

MA TechHubs Q&A Document

Eligibility & Geography

Q: May Entrepreneur Support Organizations (ESOs) be for-profit entities or only non-profit?

A: All lead applicants must be a not-for-profit entity such as non-profits, government agencies, colleges/universities. A Massachusetts public-benefit corporation under M.G.L.Ch. 156E is also eligible for the TechHubs program, but if awarded a grant they must maintain their public benefit corporation status for the term of the grant/agreement.

Q: Can one region apply for different opportunities? For example, could one partner within a collaboration apply for a strategic grant and another partner apply for a transformation grant? Understanding that different organizations within one ecosystem might be in different places/stages of growth?

A: Yes, one region can apply for different opportunities. However, there needs to be coordination within the ecosystem or region. Applications for different grant types originating from the same region should generally focus on different industries. Consideration should also be given to the bandwidth and resources necessary to effectively execute multiple grants in a region if awarded.

Q: Are applicants permitted to collaborate with regions outside MA?

A: While regions may collaborate with assets and partners beyond their geographic boundaries, the core activities must maintain a strong center of gravity within the identified region to ensure impactful, coordinated outcomes.

Q: What qualifications are required/recognized for the RIO?

A: No specific qualifications are required for the regional innovation officer. The program leaves it up to the applicant and stakeholders involved to identify someone they think is qualified for the role.

Q: Are you looking to fund ecosystems concentrated in a specific geographic region in the state, or an ecosystem focus that connects across the state?

A: The program will fund ecosystems concentrated in a specific geographic region within Massachusetts. A "region" for the purposes of the MA TechHubs Program is defined as a geographically cohesive area within the Commonwealth where assets, activities, and partnerships are concentrated to drive place-based economic growth.

Q: Must the Tech Hub's geography be a city, or can the Hub be a cluster of emerging tech businesses in a combination of cities and towns?

A: The TechHub's geography needs to be a defined region rather than a group of companies.

Q: Are there certain parts of the state that you won't be funding in?

A: The TechHubs program does not disqualify any specific parts of the state. However, it is designed to prioritize reaching unserved and underserved areas and communities that traditionally do not benefit from the innovation and technology economy

Terminology & Definitions

Q: How do you define a "scaling company?"

A: The program does not provide a specific definition of a "scaling company". It is understood that the definition of a scaling company will vary for different regions depending on their unique circumstances and stage of growth. Therefore, applicants should provide demonstrative examples of how their identified scaling companies can achieve scale and contribute to the region's economic development.

Q: How is the ERL taken into consideration when reviewing applications?

A: The Ecosystem Readiness Level (ERL) is a framework to guide your thinking and the program's review process. Your self-assessment will help determine the types of activities that would be most appropriate to support advancement to the next ERL. There is no judgment associated with any particular ERL. The program encourages applicants at all stages of development, from nascent to more mature ecosystems, to apply.

Q: Do you have specific definition about the ERL level and details as we may find in TRL and MRL?

A: All nine levels of the ERL are defined in detail in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) available on the program's website. The program's focus is on the readiness of the ecosystem, not the technological readiness level (TRL or MRL) of specific technologies within it.

Q: What role does the preferred sector areas have on the selection process?

A: While MassTech identifies a broad list of priority industry and technology areas in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), the program is not ranking specific sectors as being more important than others. Instead, the emphasis is on how a region's concentrations of expertise within sectors can drive activities that grow the local economy.

Grant Tracks

Q: If you plan to grant 2 Transformation Grants, is there a limit to how many concept papers you expect to invite to submit full applications?

A: No.

Q: If you apply for a strategy grant and are successful...is the designation automatic?

A: Yes.

Q: If you apply for a transformational grant, but you are more aligned with a strategy development grant, will the application be moved to the strategy development track?

A: No, it is unlikely that an application submitted for a transformational grant will be moved to the strategy development track if it appears to be a better fit for the latter. The program

emphasizes that applicants need to be thoughtful in deciding which track they are applying for based on their specific needs.

