



Grant Solicitation for Strong Entrepreneur Ecosystems
Solicitation No. 2022-JAII-02

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

Procurement Team Leader:	Megan Marszalek
Date Issued:	2/14/2022
Bidders' Information Session:	3/9/2022
Questions Due:	3/14/2022
Answers to Questions Posted:	3/21/2022
Responses Due:	4/1/2022 by <u>3PM EST</u>

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

The Innovation Institute, a division of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative ("Mass Tech Collaborative" or "MassTech") is issuing the Strong Entrepreneur Ecosystems Solicitation (Solicitation No.2022-JAII-02) (the "Solicitation") to solicit responses from qualified organizations that help entrepreneurs launch and grow companies in Massachusetts ("Respondents") that are interested in receiving grant funding to build or strengthen entrepreneurial ecosystems within their communities. 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.

Known as the Innovation Institute's "*Strong Entrepreneur Ecosystems*" initiative, this solicitation is intended to aid Entrepreneur Support Organizations (ESOs) or other civic, nonprofit, or academic institutions in their efforts to enhance collaboration among stakeholders in their regional entrepreneur ecosystem to generate local entrepreneurial growth and productivity.

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 **Matching Grant Agreement and Statement of Work** with selected Respondents 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 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. For more information about the Innovation Institute and its activities and investments, please visit the web site at www.masstech.org/innovation-institute.

2. The Grant

2.1 Grant Overview

Entrepreneurs play a critical role in cities and regions as they create new jobs, generate economic growth, and drive innovation. When all stakeholders in local entrepreneur ecosystems are well connected and strive toward common goals, entrepreneurs, and the region as a whole, are more likely to thrive.

Organized and accessible startup communities bolstered by an active group of supporting stakeholders

are critically important to the growth of local economies now more than ever. According to the Census Bureau's Business Formation Statistics, 2021 saw a record surge in new business applications with just under 5 million new business applications submitted between January 2021 and November 2021. This represents a 55% increase over the same time period in 2019. Even more notable, is that a significant portion of these applications are considered "high propensity applications," meaning these newly formed companies are likely to be job creators, rather than solopreneurs.

The trend is clear that the pandemic gave many people time to reassess the role of work in their lives and opened a window of opportunity for those interested in starting their own businesses. The Innovation Institute looks to support local efforts to embrace this wave of entrepreneurship through collaborative efforts that meet the needs of entrepreneurs in their communities at every stage of their entrepreneurial journeys.

The Innovation Institute's Strong Entrepreneur Ecosystems initiative aims to aid ESOs in regions across Massachusetts in the development and implementation of strategic plans that:

- enhance connectivity within the supporting infrastructure of local entrepreneur ecosystems;
- address the needs of local entrepreneurs;
- foster a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship;
- increase employment opportunities; and
- attract private capital to regions across the Commonwealth.

Strategic Plans developed as a result of this solicitation will outline a comprehensive "entrepreneur-led economic development strategy" for targeted regions across Massachusetts. Entrepreneur-led economic development strategies put successful local founders at the heart of development initiatives to understand their unique needs and align startup support organizations and resources in the community around a common mission of helping more local entrepreneurs succeed. These strategies are dependent on feedback loops between entrepreneurs, ecosystem builders, and other local decision makers that ensure local entrepreneur ecosystems address the needs of founders and foster conditions for entrepreneurial success.

2.2 Grant Requirements and Guidance

Eligibility

Eligible applicants must be a nonprofit entity located in Massachusetts.

