

**Grant Solicitation for Regional Planning Agencies to Support Municipal Digital Equity
 Planning Enrollment and Regional Asset Mapping**
(No.2023-MBI-08)

Questions and Answers

May 11, 2023

<p>Q1. Will the grant funding support staff time spent on the first two eligible outreach and data collection expenses (see bullets in the middle of page 3) and/or the Municipal Digital Equity Planning Outreach Tasks (see 2.2 Grant Requirements and Guidance, #s 1.-3 at the bottom of page 3 to page 4) if these activities took place between January 1, 2023, and when the grant funds are awarded?</p>	<p>Q1A. No, pre-award spending is not eligible for funding.</p>
<p>Q2: If the RPA allocates staff time to conduct asset mapping in communities where it already has been selected as an approved vendor, does this allow for additional funding beyond what has already been approved in a Digital Equity Planning contract?</p>	<p>Q2A: RPAs cannot use funding from this award towards staff time for asset mapping in communities where the RPA has already been selected as an approved vendor under a Municipal Digital Equity Planning Services Agreement. All asset mapping activities for those communities must be funded through the Municipal Digital Equity Planning Services Agreement.</p>
<p>Q3: Is the RPA allowed to conduct asset mapping in municipalities where it does not have explicit municipal leader buy-in? For example, are we allowed to conduct Asset Mapping Tasks by working directly with existing providers, such as libraries and CBOs, even if town leadership does not wish to participate?</p>	<p>Q3A: Yes. Asset mapping can and should be done regardless of municipal leader buy-in. The idea is to gain a fuller understanding of which entities are conducting digital inclusion activities across the state.</p>
<p>Q4: If approved, are we allowed to conduct Asset Mapping in communities where another vendor has already been selected by the municipality -- or a group of municipalities -- to conduct Digital Equity Planning?</p>	<p>Q4A: No. The consultants that are serving communities through a Municipal Digital Equity Planning Services Agreement should do the asset mapping in those communities. RPAs should plan to catalog entities participating in</p>

	<p>digital equity activities that have a regional presence in addition to organizations active in municipalities not participating in the Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program. MBI will provide a list of those municipalities to the RPA upon execution of a contract under this solicitation.</p>
<p>Q5: What's the deadline to get all these [Municipal Digital Equity Plans] done? Since we have a number of them that are going to be starting, if we were to sign up more people, how late could a six month process start to still be within the deadline?</p>	<p>Q5A: The application for municipal digital equity planning is ongoing and will be open until the end of 2024 or until the money is committed. The planning process can extend past 2024, however the funds must be spent by the end of 2026. Our hope through this funding is that RPAs can help us get more municipalities signed up in the short term to meet these deadlines.</p>
<p>Q6: When are you thinking we're allowed to start charging time spent internally on bringing communities in? Our agreement with you says December 22, 2022 was when we were brought on board as consultants. Can we start as of January 1, 2023, if we've been keeping track of that time?</p>	<p>Q6A: No. See response to question 1.</p>
<p>Q7: Is this NOFO a separate contract or would it be an amendment to the Master Service Agreement we did back in December?</p>	<p>Q7A: We will use a separate contract for awards granted under this solicitation.</p>
<p>Q8: [Asset mapping] would be work on top of what we've been doing or work in addition to what we've been doing?</p>	<p>Q8A: For RPAs that have a contract to provide Municipal Digital Equity Planning Services, asset mapping under this solicitation will only be allowed in municipalities/regions where the RPA is not contracted to provide Planning Services. See also the response to question 4.</p>
<p>Q9: How quickly do you expect to be under contract with this entity [HR&A] so that we know how quickly that [asset mapping] tool is available to us for municipal planning?</p>	<p>Q9A: MBI has scheduled a mid-May meeting to review the asset mapping tool and do a brief training for all pre-qualified planning consultants and RPAs with HR&A. We will have time to get feedback and input from the RPAs so that we can make minor adjustments,</p>