Q: Are there specific consultants that can assist with strategy development that can be funded by a grant?

A: MassTech does not have a list of specific consultants that can assist with TechHub projects. While consultants are not precluded from being a part of a proposal to assist with strategy development, the program is not looking to primarily support consultant studies. The projects need to demonstrate a commitment and intellectual value from the key actors within the region.

Industry & Technology Focus Areas

Q: Can you explain what you see as the difference between bio-industrial and non-therapeutic biomanufacturing?

A: Both terms describe using biological systems (like bacteria, yeast, enzymes, or other living cells and their components) to produce goods—just not for medical or therapeutic use. Bioindustrial manufacturing focuses on industrial-scale production of chemicals, fuels, materials, and other bulk products using biological processes. Nontherapeutic biomanufacturing refers more broadly to making any bio-based product not intended for therapeutic use. This can include industrial products but also specialty enzymes, flavors, fragrances, cosmetics ingredients, food additives, and more.

Q: Would workflow automation efforts for a municipality be considered?

A: Workflow automation for a municipality will not be considered as aligning with the goals of the MA TechHub program.

Q: Can the proposed work address multiple industry sectors/emerging tech areas? Do we need to identify a specific tech area OR industry sector to target?

A: Applicants must choose to focus on a specific industry sector, technology, or a combination of sectors and technologies.

Funding & Budgets

Q: Are future solicitations for the Tech Hubs program anticipated beyond this round?

A: There is authorization beyond what is currently available through this award. Future solicitations will be timed and sized based on the available bond cap provided by the Executive Office of Administration and Finance.

Q: Will there be future funding for groups who receive strategy development grants to move to the transformation level?

A: There is potential for future funding for groups who receive strategy development grants to move to the transformation level. Future solicitations and funding decisions will be timed and sized based on the available bond cap provided by the Executive Office of Administration and Finance.

Q: Can you speak to the Capital Funds for a leased property vs. an owned asset?

A: Leases are capitalizable. However, it is not necessarily a preferred use of funding, and applicants should aim to keep lease costs to a reasonable percentage of their overall funding request. If a lease is included in the project budget, particular attention should be paid to the sustainability of the project.

Q: Is there a document laying out guidelines for in-kind?

A: There isn't a dedicated document with detailed in-kind contribution guidelines. However, the program accepts a wide range of in-kind contributions (e.g., quantifiable staff time, material donations, or partner support) as long as applicants can clearly quantify their value. Applicants can refer to the program's standard grant templates on the MassTech website for a broader look at overall financial requirements and obligations.

Q: Could you provide some examples of items we can include in the budget for the Strategy Development Grants track? Would student support be allowed if the proposal comes from a higher education institution?

A: Yes, you can include human resource costs including those for student support in the budget for strategy development grants. Other examples of strategy development costs may include costs to run workshops or conferences, general expenses related to understanding the needs and opportunities of your region, general expenses related to drafting the proposal and demonstrating the viability of your region as a TechHub.

Q: Regarding the transformation grants, is the max grant of \$5M for 1 grant or is it for the 2 grants?

A: The maximum award for Transformation Grants is \$5M per grant.

Q: Will University applicants for the transformation grant be allowed to charge indirect cost?

A: Yes.

Program Logistics & Application Process

Q: What is the value of the commitment letter from the municipal executive? What kinds of help have such executives offered other programs that we might suggest to our own executives? Can we request executives from multiple municipalities we're working with?

A: The value of the commitment letter from the municipal executive is that it serves as a demonstration that what you are proposing is important to the jurisdiction. Yes, you can request letters from executives from multiple municipalities you are working with.

Q: Can you elaborate on the kinds of workforce development activities you are looking for (e.g., trainings, workshops) and target audience?

A: The MA TechHubs program is not specifically looking for any particular kind of workforce development activities or target audiences. Instead, applicants are asked to define what they believe will have a measurable impact in their region.