Grant Guidance

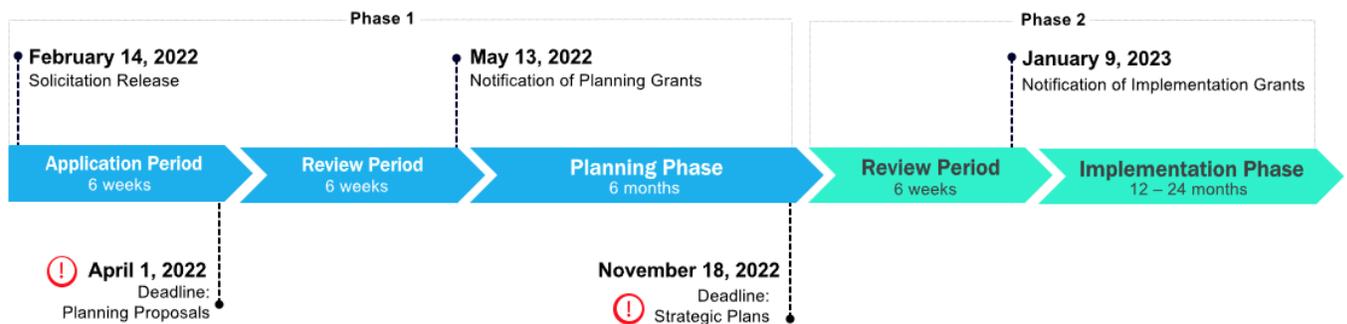
The *Strong Entrepreneur Ecosystems* funding opportunity aims to strengthen connectivity among entrepreneurs, ESOs, and business development resources within entrepreneurial ecosystems throughout the Commonwealth. The Innovation Institute seeks proposals that will build sustainable connected ecosystems that support entrepreneurs with potential to create new jobs, increase local productivity, and promote a culture of entrepreneurship in the community.

This *Strong Entrepreneur Ecosystems* funding opportunity will be administered in two phases:

- In Phase 1, the Innovation Institute will award up to four \$25,000 planning grants. Applicants are to submit a **Planning Proposal**, by April 1, 2022, that outlines their approach to convening an advisory group of entrepreneurs and ecosystem builders to collectively assess the ecosystem and develop a collaborative strategy for improvement.
- Respondents selected through this first phase of the solicitation will be considered "Finalists" and awarded \$25,000 planning grants to be used over a period of 6 months to develop a **strategic planning document** for projects that enhance connectivity within the regional entrepreneurial ecosystem and strengthen conditions for entrepreneurial success.

- Each Finalist will be eligible for a Phase 2 Implementation Award of up to \$200,000 in additional funding for implementation of projects outlined in the strategic planning document that will have transformative impact on entrepreneur ecosystems in Massachusetts. To be considered for a follow-on Phase 2 award, Finalists will need to submit their completed strategic planning document no later than 5:00 p.m. on Friday, November 18, 2022. The Innovation Institute will select Phase 2 awards no later than January 9, 2023.
- To encourage sustainability and collective ownership within regional ecosystems, the Innovation Institute will require Respondents to identify sources of matching funds equal to at least 20% of grant funding requested for Phase 2. For example, if an Applicant requests \$100,000 for project implementation, the Applicant will need to include letters of support indicating cash match commitment of at least \$20,000. For more details on the matching funds requirement, see Section 2.4 Mandatory Cost Sharing/Match Requirements, below. (Please note that matching funds are not required for Phase 1 Planning Grants.)

Timeline



Phase 1: Guidance on Submitting Planning Proposals

Lead Respondents on Phase 1 planning grant proposals will convene an advisory group of entrepreneurs and ecosystem builders to outline their approach toward the development of a strategic plan that aligns startup support organizations and resources in the community around a common mission of helping local entrepreneurs succeed.

Elements to be included in the Phase 1 Planning Proposal:

- 1. Preliminary vision for a strong entrepreneur ecosystem**
Applicants should share an outline of their preliminary vision for a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable entrepreneurial ecosystem within the targeted region.
- 2. Description of the geographic bounds (cities & towns) to be served by this strategy**
Applicants should describe the geographic footprint that is the focus of the strategy and briefly describe the economic and demographic needs of the ecosystem that the strategy will support.
- 3. Description of the lead applicant organization, its leaders, and its role in the entrepreneurial ecosystem**
Applicants should describe their credentials to lead this strategy project.
- 4. List of the entrepreneurs and ecosystem builders that comprise the advisory group with brief descriptions of their role in the ecosystem and entrepreneurial experience**
Applicants should identify founding members of an Advisory Board made up of entrepreneurs and ecosystem partners who will collectively lead the planning phase and support development of the strategy. Additional members can be added to the Advisory Board throughout this planning effort.

