

Solicitation No. 2024-MBI-08 for Residential Retrofit Program- Questions and Answers for RFP 1

Question Number	Question	Answer
Q1	Is there no one-year service provision by this grant?	The Residential Retrofit Program does not cover any operating expenses like the Apartment Wi-Fi Program does, but the Residential Retrofit Program will cover all capital costs associated with installation of fiber to the building(s).
Q2	How is apartment Wi-Fi being distributed?	The Apartment Wi-Fi program is MBI's other housing initiative that is designed to provide free, no subscription Wi-Fi to residents of public housing and affordable housing. That program is being administered by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council. They will issue solicitations directly for individual sites. We will cross-post solicitations for that program on our website and through our channels as well. There are currently no open solicitations for apartment Wi-Fi right now.
Q3	Is there a limit to how many 'sites' each MSP/carrier can bid on?	All the housing developments in the Request for Proposals are associated with Project Groups, collections of not more than five housing developments under common ownership. Applicants must bid on all developments in a Project Group and there is no limit on how many project groups an applicant can bid on.
Q4	Since we are not surveying sites until awarded in the top 3, how would you like us to budget/predict the following: MDF/IDF locations - space, location in facility, temperature, etc.; Access to buildings - inside/external; Condition of buildings - inside/external (for mounting, cabling, electric, etc.); Low voltage cabling and electrical components?	MBI has made available basic building information to all applicants. Applicants may use this information to inform an initial bid.
Q5	Will floor plans be provided for every/some location?	No, but an applicant may request floor plans as a component of their agreement with the housing owner upon award.

Q6	As a solution, could we provide a wireless mesh option to provide internet to these units, or is it expected for physical cables to be installed in each unit bid? We can install a ‘CPE’ into each unit (this would provide traditional Ethernet connectivity), but this device would only require power. It would wirelessly connect to our meshed network and then back to the head end ISP.	The Retrofit RFP only offers two options for inside plant infrastructure, which are fiber or CAT6 to each unit. A wireless mesh solution is acceptable as part of a bulk service arrangement, but not as an alternative to fiber or CAT6 for inside plant infrastructure that delivers unit level subscription options.
Q7	Can we submit our response via email or do we have to use the link / portal?	All applications must be submitted through the online application.
Q8	Can you provide the RFP document as a Word file vs PDF?	No.
Q9	In terms of the ‘fiber strands’ for MBI ... can you provide use cases for MBI? Is the expectation to have these strands free of charge for MBI? Please add commentary around that piece.	As described in section 7.1.4 of the RFP MBI retains use of the three fiber strands to support any needed public safety, municipal, educational, or other services that could potentially improve the health, safety, or wellbeing of current or future residents. MBI also retains use of the three fiber strands for all other lawful purposes. Use of these strands will be available to MBI at no charge.
Q10	We see several projects on the Cape that we are interested in serving that are close to our fiber backbone, but we only received one bid in New Bedford. Curious about your process here?	Housing owners wishing to engage in the Residential Retrofit program must first apply to be enrolled in the program through the online expression of interest form. Not all eligible properties are available for bid in this first round of the Request for Proposals. Additional properties will be available in future rounds. If there are housing authorities/partners you work with and don’t see listed under the round one Request For Proposals, please tell them to apply through the online expression of interest form.

