multiple languages," does the state expect the proposal to include costs for translation services? If so, which languages?	Q22A: Yes, Spanish, Haitian Creole, Khmer, Vietnamese, Arabic, Portuguese, Chinese, and other major languages spoken by residents in the Commonwealth.

Q23: How frequently do you expect Broadband and Digital Equity Working Group meetings to take place? How long will they be?	Q23A: MBI expects the Working Group to meet approximately 6 - 8 times during the year. The duration of each meeting will vary based on the agenda.
Q24: Do you expect Working Group meetings to be virtual, face-to-face, hybrid, or will it vary?	Q24A: See response to question 21
Q25: How much time and interest do you think Working Group members will have for policy and program planning discussions outside of the Working Group meetings?	Q25A: MBI expects that individuals committing to joining the working group will participate with enthusiasm and energy as their time and schedule allows. However, Working Group members are not required to participate in meetings outside of formal Working Group sessions.
Q26: According to the Digital Equity NOFO, Massachusetts is due to receive slightly over $1 million in State Digital Equity Planning Grants. Have those funds been received yet? Does Massachusetts have any other needs that need to be met with those funds other than this digital equity planning consultancy? Are there any other funds available for this consultancy besides the State Digital Equity Planning Grants?	Q26A: Yes, Massachusetts has received its planning grant award. MBI expects that the scope of services outlined in the RFP will be satisfied under that funding allocation. Please note that there are other Digital Equity Act related expenses beyond the consulting services that will be covered through the planning grant.
Q27: Section 2.2.1.I. Plan Development reads, "Consultants should be prepared to translate elements of this plan into multiple languages." Which/how many different translations will be anticipated?	Q27A: See response to question 22
Q28: Also, it reads, "Deliverables to include, but not be limited to... a PowerPoint presentation that summarizes the planning process and key elements and findings." Will the consultant be responsible for presenting this PowerPoint document? If so, in-person, or remotely? And to what audience(s)?	Q28A: The consultant should be prepared to present any materials developed to MBI, the Working Group, or any other audience deemed necessary by MBI in person or remotely as time and schedule allows and mutually agreed to by MBI and the consultant. The consultant supporting the Working Group should assume that they will attend and participate in those meetings. The consultant should also assume direct participation in stakeholder engagement sessions and participation in presentation of

	final deliverables to state government stakeholders.
Q29: Section 2.2.1.II. Digital Equity Existing Conditions Assessment reads, "Deliverables to include, but not be limited to: Reports and presentation materials summarizing the above activities." – indicating multiple reports; has MBI determined how many would fulfill its needs? Could a single comprehensive report fulfill this requirement?	Q29A: Yes, as long as it satisfies MBI's needs and requirements.This should be addressed in the Respondent's proposed approach.
Q30: Section 2.2.1.III. Digital Equity/Broadband Visioning and Unified Objective Development reads, "Deliverables to include, but not be limited to: Reporting documents and presentation materials summarizing the above activities." Who is the audience for these documents and presentations? Will the vendor be required to present in-person, or will remote delivery suffice?	Q30A: See response to question 28
Q31: Section 2.2.1.IV. Implementation Strategy reads, "Strategic plan should be specific to local and regional contexts." How many local areas and/or regions are currently proposed?	Q31A: The consultant will be responsible for working with MBI to determine the appropriate scale and scope of the implementation strategy. The Respondent's approach should identify the assumptions used to develop the budget for this scope of work.
Q32:The RFP states that the project will be funded through $50 million in ARPA funding. How much funding will be allocated towards this RFP? Does the state have amounts allocated for each category of service? If so, how much funding will be allocated towards the category of service #2, community engagement activities?	Q32A: The RFP does not state that the project will be funded through $50M in ARPA funding. Please refer to the answer to question 26.
Q33: Are there targeted areas that category of service #2, community engagement activities should focus on?	Q33A: Respondents should read and reference the target populations list provided in Appendix A when considering the focus of community engagement activities.