5. Description of the main elements of the planning process that will result in a comprehensive strategic planning document to strengthen the local startup community

Applicants should describe their timeline and approach to the planning process in which they assess the current entrepreneurial ecosystem in the region and develop a strategic plan complete with targeted projects that enhance connectivity within the startup community and strengthen conditions for entrepreneurial success.

Phase 1 Planning Proposals are due by April 1, 2022 by 5:00 p.m. EST with MassTech expecting to send notification of planning awards to Finalists by May 13, 2022.

Phase 2: Guidance on Submitting Strategic Plans (for applicants selected as Finalists)

If awarded a Phase 1 Planning Grant, Finalists will work with their Advisory Board over the course of six months, beginning May 2022, to develop a comprehensive strategic plan to strengthen their entrepreneurial ecosystem. This strategic plan will be considered the final deliverable submitted to MassTech by the planning phase Finalists and shall be the basis for potential follow-on funding under Phase 2: Implementation Grants. The Innovation Institute, at its discretion, may fund all or only some of the proposed projects depending on the viability and feasibility of those projects and the availability of funds. Complete strategic planning documents will be due by November 18, 2022 at 5:00 p.m. EST and should:

1. Identify successful entrepreneurial businesses in the targeted region

Strategic plans should identify entrepreneurial businesses in the region, the local strengths they represent, and the key leaders behind their growth.

2. Identify key organizations supporting entrepreneurs in the local startup community

Strategic plans should identify and provide brief descriptions of the entrepreneur support organizations in the community (i.e., accelerators, incubators, co-working spaces, innovation hubs, and makerspaces).

3. Identify the organizations and leaders playing a role in the broader entrepreneurial ecosystem

Strategic plans should identify key stakeholders in the entrepreneurial ecosystem, such as investors (i.e., angel networks or venture capital), university entrepreneurship programs and tech transfer offices, service providers (i.e., lawyers, accountants, bankers, marketing firms, etc.), corporations, anchor institutions, media outlets, and local government officials committed to strengthening the entrepreneurial ecosystem and increasing the productivity of local entrepreneurs.

4. Define the value proposition of the entrepreneur ecosystem in the region

5. Identify challenges facing entrepreneurs in the region and gaps in support services

6. Recommend projects or initiatives that address the needs of entrepreneurs in the region and collectively aim to achieve the vision set for the entrepreneur ecosystem

Strategic plans should detail projects or initiatives to be implemented by ESOs or ecosystem partners that encourage collaboration among ecosystem stakeholders, foster an inclusive culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, increase employment opportunities, and attract private investment.

Examples of projects or initiatives include, but are not limited to:

- Support Services: Address gaps in entrepreneurial support through enhanced collaboration and knowledge sharing among entrepreneur support organizations to reduce duplicative efforts and become more inclusive.
- Mentorship: Consolidate fragmented and competing mentor pools into an accessible regional network and set clearly defined guidance for mentors and entrepreneurs on the types of mentorship available.
- Events: Establish a consistent schedule of activities and events that engage the whole ecosystem or specific segments within the ecosystem.
- Capital: Identify and address gaps in pre-seed, seed, and early-stage funding by increasing awareness among providers of capital and entrepreneurs on the options available in the region while encouraging the development of creative sources of local funding.
- Promotion: Address perception gaps by better publicizing local companies that have had significant entrepreneurial success through rapid growth, market expansion, venture funding, exits, etc. Engage regional and state-wide media outlets to celebrate local founders, attract talent and capital, and promote the region's culture of entrepreneurship.

7. Include a project budget and demonstrate commitment of cash matching funds of at least 20% of the amount requested for implementation.

Strategic plans should include a detailed budget and accompanying budget narrative for the allocation of requested funds across projects and organizations as well as letters of support from providers of match funding.