Q11	Can the Request for Proposal (RFP) include terms for monitoring and maintenance services for interior equipment, such as 5/10 year service plans? Or what is the plan for monitoring and maintenance of internal equipment?	As outlined in section 7.1.2 of the RFP, Applicants that are awarded grants under this Program must manage and maintain the CPE, and as necessary troubleshoot, repair and/or replace CPE throughout the life of the equipment or as long as there is a paying customer using the CPE. Applicants must provide an easy self-installation kit and/or an on-site technician to complete customer installations within 10 business days of requesting service. There are no specific terms that dictate how awardees are to go about monitoring and maintaining CPE.
Q12	Can this presentation be sent out today after the webinar or when will it be sent out?	The presentation and slides were sent to attendees of the Bidder's Conference on 6/5 and is available on the Residential Retrofit solicitation website .
Q13	Is the "public broadband infrastructure" meant to be MBI's middle mile? If so, will there be deep discounts for locations that are currently served by MBI (versus bringing our own fiber to the building)?	The public broadband infrastructure could include MBI's middle mile network as well as any other publicly owned and operated network, any municipally owned fiber, and other state assets. The price of service will be dependent on the agreement that is made with the network operator.
Q14	Is there a common definition of "industry oversubscription ratio best practices" for MDUs?	MBI does not wish to prescribe an oversubscription ratio, rather MBI requests that Applicants explain their oversubscription ratio and provide a justification for it as related to the size and scale of the Project Group.
Q15	Does your target price require equipment fees and all other taxes and fees to be included?	Yes.
Q16	Can ISP's charge an installation fee?	No, Applicants budget proposal should include all costs associated with installation in the network equipment section of the budget worksheet.
Q17	Can ISP's require a contract for service?	Yes.
Q18	Is there a list of qualifying assistance programs for income eligible plans?	Applicants are responsible for providing the criteria regarding their income eligible plans.
Q19	If we offer a bulk service based on owner preference does that qualify for 7.2.1 scoring criteria?	No, Applicants must provide unit level retail service pricing structures to satisfy section 7.2.1. Applicants may provide pricing structures for bulk service in alignment with section 7.3.3.

Q20	Will the "provided devices" be paid for through the grant? Including device and warranty?	No.
Q21	Would "third party digital literacy" be paid for by the grant?	No.
Q22	Is there a bandwidth requirement per client for the Community Benefits WiFi network?	Common area WiFi should generally be able to support 100/20 speeds for a reasonable number of expected users given the size of the building.
Q23	Who holds liability in case of misuse or abuse of the "Free WiFi" network?	The user. The provider should install a home page that outlines the terms and conditions of use of the network.
Q24	Who is tasked with the replacement or upgrade of the "Free WiFi" infrastructure after a designated timeframe?	The Applicant will be responsible for ensuring ongoing service and function of the WiFi network throughout the duration of the federal interest period.
Q25	Does the commitment for free Wi-Fi expire at the end of the Federal Interest Period in 2024?	Yes. The Federal Interest Period expires December 31, 2034.
Q26	Does "True Open Access" mean the secondary ISP will have free access or can the initial ISP charge other ISPs for access?	Applicants may charge for use of Open Access networks constructed under the Retrofit grant. Applicants must provide supporting documentation regarding the reasonableness of proposed rates per market conditions. The RFP and online application have been updated to reflect this requirement.
Q27	Does "shared conduit" mean to the building or internal conduit?	Shared conduit refers to sharing conduit between the street and the building, not sharing conduit that is used as part of inside plant infrastructure inside of the building.
Q28	Does bulk satisfy requirements for 7.2.1?	No.
Q29	Is fixed wireless service allowed?	No. The requirements of the Residential Retrofit program are that providers must build and be able to deliver broadband service via fiber to the building and fiber or CAT6 to the unit.

Q30	Do applicants need to comply with Davis-Bacon Act for prevailing wages and certified payroll, or are there other prevailing wage requirements we should be aware of?	For projects solely funded by the ARPA Capital Projects Fund (“CPF”), Davis-Bacon Act requirements do not apply. See GUIDANCE FOR THE CORONAVIRUS CAPITAL PROJECTS FUND (treasury.gov). However, certification of compliance with Davis-Bacon Act requirements may be used when submitting the mandatory Labor reporting for projects exceeding \$5 million in CPF funding (see Revised-CPF-State-Guidance.pdf (treasury.gov)).
Q31	Can applicants break down project groups?	No, Applicants cannot break down project groups and must include all properties within a project group in their proposal.
Q32	Are grant dollars allowed to be expended to facilitate workforce partnerships and training costs?	Residential Retrofit Program funds cannot be used for workforce partnerships or training costs.
Q33	Could you please share the website again?	https://broadband.masstech.org/retrofit
Q34	Who will create the network design for each site?	Applicants are required to submit a narrative and a logic diagram outlining the design of the network for each Project Group they seek to serve.
Q35	Are applicants required to provide a collaborative agreement with an ISP?	Applicants do not need to provide a collaborative agreement with an ISP but should outline which ISP they plan to partner with under the Key Business partners section of the RFP – see Section 7.2.5 of the RFP.
Q36	Does the management of the solution must be implemented in the proposal?	The Applicant is responsible for the management of solutions included in their respective proposals.
Q37	Could network management become sticky if there are different ways of network design structure between each site?	MBI has chosen to make the network design component of the application a threshold requirement. MBI will review your application against the threshold requirement of the 6 criteria outlined in RFP section 7.1.1. If an Applicant’s network design can meet those requirements, then the Applicant passes that section of the threshold review. MBI anticipates that different providers will have different ideas about how they would approach the network design.