	as needed. See also the response to question 17.
Q10: Will your consultants be doing this same environmental scan with state agencies?	Q10A: No. MBI staff will use the asset mapping tool for state agencies.
Q11: With this new tool and this new part of the effort of the environmental scan in terms of applying for support on how to do it, are you going to give us a recommendation on how to characterize using time and charge to it? Because it's new to us, so how do we characterize it in an application in that regard?	Q11A: MBI will to provide RPAs with the asset mapping tool and the technical assistance to use it. To ensure adequate time to conduct asset mapping activities including staff time to become familiar with the tool, MBI recommends RPAs allocate at least 50% of their proposal budget to cover asset mapping.
Q12: Could we still be doing asset mapping [where another consultant was selected] or are they going to be doing it and we shouldn't be thinking about them?	Q12A: See response to question 4.
Q13: As I'm finishing the scope of work and all of that for the communities that have chosen us, I'm not including asset mapping. But then if we apply for the NOFO, that's where our time spent in those same communities, asset mapping will be paid for. Correct?	Q13A: See response to question 2.
Q14: It seems to me, since this particular solicitation includes two tasks, but there's an opportunity to put asset mapping in the agreements for towns that we're working directly with that would be the wiser place to put those costs and that only regional asset mapping would be what we want to focus on in our response to this solicitation in order to allow as much possible remaining dollars to go to the recruitment and participation work that we've been doing. Do you have any sense of what we should set aside, within this two-task proposal, for the asset mapping?	Q14A: For any consultant providing services to a municipality under a Municipal Digital Equity Planning Services Agreement, asset mapping will be added to each scope of work. In your response to this solicitation, please include asset mapping services only for those communities that are not already receiving consulting services under the Municipal Digital Equity Planning program. MBI will supply all RPAs with a list of approved municipalities and their chosen consultants upon execution of a contract under this solicitation.
Q15: For the RPAs that get this funding to work on the environmental scan but may or may not have some of the municipal contracts, some sort of coordination time between the RPAs and the work they are doing with the work that other consultants	Q15A: Yes. Staff time to engage with other consultants can be included in the budget for this solicitation. MBI can help coordinate an exchange of knowledge/activities between RPAs and other pre-qualified planning

<p>are doing would be helpful to make sure that we are not wasting funding by the RPA doing some work and another consultant doing some work. Could an eligible use of funding relate to coordination of consultants so that time is covered to talk to other consultants and align with them?</p>	<p>consultants, but MBI expects this to be a small overall allocation under this effort. Additionally, MBI can supply all RPAs with a list of approved municipalities and their chosen consultants.</p>
<p>Q16: What happens if as we go through and we've added up our costs, we start approaching the 15,000 without even getting to the Asset mapping?</p>	<p>Q16A: See responses to questions 1 and 11.</p>
<p>Q17: Any guidance on the timing for the digital Asset mapping or any of the other outreach beyond just the entire contract period? Is there some sort of timing component we should incorporate into our response?</p>	<p>Q17A: Yes. MBI's goal is to begin asset mapping in June 2023 and continue through the summer. Note the deadline to complete asset mapping inventory activities stated in the NOFO is August 31, 2023.</p>
<p>Q18: Is [the asset mapping tool] a done product that we're going to be using, or is it something that we'll have an opportunity to provide feedback on? Is it going to be once you sign that contract with a consultant, it's ready to roll, or is there a time period where it might be adapted or changed?</p>	<p>Q18A: See response to question 9.</p>
<p>Q19: Having seen the asset mapping [tool], is it the kind of thing that with training, we could be doing a group zoom training with libraries and saying, "hi, everyone, here's the tool. Can you help us populate it?" So we're giving the work to the people who are doing the stuff and maybe we are cleaning it up, but we're not picking up the phone and dialing every library to get information?</p>	<p>Q19A: Yes, a training approach to support regional and local partner organizations to fill out the asset mapping tool is allowable. If your organization plans to use this approach, please describe how you will go about ensuring the accurate input of data and cohesive documentation of the digital equity activities in your organization's region.</p>
<p>Q20: I was just going to ask if you could clarify a little bit on the survey you said that you were putting out.</p>	<p>Q20A: MBI is going to conduct a digital equity survey in addition to the asset mapping inventory. The survey is for individuals and will be made available for use to all consultants participating in the Municipal Digital Equity Planning program. The asset mapping tool is for organizations.</p>

<p>Q21.1: Can the “Coordinating regional approaches to the Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program” task or the grant funding more generally include:</p> <p>Services to municipalities that have already been awarded technical assistance through the Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program such as coordination during the performance period?</p>	<p>Q21.1A: No. The coordination efforts in the NOFO refer to coordinating regional approaches to applying for the Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program. All coordinating efforts after a consultant has been awarded a regional application will be considered part of the Municipal Digital Equity Planning Services Agreement, and cannot be funded under this funding opportunity. RPAs must clearly differentiate their costs between the funding sources.</p>
<p>Q21.2: Administrative costs of providing technical assistance through the Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program such as billing during the performance period?</p>	<p>Q21.2A: No.</p>
<p>Q22: What specific pre-developed tools are required to be used to identify and catalog providers of digital equity-related services (i.e. digital literacy or technology classes, access to free internet or WiFi, device distribution, ACP enrollment, etc.) in the RPA’s catchment area and how should these be integrated into the description of the RPA’s approach?</p>	<p>Q22A: Our consultant, HR&A, has a very well thought out process description of how to use the asset mapping tool, what goes in it, and how the data is organized. At the mid-May meeting, we will take a look at the asset mapping tool, as well as a survey that MBI will administer statewide. See also response to question 9.</p>