2.3 Evaluation Process and Criteria

Each Phase 1 Planning Proposal will be reviewed and evaluated against the following criteria:

- Strength of Vision:* Proposals will be evaluated on the strength of the preliminary vision set forth for the entrepreneur ecosystem and how that vision aligns with the economic and demographic needs of the defined region.
- Strength of Team:* Proposals will be evaluated on the demonstrated strength of the lead applicant to connect with local entrepreneurs and address the needs and opportunities within the ecosystem. The makeup of the Advisory Board will also be evaluated to ensure a significant portion of the team is made up of entrepreneurs and key leaders of entrepreneur support organizations in the region.
- Strength of Approach:* Proposals will be evaluated on the strength of the planning process outlined, including planning timeline, budget, and approach.
- Overall Proposal Organization:* Proposals will be evaluated on the basis of organizational clarity and timely submission of all required attachments.

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 Respondents that will most closely align with MassTech Collaborative's goals in the publication of 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 complete Planning Proposal that is properly submitted. As part of the selection process, Mass Tech Collaborative may invite finalists to answer

questions regarding their Proposal 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 Respondent(s) and then ask the Respondent(s) to submit additional information.

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

All Respondents will be notified of Phase 1: Planning Grant awards via email to the identified Team Leader. We anticipate decisions will be made by May 13, 2022.

Further details on the evaluation process and criteria for Phase 2: Implementation Grants will be communicated with the recipients of planning grants (Finalists) at the time of selection notification, no later than May 13, 2022.

2.4 Mandatory Cost Sharing/Match Requirements

There is no requirement for match funding on the Phase 1 Planning Grants. A requirement for all Phase 2 awards will be additional, companion expenditures of cash contributions that match the state investment by at least 20% of the grant funding requested. A Finalist's Phase 2 cost sharing requirement shall be satisfied provided that such cash contributions meet all of the following criteria: (i) are necessary to accomplish the objectives of the project; (ii) are included in the approved budget for the Phase 2 project; (iii) are allocated separately for the Strong Entrepreneur Ecosystems Grant Program award; (iv) are verifiable from Respondent's records; (v) are not included as matching contributions for any other federal or state-supported project; and (vi) are not provided by a state agency in the Commonwealth (as defined in section 39 of chapter 6 of the Massachusetts General Laws). To the extent the Respondent's application deviates from these expectations, the Respondent must clearly describe and justify the proposed alternative approach at the appropriate time.

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 in Microsoft Word or PDF format to proposals@masstech.org (please include the Solicitation number in the subject heading)
- 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, as outlined in Section 2.2 "Elements to be included in the Phase 1 Planning Proposal", above.
 - The Project's Phase 1 detailed budget 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. As a general policy, the Mass Tech Collaborative does not pay mark-ups on reimbursables or out-of-pocket expenses. 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.

- 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](#), or the *Research and Development Grant Agreement and Statement of Work*, located [HERE](#), if any.
- 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. 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	2/14/2022
Informational Webinar	3/9/2022 @ 1PM EST
Questions Due	3/14/20223/14/2022 @ 5 PM EST
Question and Answer File Posted	3/21/20223/21/2022 @ 5 PM EST
Planning Proposal Applications Due	4/1/2022 @ 3 PM EST
Notification of Planning Awards	5/13/2022
Strategic Plans Due (for planning award recipients only)	11/18/2022
Notification of Implementation Awards	1/9/2023

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-02“. All questions must be received by 5:00 p.m. EST on 3/14/2022. Responses to all questions received will be posted on or before 5:00 p.m. on 3/21/2022 to Mass Tech Collaborative and Comm-Buys website(s).

3.4 Bidders' Informational Webinar

A bidders' informational webinar will be held on 3/9/2022 at 1:00pm EST. All potential Respondents interested in participating in the bidders' Zoom Webinar should use this link to register https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_mqLB2kKQTLiZhbMURO8uCA.

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 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 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			
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 c. 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 [Matching Grant Agreement and Statement of Work](#); 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