

Proposals for Digital Equity Partnership Program

(No. 2023-MBI-04)

Questions and Answers

October 17, 2022

	Question	Answer
1	Can we include activities not specifically identified in the RFQ and if so, is there a recommended way to present these?	At the present time, this is a defined universe of initiatives that MBI is launching. In the future, MBI may modify and/or augment that list.
2	Can you articulate any relationship that MBI sees or expects between the Regional Partnerships and the Municipal Planning in the creation of a digital equity ecosystem?	Through the Digital Equity Planning Program MBI expects consultants to align strategic recommendations with any existing state or federal programs. The Digital Equity Partnership Program would be one of those existing state or federal programs that MBI would expect consultants to align with. To the extent that MBI can help facilitate connections and discussions between the prequalified consultants and the partners who are active in these areas that are relevant to any given municipal geography, MBI certainly is willing to do so.
3	Within a regional ecosystem, there are individuals who will not meet the ARPA definition for "eligible end beneficiaries". Must 100% of services be focused on these eligible people; must outside funds be used if non-eligible people are also served in the ecosystem	Partners can only expend funds under this Program to serve individuals that meet the definition of "Eligible End Beneficiary" as defined in section 3.2 of the solicitation. Each Partner will be responsible for establishing and maintaining a process to verify that funds are being expended to support eligible individuals or households. The verification must take place at the individual or household level unless the end beneficiaries reside in an eligible geographic area, such as a Qualified Census Tract.
4	Is there a maximum suggested budget? What is the total available funding for the Digital Equity Partnership Program?	MBI does not have a cap on the amount of funds that can be requested from an individual applicant. The Digital Equity Partnerships Program is one component of a \$50 million

		authorization of American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA”) State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (“SLFRF”) for digital equity initiatives.
7	Is MBI interested in proposals for program management that may cover multiple program areas? Do separate concept papers need to be submitted for each program area?	MBI is interested in proposals from applicants that can execute one or more of the program areas described, and the applicant does not need to submit a separate concept paper for each program area.
8	Can the research to assess solutions eligible expense category be used to advance a more comprehensive plan including upgrading needs assessment and understanding of end user challenges and the ultimate development of a strategic agenda?	MBI would encourage partners to understand how they meet the needs of the target populations that they intend to serve. Community outreach and assessment is certainly an eligible use of funding under this allocation. However, a Partner may not expend funds for strategic planning activities that are not directly associated with program implementation of an initiative under the Digital Equity Partnerships Program.
9	I think I saw that the 1.0 FTE should be employed by the lead applicant. Is this correct, or can we have the full-time staff/team member employed by one of our partners?	MBI has a preference for the full time staff person to be employed by the Lead Applicant. However, the full time staff person may be employed at another entity, provided that the Lead Applicant can sufficiently demonstrate that this arrangement will still allow the Lead Applicant to fulfill its fiduciary, management and other responsibilities as required under this Program.
10	Will lead applicants which are not public agencies be required to follow Chapter 30B procurement regulations?	No. This program does not impose new state procurement requirements. If an entity was not previously subject to Chapter 30B or any other state procurement requirements, entering into a grant agreement with MassTech will not have any impact on the applicability of state procurement laws or regulations. Please note that entities receiving funds through this Program will be subject to federal flow down requirements that will be referenced in a grant agreement that awardees will execute with MassTech. Each Partner will need to flow these requirements down to their sub-awardees.
11	What would require a project collaborator to be regarded as a sub-recipient vs. contracted entity?	A subrecipient is responsible for making program decisions and determining where the funding will go. A contractor has a contract to perform work that they typically do in their normal business operations.