Q34: How will the funds be dispersed for this RFP?	Q34A: Services will be paid for on a cost reimbursement basis based upon monthly invoices.
Q35: How long should the community engagement activities portion of the program span?	Q35A: MBI expects the Community Engagement activities to range from 6 - 8 months. Respondents should consider their proposed approach and scale accordingly.
Q36: We don't bill hourly, but rather work on a fixed contract fee, can we deviate from the budget template c?	Q36A: Respondents should complete the budget template as requested in the RFP which includes a time and materials based approach with a total not to exceed value. The budget format allows us to evaluate the level of effort and rates of each respondent. To the extent the respondent wants to include an alternative proposed fixed fee structure they may include that as an option in their proposal ***in addition*** to the completed budget template. MassTech may consider the alternative budget fee structure at its sole discretion.
Q37: We recognize the need for a robust level of community outreach in order to deliver the scope of work. While we understand and have experience with the degree of community outreach required for the deliverables you seek, could MassTech please consider providing some parameters around the volume of community outreach expected by MassTech?	Q37A: Please see responses to Question 33 and 35
Q38: What will be the term of the awarded contract and will there be any extensions available?	Q38A: It is expected that the term of the agreement will be for one year to align with the time requirements of the Digital Equity Planning funds.
Q39: In section 3.1, MBI states travel costs are reimbursable. Can MBI please provide a high-level list of activities for which travel may be required?	Q39A: Examples of travel costs eligible for reimbursement includes, travel to and from community outreach events, travel to and from key stakeholder meetings/focus groups, travel to and from working group meetings, etc. Any out–of-state travel requires prior written approval.

Q40: The categories listed go from 2.2.1 Category of Service 1: Statewide Digital Equity Plan Activities to 2.2.3 Category of Service 2: Community Engagement Activities. Can MBI clarify if there Is a Category 2.2.2 that is supposed to be included to replace the previous RFP Scope or if 2.2.1 and 2.2.3 are the RFP numbers?	Q40A: There is no Category 2.2.2, this is a numbering mistake.
Q41:Was MBI provided with a specific planning allocation for the development of its Digital Equity plan? If so, can you please provide this number?	Q41A: MBI was awarded approximately $1M to conduct the Statewide Digital Equity Plan. Also, please refer to the answer to question 26.
Q42: Will coordination of DEA planning activities with BEAD planning activities be explicitly covered in the subsequent RFP supporting BEAD 5-Year Action Plan planning activities?	Q42A:The Respondent's proposal and budget should be limited to the Categories of Service as described in this RFP.
Q43: Is it allowable for teaming partners to submit separate bids identifying which categories of work each will perform?	Q43A: Any entities that are planning to team up and collaborate to perform services under this RFP should submit one Application to cover the applicable Categories of Service. The Application should clearly indicate which categories of service will be performed by which partner.
Q44: Does MassTech intend to fund the community engagement activities, at least partially, from BEAD planning funds as community engagement is also a requirement of that program?	Q44A: The Categories of Service listed in this RFP will be funded through the Digital Equity Act planning grant. Consulting support for BEAD planning activities will be awarded through a separate RFP to be released by MassTech after the BEAD Planning Grant is awarded.
Q45:What other technology/technical components of the services does MassTech anticipate, as noted on page 3 in section 2.2?	Q45A: This will need to be determined by each Respondent based on their in-house capabilities to perform the tasks as described in the Categories of Service.
Q46:Can MassTech confirm it is no longer a requirement to show a high-level project plan that is also in alignment with BEAD planning requirements as noted on page 8 in section 3.1?	Q46A: The project plan should identify areas of the Digital Equity Act plan that should be informed by and in alignment with the BEAD Five Year Action Plan.

Q47: Can MassTech elaborate on the Federal and State requirements referenced in item 20 under section 5 "The awarded Respondent shall maintain an accounting system and supporting fiscal records adequate to audit and otherwise verify that assistance payments and administrative costs meet Federal and State requirements"?	Q47A: See Section 13 of the Services Agreement (Federally Funded). Under federal guidance there are provisions that must be followed when expending federal funds, which are included in 2 CFR 200. The language in the RFP was intended to make Respondents aware of the federal requirements and ensure that their billing procedures and controls are sufficient to meet the requirements under the agreement and all federal program requirements.
Q48: Will entities that have applied for, or have been awarded funds through MBI's Digital Equity Partners Program, be restricted from participating as a partner/bidder for this work?	Q48A: No
Q49: What are MBI's plans for BEAD applications or funding for Massachusetts?	Q49A: Potential Respondents should note that this new RFP is a scaled-back version of RFP No. 2023- MBI-05, which was withdrawn by MassTech on November 7, 2022. MassTech intends to issue a subsequent RFP requesting consulting services to support MBI's planning activities that will support the development of a Five-Year Action Plan for the Broadband Equity, Access and Deployment ("BEAD") Program. Other than the separation of DEA and BEAD planning services and related activities into separate procurements, the core tasks for DEA are substantially similar to the core tasks described in the RFP that was withdrawn. MBI still intends for the DEA and BEAD planning activities to be closely aligned and the respective planning processes should inform each other as they evolve and develop.
Q50: Would the awardee (s) for this Digital Equity Plan RFP be eligible to apply to any possible RFP from MBI about BEAD?	Q50A: Yes
Q51: Would MBI consider providing an extension for this proposal?	Q51A: No