Q38	Is there any standardized solution we can bring to the table to provide a common basic network structure of communication between other sites?	MBI is open to standardized solutions so long as the Applicant’s proposal meets the threshold criteria outlined in the RFP and the Applicant adheres to the guidelines of the RFP – including that project groups cannot be disaggregated, and applicants may not make one project group’s service contingent on the award of another.
Q39	If we are only able to offer bulk Wi-Fi and not retail subscriptions, should we not apply?	The Residential Retrofit Program requires Applicants to offer retail subscriptions, with an option for bulk service.
Q40	It is understood per answers provided during the bidders conference that if a housing authority has multiple buildings, bidders may suggest bringing fiber to 1 building and using wireless tech to distribute internet to the other buildings. Assuming that is true, for project groups that consist of multiple housing authorities, can we bring fiber into one housing authority and wirelessly distribute internet to other housing authorities within the same project group?	Project groups are structured so that all properties are under common ownership, so there would not be a scenario where an Applicant would serve two different housing authorities within the same project group. The RFP requires that each development has a unique fiber connection.
Q41	Will the top 3 bidders for each project group be informed of the current rank prior to the scheduled site visits?	No.

<p>Q42</p>	<p>"Massachusetts Retrofit Questions Section 1.1 of the Application Form asks for both a "Federal ID Number" and a "Tax ID." Is the Tax ID referring to the State of Massachusetts Tax ID, and if so, is the "Federal ID Number" the applicant's Employer Identification Number obtained from the IRS? Or is the Tax ID the federal EIN and the Federal ID Number the applicant's FCC Provider ID or FCC Federal Registration Number?</p>	<p>MBI has updated the Application to only request the Federal ID #.</p>
<p>Q43</p>	<p>Section 1(D) of Exhibit 2 to the Residential Retrofit Grant Agreement Template, entitled Statement of Work, requires an applicant to execute a Fiber IRU agreement before the second Grant Milestone Payment. What are the terms of the Fiber IRU agreement? Is there a draft of the Fiber IRU agreement that is available to applicants? Specifically, what is the specified duration of the Fiber IRU agreement? Can the applicant charge a price for using this fiber?</p>	<p>MBI will provide a draft Fiber IRU at the time of contracting for any winning bidder's review. The Applicant may not charge a price for use of this fiber.</p>

<p>Q44</p>	<p>Page 7 of the PDF version of the Application Form asks applicants to “provide a description of how your organization will ensure ongoing access to service coils at egress/ingress points of any fiber extension and drop to any Property.” Is this question related solely to the 3 strands of dark fiber subject to the Fiber IRU? Where do the strands terminate on each end?</p>	<p>Yes, this is related solely to the 3 strands of dark fiber subject to the fiber IRU.</p> <p>The A-end of the 3 strands is outside of the building at the location where new fiber optic cabling (proposed to be installed as part of an application) is spliced into an ISP’s existing fiber optic infrastructure.</p> <p>The Z-end of the 3 strands is adjacent to the termination panel inside of the building that terminates the fiber optic cabling that came in from the street.</p> <p>Service coils are to be left at both the A and Z ends of the 3 strands of dark fiber.</p>
<p>Q45</p>	<p>Page 9 of the PDF version of the Application Form asks whether the applicant offers “a low cost broadband (100mbps upload / 20mbps download) subscription to income eligible residents?” Was this intended to state 100mbps download / 20mbps upload?</p>	<p>Yes – the online application has now been corrected.</p>
<p>Q46</p>	<p>Page 24 of the PDF version of the Application Form contains a Budget Summary table. The second row of this table asks for information regarding “Answer 1.” What is Answer 1 referring to?</p>	<p>This is a function of the export of the survey from an online tool to PDF.</p> <p>Please disregard this row – in the online form there will not be a statement of Answer 1.</p>
<p>Q47</p>	<p>Page 31 of the PDF version of the Application Form states: “Applicants are not required to participate in community/tenant engagement activities and can indicate so below.” Does community/tenant engagement refer to the Community Benefits described in the same section? In other words, is providing “Community Benefits” optional?</p>	<p>Yes, Community/Tenant Engagement and Community Benefits are the same thing. Community benefits are optional. If an Applicant does not plan to offer community benefits, they must indicate so in response to the question.</p>