12	How much do they expect the grant amount range to be to each partner?	There is no expected cap on the grant range for this program. Respondents should propose what they feel like is a feasible allocation based on their organizational capacity, technical expertise, and connections with on the ground service delivery organizations.
13	What is the total amount that MBI has to distribute?	See answer to question 4
14	In the compliance and reporting section it is noted that invoices will need to be collected and end user data. Can you elaborate and share an example of what this will look like? Such as - invoices to show money has gone to partner or all invoices from partner to implement work and end user data that shows that a partner works with eligible individuals or documentation of each end user served - ie received a machine?	Partners will be required to maintain, and in some cases provide to MassTech, documentation of all costs incurred directly by the Partner as well as any sub-recipients or contractors of the partner. Partners will also be required to provide documentation of the end-user beneficiary receiving the benefit of the program. As an example, If the program objective is to provide devices, documentation of the purchase of the devices need to be maintained and proof of the distribution of the device to a specific end user beneficiary must also be documented.
15	Jan 2023-Dec 2026 is 3 years; is MBI saying applicants can only apply for 2 years of funding?	Under ARPA, funds must be committed by December 31, 2024, however once committed, they may be expended through December 26, 2026. MassTech expects to contract for an initial period of performance of two-years.
16	With the municipal program you provided some best case examples. Is there anything similar for this program?	The six initiatives described in the Solicitation have been identified by MBI as focus areas that can be scaled and replicated in every region of the Commonwealth. MBI expects to publish impact stories on our website as digital equity projects are implemented over time.
17	For the Digital Literacy Initiative program area, are we able to propose our own digital literacy levels or do we need to use the literacy metrics outlined by MBI? If we need to use the levels outlined by MBI, can you please provide information about where we can obtain the specific skills associated with each level?	Respondents may propose their own Digital Literacy level objectives that meet the needs and circumstances of the populations they intend to serve. Those levels will then be used to inform the metrics associated with that digital literacy initiative as outlined in section 3.3 of the solicitation.
18	The Solicitation is focused almost exclusively on WiFi. This proved to be a poor solution during covid. Can alternative technologies be proposed?	The Digital Equity Partnerships program is not an infrastructure program. There are other federal funding opportunities that will address infrastructure gaps in the Commonwealth that will complement this Program.

19	<p>What level of detail is expected at the concept paper stage? Asking both about budget detail and project specifics (network design, etc).</p>	<p>The concept paper is designed to be a relatively low barrier for organizations to indicate an expression of interest in the Partnership Program and proposed approach. Respondents should follow the guidance outlined in section 4.1 of the solicitation to the best of their ability. Budget detail should be in alignment with the information outlined on slide 12 of the bidders' conference presentation. Project specifics that include network design, for example, would not be required as a component of a Concept Paper submission, however applicants should indicate which projects, if any, could be implemented quickly upon award.</p>
20	<p>Could you imagine a prospective partnership application/budget submitted to the near term deadline (conceivably a phase 1 partnership) and then a second application next year for a phase 2 based on learnings in year one, possibly focused on the sub recipients scaling successful effort.</p>	<p>If that is the approach that an applicant wants to take, then they should clearly indicate that in their concept paper and discuss it with MBI as part of the review process.</p>
21	<p>Does MBI plan to award 10-15 organizations with grants throughout the life of the Partnership solicitation period, or 10-15 per concept paper round/due date?</p>	<p>MBI seeks a total of 10 - 15 organizations to participate in the Partnership Program.</p>
22	<p>Might an entity be a lead applicant on one concept paper, and also a sub-award entity on another?</p>	<p>Yes, an entity may be a lead applicant on one concept paper, and also a sub-award entity on another - so long as it is clearly articulated how the entity's role as a sub-awardee is not duplicative of their role as a lead applicant.</p>
23	<p>So to clarify, while the other program is focused on planning, the goal here is to show that communities are walking the talk by documenting that by 12/31/26 xx # of people have received refurbished laptops, xx # now have access to free wifi, etc.. as examples?</p>	<p>Yes, the Digital Equity Planning Program is focused on providing municipalities with planning support and the Digital Equity Partnerships Program is focused on implementation of digital equity projects.</p>
24	<p>Should the concept paper request a specific dollar value? What is meant by "high-level" budget?</p>	<p>MBI expects the concept paper should have a total budget estimate that is informed by project and cost assumptions. The concept paper is not meant to be exhaustive, but should outline a framework for each program area including key assumptions that the applicant established to inform their budget estimates for both direct program costs and administrative costs to manage the proposed program. The</p>