Q52: We are bidding for some of the RFP and want to partner with another firm with a focus and deeper expertise on Category of Service 2. Is there a way to know who else is on the bidders conference as a way to identify a complementary bidder?	Q52A: A list of bidders conference participants has been shared with attendants of the bidders conference.
Q53: Please provide the anticipated length of the contract to be awarded as a result of this RFP.	Q53A: One year
Q56: How long of a public comment period does MassTech anticipate for DEA planning activities?	Q56A: As outlined in the NOFO, MBI is required to support a 30 day public comment period.
Q57: What organizations have been identified as members of the Digital Equity Working Group?	Q57A:The membership of the Working Group has not been finalized.
Q58: Does MassTech have an anticipated total budget for this effort and/or for each category of services?	Q58A: Please refer to the answer to Question 26.
Q59: Per the RFP, Mass Tech Collaborative is requesting offerors to provide projected hours, and proposed hourly rates by labor category to establish not-to-exceed costs. Some respondents do not perform on an hourly basis (i.e. receive payment based on actual hours worked). Instead, they exclusively perform on a Firm Fixed Price basis where payment is based on a mutually agreed upon amount that is not subject to any adjustment based on the respondent's cost or time experience in performing the work. Agencies within the Commonwealth have regularly benefited from expanding pricing requirements to allow for fixed price bids based on a respondent's detailed description of the project in their technical response and calculating an associated fixed price using the respondent's commercial pricing practices. This allows for more cost effective options, transfers potential schedule and cost risk to the bidder, incentivizes bidder efficiency, eases Mass Tech Collaborative's project management burden, and ensures maximized competition and an inclusive procurement open to all qualified	Q59A: See response to question 36.

respondents. Given this best practice offered on other Commonwealth RFPs, will Mass Tech Collaborative accept a Firm Fixed Price proposal for this effort given the bidder is authorized to alter Attachment C to propose the Firm Fixed Price pricing structure?	
Q60: Given the objective of the RFP to provide "planning services and technical assistance" to decision-makers rather than requesting determinations and/or performing other inherent functions of state agencies, can the Mass Tech Collaborative confirm that the selected Respondent would be considered a "contractor" rather than a "subrecipient" (also referred to as "sub-grantee") in accordance with 2 CFR § 200.331 and therefore, the contract resulting from the RFP will not be considered a "subaward"?	Q60A:The selected Respondent is expected to be considered a "contractor" but final determination will be made at the time of the award.
Q61: It is understood that the selected Respondent will not be responsible for determining who is eligible to receive Federal assistance and will not have responsibility or the authority for programmatic decision-making. Rather, the selected Respondent will provide goods and services within normal business operations, with such goods or services being provided to many different purchasers; normally operates in a competitive environment; and provides planning	Q61A: Please refer to answer to Question 60.

and technical assistance services that are ancillary to the Statewide Digital Equity Plan.	
Q62: Do you have a contact list of Massachusetts community anchor institutions for Covered Populations as those terms are used in the RFP and DEA NOFO?	Q62A: MBI has contacts and relationships with some, but not all CAI's and covered population groups in the state and will support the consultant in reaching those entities. The consultant should be prepared to identify gaps and make contact with relevant entities outside of MBI's existing networks.
Q63: For Category of Service 2: Community Engagement Activities - is MassTech seeking a town-by-town analysis of digital equity needs or envisioning more regional approaches?	Q63A: MBI expects a two fold geographic and population based approach. MBI expects the geographic approach would occur at the regional level, not on a town by town basis.
Q64:Is the consultant able to use access data collected by MassTech and MBI to build upon?	Q64A: MBI will make data available that is not subject to a Nondisclosure Agreement.
Q65: What is the budget, and if it hasn't been determined, can you tell us your range?	Q65A: See answer to question 26.
Q66: I am sure you are getting this question from numerous folks, but we are wondering if you could provide any more context on rationale behind this update? (Has the Commonwealth been awarded its DEA planning funding faster than its BEAD funding?)	Q66A: The Commonwealth has not received its BEAD planning award yet. Also, please see answer to Question 49.
Q67: What organizations are eligible to apply as vendors?	Q67A: Any entity that can provide the services outlined in section 2.2 and is in good standing within the Commonwealth and Federal government (lack of debarment, etc.) is eligible to apply.