<p>Q48</p>	<p>Page 32 of the PDF version of the Application Form states: “Does your organization plan to utilize public broadband infrastructure assets - as defined in section 2.1 of the RFP - as part of your application for this Project Group?” Section 2.1 of the RFP does not define public broadband infrastructure assets. What definition should the applicant use?</p>	<p>Public Broadband Infrastructure is defined as any physical asset that facilitates the access or use of broadband services that is publicly owned and/or operated that affords equal access to all customers, content providers, and service providers. These assets can include but are not limited to middle mile networks, municipally-owned FTTx networks, dark fiber assets, points of presence, and other forms of infrastructure.</p> <p>These physical assets must be owned by a state, county, or municipal entity/agency, including quasi-public or public authorities, and other government entities.</p>
<p>Q49</p>	<p>In section 3.1 of the Application Form, the design requirements state there must be “Fiber backhaul to the building.” Does this prohibit use of an MDF room in a main building of a complex feeding via fiber or CAT 6 to an IDF room in related buildings?"</p>	<p>No. For developments that have multiple buildings, applicants may propose network designs where a fiber drop is constructed to a single building and then cabled to associated buildings via fiber or CAT 6</p>
<p>Q50</p>	<p>How can housing sites enter to be considered for future rounds of funding for the Residential Retrofit Program?</p>	<p>Housing sites can fill out this ongoing expression of interest form to be considered for future rounds of funding for both the Residential Retrofit and Apartment Wi-Fi programs. This is also available through MBI’s Residential Retrofit webpage.</p>
<p>Q51</p>	<p>The RFP states that funds are available for “Installation of fiber construction into Affordable Housing building” as well as “In-building wiring installation of fiber or CAT 6 cabling into units within eligible properties”. If we desire to connect the community to the Internet via fixed wireless, and the costs of the fixed wireless equipment are not paid for using program funds, are we still eligible to receive funds for in-building wiring installation of fiber or CAT 6, and for Networking equipment used for in-building distribution?</p>	<p>Yes. So long as the Applicant’s proposal meets all RFP requirements, including the fiber deployment to the building and fiber or CAT6 cabling to the unit, and retail service deployment over that network structure, the Applicant may leverage infrastructure deployed under the Retrofit program for fixed wireless deployment in the surrounding community. Costs associated with additional equipment required for fixed wireless deployment are not eligible under the Retrofit program and would need to be paid for outside of the context of the Retrofit grant program.</p>

Q52	Q52. Can the grant funding be used to pay for fixed wireless transmission between buildings within the community? And, if agreeable with the building owner, does the MBI have any opposition to the provider using its facilities to provide fixed wireless internet service to other MDUs within the vicinity of the property?	Grant funds may be used to provide point to point wireless transmission of backhaul within a given project group. Grant funds may not be used to cover costs associated with providing fixed wireless service to other MDU's within the vicinity of the property, but any given Applicant may leverage infrastructure deployed under the Retrofit program for future deployment of fixed wireless assets.
Q53	What would be your Z Location for the dark fiber?	See response to Q44.
Q54	What will the dark fiber be used for?	See response to question 9.
Q55	With regard to the proposed draft grant agreement, where in the application may applicants propose edits to language included in the draft agreement?	Applicants that are selected to receive funding may propose non-substantive changes to non-mandatory provisions in the agreement prior to contract execution.
Q56	How will the grant award consider the change order process, that is, if there are material changes in costs or schedule due to information not reasonably known to the applicant at the time of applying or during the site visit? For example, the presence of asbestos or additional layers of concrete may not be known until the construction process has commenced.	MBI will evaluate change order requests on a case-by-case basis and make a determination based on: 1) whether the costs could have reasonably been known at the time of application and/or site visit; and 2) the reasonableness of the funding request for the additional work proposed.
Q57	Are the property owners of the eligible locations amenable to allowing applicants to conduct a site visit before the response is submitted?	No. Only the top three scoring applicants for any given project group will be allowed to conduct a site visit.