		high level assumptions for each program area should include (i) # of projects and cost per project with a summary of the types of costs to be incurred for each project, (ii) assumptions on level of staffing required and estimated cost per FTE, and (iii) a description of other cost categories and estimated amounts for each category. The high level assumptions for each program area should roll up to the total budget estimate that the applicant thinks is feasible for them to expend within the given time period.
25	Would training historically marginalized communities and placing them in entry level tech jobs be covered by this grant? This is a little bit going beyond digital inclusion.	MBI would need more details to make a determination on eligibility for funding.
26	Has MBI considered procuring a state contract rather than helping with technical assistance to all the organizations separately. Prices might be better with economies of scale. A state contract would vastly simplify procurement and save a lot of effort across all the organizations.	Depending on the initiative and depending on the partner, this may or may not be feasible. This Program is not directed exclusively at public entities, so a state contract may work in some contexts, but it may not be necessary or appropriate in other contexts.
27	For the public wifi initiative, to what extent is MBI entertaining concept papers with "shovel ready" projects (i.e. a site selected, a network design, all sub-awardees identified, etc.) vs is MBI also entertaining concept paper approaches that would involve a proposed process for defining those specifics (site, network design, etc.) AFTER award (and may involve the lead applicant working with stakeholders to entertain multiple sites)? TL;DR - are you asking for specific projects or program approaches? (of both?)	Applicants that have shovel ready projects should certainly indicate that in their concept paper. MBI also expects that many partners will need to work with organizations on the ground to generate a pipeline of projects upon award.
28	We find that most people who we help purchase a device also need training to use the device that can take from 1 to 12 hours. Would you categorize this support for device adoption and use in the Digital Literacy Initiative or in the Device Distribution and Refurbishment Program?	Applicants that seek to integrate digital literacy with device distribution should apply for both program areas to align with the eligible expense categories outlined in Appendix A of the bidder's conference presentation.

29	Will full applications be also submitted on a rolling basis? Will awards be made on a rolling basis?	Respondents will have 4 weeks from the notice of an invitation to submit a full application, and it is expected that any resulting award(s) would also be made on a rolling basis.
30	When do you anticipate notifying applicants that they are invited to submit a full application?	Review periods for concept papers will depend on volume received and the level of follow up questions and supplementation information that is needed to fully evaluate the concept paper.
31	Funding Dates: What are the committed to funding dates and spend dates? Please publish and include timeline in RFP. (Please display dates noted on the display page)	Funds under the broadband innovation fund must be committed by December 31, 2024 and expended by December 31, 2026.
32	Geographic Caps: Are there geographical caps within counties? If so, how are those calculated?	There are no geographic caps within counties. Applicants should indicate their desired service area and how they plan to meet the needs of eligible populations in their concept paper.
33	Funding code (assigned by Govt) clarification: As we understand it- each set of monies has a funding code designation by the govt which includes additional requirements and parameters- are these all captured in RFP? Are they any other additional requirements that will be identified after RFP that we need to be aware of?	The Federal Award Identification Number (FAIN) for this program is SLFRP1025. The RFP and draft Subaward Agreement template (https://masstech.org/sites/default/files/2022-09/Subaward%20Grant%20Agreement.pdf) provide specific requirements or references to the federal regulations that will need to be followed. MassTech does not expect additional requirements but reserves its right to modify the requirements to the extent there are additional requirements imposed on MassTech.
34	Program Priorities: What are the Program Area priorities and are there monetary Caps by type?	The desired scope of services is outlined in section 2.3 of the solicitation. As indicated, there are no monetary caps for the program areas.
35	Is there a reporting template/example that can be shared?	Reporting templates will be shared with respondents invited to submit a formal application
36	What tools will need to be used for reporting?	MBI plans to use a combination of cloud based reporting tools to streamline reporting and create transparency.

37	How much flexibility does the regional fiduciary have in the selection and approval process?	A regional fiduciary/Partner will have flexibility within specific parameters to select and approve sub-recipients, contractors, or beneficiaries to the extent it is in line with the approved project scope, budget, and requirements set forth in the agreed upon subrecipient agreement. Determinations by MassTech regarding authority on selection and approval of projects may be revisited during the period of performance. Please refer to the answer to Question #39 for more details.
38	Can you walk through the process both for the regional organization and non-profit- the steps from concept paper to approval?	Please see slide 6 in the bidders' conference presentation.
39	Will organizations be trusted to select, and fund said projects, or will each project need to be approved by MBI? i.e. will partners be independent Grantors or intermediaries?	A respondent that submits a full application that includes a sufficiently detailed project plan, budget with reasonable cost estimates, and criteria for approving projects to implement an initiative, will not require approvals on a project-by-project basis within the parameters set forth in the agreed upon subrecipient agreement. However, to the extent a Partner is deemed high risk with respect to administering the federal funds, additional requirements may be established with regard to the ability to implement the projects without guidance and oversight by MassTech. Determinations regarding authority around approval of projects may be revisited during the period of performance.
40	Invoices and End user Data: In the compliance and reporting section it is noted that invoices will need to be collected and end user data. Can you elaborate and share an example of what this will look like? Such as: Invoices to show money has gone to partner (such as Grant has been made and received by Grantee org) or all invoices from partner to implement work (such as the payments to each vendor and wages etc)? Or can you share an example?	See answer to question 14

41	<p>End user data that shows that a partner works with eligible individuals or documentation of each end user served - ie received a device? For example, many organizations by their mission and work (a community action organization as an example)– serve eligible individual only or primarily- is this sufficient documentation or does each individual have to be vetted (there are privacy issues here)?</p>	<p>As stated in section 3.2 of the solicitation, for each of the six program areas, Partner organizations will be required to verify that all Beneficiaries meet the Target Population criteria. Partner organizations will be required to submit to MassTech a process description of how they will verify that digital equity projects serve eligible individuals or households as part of their response to the Partnership solicitation. The verification must take place at the individual or household level unless the end beneficiaries reside in an eligible geographic area, such as a Qualified Census Tract. MassTech will monitor this verification process through the duration of any agreement and will confirm funds are being deployed for eligible uses on an ongoing basis as projects are developed. MassTech will require Partners to make updates as needed as a condition of any subrecipient agreement with the Partner. Verification of target populations may differ between the six program areas outlined in the solicitation. Respondents should review the examples given in section 3.2 for each of the six program areas.</p>
42	<p>Can funding be used on administration, reporting and project coordination?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
43	<p>What is the decision-making process internally at MBI for each proposal? Does the administration or legislature have any visibility to the process?</p>	<p>MBI will use the review criteria outlined in section 5.2 of the solicitation. As a state entity MassTech/MBI reports its activities to various legislators/legislative committees on an ad hoc basis, and works in close coordination with the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development ("EOHED"). MassTech/MBI has certain reporting requirements to EHOED as it relates to the funding source for this RFP.</p>
44	<p>Please describe the transparency of the process. Are proposals in progress posted publicly?</p>	<p>Proposals in process will not be posted publicly. See also the answer to question 43.</p>
45	<p>Does MBI have to report to the House/Senate committee throughout the process? If yes, what is the schedule?</p>	<p>The statutory language creating the Broadband Innovation Fund did not contain specific reporting requirements. As a state entity MassTech/MBI reports its activities to various legislators/legislative committees on an ad hoc basis, and through an annual reporting requirement.</p>

46	Will you approve multi prong applications – that for example include Digital Literacy, ACP Adoption, Device refurbishment?	Yes, MBI encourages respondents to consider how the implementation of multiple program areas might create synergies and more holistic and sustainable digital equity interventions.
47	Will you approve multiyear grants? If yes, up to how many years?	Yes, as indicated in section 4.1B respondents should assume an initial performance period of 2 years. MBI will make decisions regarding longer proposed periods of performance on a case by case basis.
48	Can organizations put in multiple or tiered proposals?	Organizations are limited to submitting one proposal as a lead applicant.
49	Is there a mechanism to have statewide initiatives facilitated amongst partners for larger scale solutions like device refurbishment?	Statewide initiatives would be allowed under this solicitation. The lead applicant would need to demonstrate the ability to implement an initiative on a statewide basis, including forming relationships with partners that would be needed to provide the necessary scope and breadth of services. .
50	The RFP doesn't reference Digital navigators for ACP adoption, is this a qualifying use of funds? If yes, can that be included in RFP guidance?	Digital Navigators are referenced in section 2.3.1.VI (page 5, paragraph 6)
51	What is floor and ceiling in an award per organization?	See answer to question 12
52	Can you apply multiple times and be awarded multiple grants?	Any given lead applicant may only be approved for one Partnership grant at any given time. At the end of any given period of performance an applicant may reapply as long as the Partnership program is still operating and accepting applications. See also response to question 22.
53	Will you approve a partial grant if the total grant is not approved?	MBI reserves the right to engage with an applicant to discuss the potential for funding part of the request as MBI deems appropriate.
54	How will money be allocated? Will it be lump sum or milestones or other?	MBI anticipates that Partners will be allowed to requisition funds quarterly in advance based upon their forecasted project expenditures. With each quarter's requisition, the Partner will include documentation for the actual costs incurred to date and any funds remaining from prior requisitions shall be applied toward the next quarter expenditure projections. All funds must be expended in accordance with the eligible uses and the approved budget. Any funds paid to Partner that are not expended in