Q58	How (can) respondents can obtain additional information or certifications (i.e., related to asbestos) for each property?	MassDEP has a portal that allows the search of asbestos projects by address. Link to the online portal here: https://www.mass.gov/asbestos-project-lookup . Applicants may request additional information related to asbestos during scheduled site visits as outlined in Section 6.4 of the RFP.
Q59	With respect to Section 7.1.7, is the draft property owner agreement to be submitted with the RFP response? If so, can applicants include conditional provisions to be resolved post site visit?	The draft property owner agreement must be submitted with the RFP response. Applicants may include conditional provisions to be resolved post site visit.
Q60	Please clarify the request for a narrative description of previous experience (RFP section 7.2.3). Does an applicant satisfy the request with a description of its operations and deployment experience, or must an applicant have experience with a similar retrofit program? What other experience is preferred (i.e., experience with large government-subsidized projects or large-scale construction projects)?	Applicants should use this section to describe projects related to the deployment of fiber to buildings and fiber or CAT 6 cabling within multi dwelling unit buildings (MDUs). If those projects were funded under government grants that have relatable characteristics to the Retrofit program the Applicant should indicate so. An Applicant should also use this section to describe any experience it has with projects that are similar in size and scope to the Retrofit Program.
Q61	The US Treasury has exempted ARPA\CPF projects from the Davis Bacon Act. Please confirm that there are no state or local wage laws applicable to the projects funded under this program. If applicable, provide the associated wage determination or requirements.	There are no applicable state or local wage laws for projects funded exclusively with CPF funds. However, certification of compliance with Davis-Bacon Act requirements or related state laws, commonly known as “baby Davis-Bacon Acts”, may be used when submitting the mandatory Labor reporting for projects exceeding \$5 million in CPF funding (see Revised-CPF-State-Guidance.pdf (treasury.gov)). For additional information regarding wage determinations, and rates please visit the Department of Labor website at https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/government-contracts/construction/guidance

Q62	Please clarify when a proposed Fiber IRU will be provided for review before the deadline for responses	MBI will provide a draft Fiber IRU at the time of contracting for winning bidders to review.
Q63	Please confirm that Applicants can propose or negotiate terms of the Fiber IRU	See response to Question 62.
Q64	Please confirm that the MBI intends to use the dedicated fiber strands only for administrative, non-competitive uses	See response to question 9.
Q65	Please confirm that the intended use of and scope of/access (i.e., limited to fiber) at the actual property and not any portion of the network within public rights-of-way.	MBI's fiber rights are exclusive to any fiber cable constructed under the Retrofit grant program and would not apply to pre-existing infrastructure in the public right of way.
Q66	Would the MBI consider extending the deadline given that the RFP calls for innovative solutions and such solutions must be considered taking into consideration the unique characteristics of each eligible property group.	No.
Q67	Is fixed wireless service allowed?	No
Q68	The RFP states that Applicants must also provide evidence of officer certification of compliance with local, state, and federal tax laws and compliance with all applicable regulatory requirements, but there is no location in the online form to provide that evidence. Where should we submit this statement?	Applicants should upload the officer certification along with audited or unaudited financials within the Financial Statements upload section.

<p>Q69</p>	<p>The online application requests that the Applicant provide standard operating procedures for replacing or upgrading CPE and on site installation in Section 2: Standard Business Practices section and then again in the Section 3.1 Network Design section. Do we need to provide this information in both sections of the online application?</p>	<p>No, please only provide this information in the Standard Business Operations section. The online application has been updated to reflect this change.</p>
<p>Q70</p>	<p>The RFP and online application state that if applicants cannot commit to an expected completion date of 7/30/26 they should provide detail how it will guarantee substantial completion prior to the federal deadline of September 31 2026 – but there is nowhere in the online application to provide that additional information. Where should we provide that information?</p>	<p>The online application has been updated. There is now a text entry field following the Milestone matrix in section 3.2 of the online application to provide this narrative if needed.</p>
<p>Q71</p>	<p>Section 7.2.5.A of the RFP indicates that applicants may be awarded up to 2 points for clearly defined roles and responsibilities of the key staff assigned to the project, however there is no place in the online application to provide a narrative of key staff roles and responsibilities. Where should we provide that information?</p>	<p>Section 3.4 of the online application has been updated to include a question after the Resume's / Bio's upload where applicants can provide the roles and responsibilities of key staff.</p>