		accordance with the terms of the contract and budget shall be returned to MassTech.
55	Does wireless internet need to be broadcast from within the interior of a unit? Would a wired unit connection be a requirement? If an owner of subsidized or public housing is legally prohibited from operating <i>wired</i> in-unit services, but could provide wireless solutions where residents could access the internet from within their unit, would that be acceptable?	Projects under the Apartment WiFi program area will likely be developed on a case by case basis, taking into account the specific needs and uses of the operator and residents. A wired unit connection will not be a requirement. Wireless solutions are an acceptable use of funds.
56	The WiFi Access initiative appears to require the "building owner" to hold a master-level subscription. Would MBI consider flexibility on this requirement in the following scenario: A public agency owns the building, and another public agency provides the internet service at no cost to the end-user, but the building owner does not hold a "subscription" and the residents do not hold a subscription. Rather, the agreement is granted via license or memorandum of agreement between public agencies.	As described in the response to question 55, projects under the Apartment WiFi program area will likely be developed on a case by case basis and will need to be structured in such a way that all stakeholder parties involved deem the project feasible. The scenario outlined in the question would be considered an eligible project under the current program structure.
57	If in-unit access is provided via a signal broadcast from a public space (for example, a hallway of a publicly-owned, residential building), and the in-unit internet service meets the broadband requirements laid out by MBI, could this be considered under either or both Wifi Access or Public Space Modernization initiatives?	The Public Space Modernization initiative is designed to support non-residential public spaces. The scenario outlined in the question would be designated under the Apartment WiFi program area.
58	At what point in the application process will Lead Applicants need to specify and define partner organizations/Sub-Applicants? Will these partners need to be defined at the	Respondents do not need to specify all sub-applicants at the time of the concept paper. To the extent all project participants are not identified, Respondents should articulate

	concept paper stage, at the application stage, or at another stage?	the process for expanding sub-applicants as part of their concept paper response. However, gaps in any proposed applicant team may impact the likelihood that the Respondent will be approved by MBI to proceed to the full application stage. Respondents with an incomplete team that are not selected for a full application in a particular round can reapply in a subsequent round when their team is complete.
59	Are proposals that combine specific projects with defined Sub-Applicants and a process for further site/partner solicitation post-award acceptable?	See answer to question 58
60	To what extent should WiFi/public access network sites and partners be already selected (with networks designed) prior to the application? To what extent can site selection/design/budgeting come after selection?	See answer to question 27
61	What level of detail is expected on the budget at the concept paper stage?	See answer to question 19
62	Attachment C of the solicitation refers to a budget template Excel sheet, which does not appear to be attached. Where can we access that template?	The detailed budget template (Attachment C) will be made available to respondents who are invited to submit a full application.
63	What is the total amount of funding available for the Partnership solicitation? Is the \$50m in funding specific to this solicitation, or is it shared between the Partnership and Planning solicitations?	See answer to question 4
64	Does MBI have any guidance or expectation regarding the maximum amount of funding available for each project?	There is no maximum amount of funding available for any individual project.
65	Does MBI plan to award 10-15 organizations with grants throughout the life of the Partnership solicitation period, or 10-15 per concept paper round/due date?	See answer to question 21

66	Can one organization receive multiple awards, either per concept paper deadline or for the lifetime of the solicitation?	See answer to questions 22 and 52
67	Is there a limit to the number of concept papers that each organization can submit?	See answer to question 52
68	Should concept papers be submitted individually for each proposed project, or as a single concept paper describing the full suite of projects an organization is proposing?	Respondents should submit one concept paper that clearly indicates which program area(s) the respondent wishes to be considered for.
69	What are the requirements for non-public applicants for procurement? Will non-public awardees still need to adhere to Chapter 30B regulations?	See answer to question 10
70	Is there a ceiling to the grant size?	See answer to question 4
71	Is there a ceiling of funding that will be distributed each rolling deadline?	There is no ceiling of funding that will be distributed during each application review period.
72	Are applicants able to apply for multiple rounds of funding across the rolling deadlines?	See answer to questions 52 and 22
73	Will there be any restrictions on the use of funds?	See slide 12 and Appendix A of the bidders conference presentation slides for a full list of eligible expenses
74	Why is there a focus on refurbishment? What is the goal of refurbishing devices as outlined in the RFP, rather than providing new hardware?	As described in section 2.3.1 of the solicitation the Device Distribution and Refurbishment program area allows for both refurbishment and purchase of new devices.
75	Can the proposed project address multiple areas of the RFP in program design, or does it need to be focused on a singular/specific area?	See answer to question 58
76	Can we serve undocumented populations under this grant? Is immigration status a consideration in eligibility?	The federal funding source for this RFP does not specify any restrictions based on immigration status, however the end beneficiaries have to satisfy the eligibility criteria specified in the Solicitation.
77	Who will be reviewing the applications in addition to MassTech staff?	There will be no external reviewers outside of MassTech staff.
78	Will there be a rubric that accompanies the application?	See a list of evaluation criteria outlined under section 5.2 of the solicitation

79	Are letters of support allowable in addition to the five page LOI?	<p>As outlined in section 4.2B any respondent invited to submit a full application must include references from at least 3 clients of the Lead</p> <p>Applicant who have utilized the organization on matters of similar size, scope and complexity to the Respondent's Proposed Initiatives. The references must include name of company, period of performance, description of the project, a contact person and their business address, email and a phone number. If an applicant wishes to seek an additional letter of support to submit as an appendix they may do so, but it is not a requirement.</p>
80	To use potential funding in the most impactful way, there will be significant up-front costs in scaling the organization. With that in mind, does MBI have an anticipated payment schedule?	To the extent the upfront costs for scaling the organization are determined to be eligible expenses and are included in the approved budget, they can be requisitioned in accordance with the process articulated in Question 54. Payment schedules will be determined based upon the timing of expenditures of each Partner.
81	What information or data will be requested in the standard reporting forms provided by MassTech?	<p>MassTech will seek quarterly information regarding funds expended across specific line items that align with the eligible expenses as articulated on slide 12 and Appendix A of the bidders' conference slides and the approved budget; metric reporting as outlined in section 3.3 of the solicitation; anticipated project milestones across all program areas; qualitative reporting associated with challenges/successes/lessons learned; any other criteria deemed necessary and relevant by MassTech.</p>
82	What is the timeframe that MBI is interested in funding Digital Equity Partners? Is a two-year period a reasonable period?	As outlined in section 4.2B respondents should anticipate an initial two year period of performance.
83	Does an individual's eligibility for MassHealth meet the definition of "Eligible End Beneficiaries" for the following three Digital Equity program areas: Digital Literacy Initiative, Device Distribution and Refurbishment Program and Education, Outreach and Adoption?	<p>An individual's eligibility for MassHealth may not automatically make them an "Eligible End Beneficiary". Further analysis is needed to determine whether they meet the definition outlined in Section 3.2 of the solicitation.</p>

84	<p>For the Digital Literacy Initiative program area Metrics, are grantees permitted to use a portion, rather than all, of MBI’s proposed Metrics? For example, a Comp TIA Network+ program graduate has highly advanced technical skills including the ability to configure, manage, and troubleshoot wired and wireless network devices. If permitted, we will not track people at the “Comp TIA Network + program graduate level” because our digital literacy programs are targeted to beginning and intermediate digital skills.</p>	<p>See answer to question 17</p>
85	<p>For the Digital Literacy Initiative program area, can MBI provide additional information on the specific skills required to meet the below levels of literacy outlined in the Metrics. We have developed our own literacy assessment and skill levels and would like to crosswalk our program to the MBI literacy levels.</p>	<p>See answer to question 17</p>
88	<p>For the Digital Literacy Initiative program area Metrics, would MBI accept the results of an assessment conducted after literacy services are provided to determine the literacy level of a client rather than an annual survey?</p>	<p>To the extent that any surveying of end beneficiaries occurs after the implementation of a program and can be rolled into a summary annual survey or assessment, MassTech would find that acceptable.</p>
89	<p>Our experience is that a portion of clients who we help to enroll in the ACP also need help home-based support when the ISP installs home broadband. We are prepared to provide this support to ensure that the home broadband is being effectively used by the client. Would you categorize this support in the “Digital Literacy Initiative” or in “Education, Outreach and Adoption?”</p>	<p>The respondent should use the guidance provided in the solicitation to determine which program areas they believe their organization is best suited to execute and submit them in the concept paper. MBI staff may then engage with respondents to further define/refine their proposed approach within the framework of the six program areas.</p>
90	<p>We find that most people who we help purchase a device also need training to use the device that can take from 1 to 12 hours. Would you categorize this support for device adoption and use in the “Digital Literacy</p>	<p>See response to question 89.</p>

	Initiative” or in the “Device Distribution and Refurbishment Program?”	
92	For the “Connectivity Initiative for Economic Hardship”, would MBI support the distribution of smartphones in lieu of jetpacks? Some smartphones function well as a hot spot and some individuals may find it simpler to manage a single device.	MBI will not support the distribution of smartphones or other cellular devices.
93	What is the maximum award amount?	See response to question 12
95	When is the time frame for funding? When will grant awardees be notified? When is the expected time frame to begin work after award notification?	See responses to questions 82 and 30
96	What are eligibility requirements for individual participants to access services and resources? Can individuals who lack worker authorization access services and resources?	“Eligible End Beneficiaries” are defined in Section 3.2 of the RFP.
97	What is considered an “existing regional partner” as outlined on page 6 “Priority for awards under the digital literacy initiative shall be given to programming for existing regional partners”	Existing organizations providing services on a regional basis.
98	For the Digital Literacy Initiative, do all tiers of training set forth on page 10 of the RFP need to be provided?	See response to question 17
99	If all 3 tiers of training are required on page 10 of the RFP, what is the reasoning behind why these tiers were selected? We are not seeing a natural progression between the three trainings, as they would be tailored to different populations.	See response to question 17
100	Is there a maximum allowable indirect cost (also known as facilities & administration) rate?	To the extent the Partner has a federally approved indirect cost rate, Partner can submit a budget that includes that rate along with documentation of the federal approval of that rate. To the extent a Partner does not have a federally approved rate, it can use the de minimis rate of 10% of modified total

		direct costs as specified in 2 CFR 200.414 (f) for their indirect cost rate.
101	Is there an anticipated project start date, and/or date for notice of award?	Projects will be reviewed on a quarterly basis as articulated in section 4.2 of the solicitation. Timing of notice of awards will be dependent on volume of responses.
102	Is there a cost cap on total or direct expenses proposed?	There is not a cost cap on total or direct expenses under this program.
103	When budgeting for personnel, should the federal salary cap (\$203,700) be applied, or should institutional base salaries be utilized?	Under the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds Final Rule and the associated Compliance and Reporting Guidance, a federal wage cap is not specified. Personnel costs should follow requirements set forth in 2 C.F.R. Part 200 and more specifically 200.430.
104	Does the full application have a page limit?	No
105	The RFP references an excel budget template; will this file be made available at a later time?	See answer to question 62
106	What will the contract end date be for Partners selected?	See answer to question 47
107	Will selected Partners be responsible for implementation of municipal plan recommendations? And if so, will they be responsible for all recommendations or only for recommendations that match the topic area(s) they agreed to provide?	See answer to question 2
108	Will only one Partner be selected to serve a geographic area?	No, MBI intends to support an ecosystem that allows Partners that are providing different or complementary program area services to have overlapping geographies. MBI's goal is to have Partners providing services in every region in every program area and will encourage entities to collaborate within a region to achieve efficiencies and avoid duplication efforts.
109	Could more than one Partner be selected for the same topic area in the same geographic region?	If multiple applicants propose to provide the same program area services in the same geography, MBI will determine whether the applicants intend to serve different populations or substantially different and complementary services. MBI will make any award decisions based on that determination to avoid duplicative services within a region.

110	Does the MBI intend to spread out the number of grants awarded in each application round, so that not all 10 to 15 grants are distributed in the first and/or second round? Is it possible that the MBI may award all 10 to 15 grants in the first and/or second round?	MBI will make awards based on the merit and qualifications of any given applicant. MBI will continue making awards until it deems there insufficient capacity among Partners to fully execute the program areas and expend the funds allocated for this Program within the time period allowed. If MBI deems that there are sufficient qualified applicants in the first and second round of applications, it may make 10-15 awards within that time frame.
111	Will there be funds, in addition to the current \$50 million Digital Equity Partnerships Program, made available to the Partners selected through this solicitation? Or will there be a separate solicitation(s) for each funding program(s)?	The Digital Equity Partnerships Program is funded through a portion of the \$50M authorized by the Legislature. No additional funding will be allocated by MassTech for this Program. .
112	In a few of the topic areas, it says funds can be used by selected Partners to award grants to entities providing internet access to specific constituencies (such as at public housing and public spaces, individuals facing housing instability, etc.). Is there a minimum or maximum term for how long this access must be provided (i.e. months/years or a specific cut-off date)? Or is the term the decision of the Partner and/or the entity receiving the sub-award from the Partner?	There is no minimum or maximum but Partners are responsible for ensuring the longevity and sustainability of any funded project under the Partnership program.
113	Is there a grant match requirement?	No grant match requirements are required for this program.
114	How long after application submission will an award be granted?	See answer to question 30

115	After an award is granted, how soon can work begin?	The commencement of work will be based on the effective date of the subaward agreement
116	Do applicants have to wait until the full RFP is awarded to begin work?	See answer to question 115. An applicant will not be eligible to receive funding for work performed prior to the effective data in a fully executed subaward agreement
117	What is the term length of the partnership?	See answer to question 82
118	Where can a copy of the Budget Template (Attachment C) be found?	See answer to question 62
119	Can we submit an initial concept paper on a narrow part of the work and then expand through subsequent concept papers in the future (either expand on the project area or add another project area to the original submission)?	Partners will have the ability to expand their scope of work and program areas at regular intervals during the Partnership program lifecycle. They will be required to submit additional documentation and budget detail for any new program areas in alignment with the initial application process.

120	Can we submit an application on a narrow part of the work and then expand through subsequent rolling deadlines in the future (either expand on the original project area or add another project area to the original submission)?	See answer to question 119
121	Can an organization simultaneously submit concept papers/applications for 2 separate project areas?	See answer to question 68
122	How much funding is going to be allocated to each of the 6 project areas?	See answer to question 4
123	Can MBI provide an example/elaboration of how it will provide funding for the “dedicated resource(s)”?	The phrase “dedicated resource(s) does not appear in the solicitation.
124	Can MBI provide examples/elaboration on fiduciary responsibilities?	Fiduciary responsibilities include distribution of funds to recipients (see section 2.2 of the solicitation for definitions), ensuring compliance of program funds (see slide 14 of the bidders conference presentation), and ongoing reporting.

125	<p>The Education, Outreach and Adoption project area requires work to raise awareness of the resources available in the other Initiative programs areas not just ACP - Is it possible to focus on just ACP outreach and awareness? If it's possible to perform just ACP outreach and awareness, is the partner required to perform all outreach items (e.g. in-person workshops, call center phone banking, door to door outreach, online or printed communications, public service announcements, and other media activities as deemed necessary) or can it just focus on 1 outreach item? Can the partner also focus on performing and implementing its own ACP awareness and outreach strategy within Massachusetts?</p>	<p>Respondents can apply for the Education, Outreach, and Adoption program area to solely focus on ACP Outreach and Awareness. Respondents should indicate what specific activities they would engage in to accomplish increased ACP enrollment in their concept paper.</p>
126	<p>We have the ability to support some but not all of the scope in the Education, Outreach, and Adoption program area. Our ideal role would be to support a lead applicant with ACP awareness and enrollment support. Should we still submit a concept paper?</p>	<p>The concept paper should be submitted by the entity that would serve as the lead applicant</p>
127	<p>Will pilot programs be allowed for any of the project areas?</p>	<p>See answer to question 1.</p>
128	<p>Will or can MBI be the administrator of funds? In other words, can a partner provide guidance to MBI on how to spend funds without actually administering the distribution of awarded funds?</p>	<p>No</p>

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128	Can MBI elaborate on any federal or state level guidelines to procurement if a partner is awarded funds?	See response to question 10.
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