



## **Request for Information on Massachusetts Broadband Institute's Residential Internet Retrofit Program**

**RFI No. 2024-MBI-05**

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

<b>Issue Date:</b>	<b>March 20, 2024</b>
<b>Questions Due:</b>	<b>March 29, 2024</b>
<b>Answers to Questions Posted:</b>	<b>April 5, 2024</b>
<b>Responses Due:</b>	<b>April 17, 2024 by 5PM</b>

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Overview**

Massachusetts Technology Collaborative (“Mass Tech Collaborative” or “MassTech”), on behalf of the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (“MBI”), is issuing this Request for Information on MBI’s Residential Internet Retrofit Program (RFI No. 2024-MBI-05) (the “RFI”) to solicit responses from interested parties (“Respondents”) in the field of broadband infrastructure installation, construction and service in public housing and affordable housing buildings. Respondents to this RFI are invited to respond to any or all of the questions in this RFI. This RFI does not obligate MassTech to issue or amend a solicitation or to include any of the RFI provisions or responses in any solicitation. An RFI response is entirely voluntary and it will not affect MassTech’s consideration of any proposal submitted in response to a subsequent solicitation, nor will it serve as an advantage or disadvantage to the Respondent in the course of any solicitation that may be subsequently issued or amended.

### **1.2 Mass Tech Collaborative and MBI**

Mass Tech Collaborative is an independent public instrumentality of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts chartered by the Commonwealth to serve as a catalyst for growing its innovation economy. Mass Tech Collaborative brings together leaders from industry, academia, and government to advance technology-focused solutions that lead to economic growth, job creation, and public benefits in Massachusetts. For additional information about Mass Tech Collaborative and its programs and initiatives, please visit [www.masstech.org](http://www.masstech.org).

MBI is the central broadband office for the Commonwealth. The primary mission of MBI is to extend affordable, robust, high speed internet access to all homes, businesses, schools, libraries, medical facilities, government offices, and other public places across Massachusetts, with a focus on the hard-to-serve areas of western and central Massachusetts. For more information about MBI and its program and activities, please visit [www.massbroadband.org](http://www.massbroadband.org).

### **1.3 Overview of MBI’s Residential Internet Retrofit Program**

Of the \$175 million of American Rescue Plan Act Capital Project Funds (“CPF”) allocated to the Commonwealth<sup>1</sup>, \$22 million is designated to a new Residential Internet Retrofit Program (the “Program”) to be administered by MBI. This Program will serve to not only remediate immediate issues associated with residential internet quality of service but make a transformational investment that will ensure residents of participating public and affordable housing developments in the Commonwealth have the infrastructure needed to support high speed internet for the foreseeable future. MBI has identified four (4) primary areas for capital investment of CPF funds as part of this Program:

- Installation of fiber construction into public and affordable housing buildings;
- Installation of fiber or CAT 6 cabling into units within public and affordable housing buildings;
- Installation of smart panels or other needed in-unit termination points for improved wiring within public and affordable housing buildings; and
- Other required cabling, RF, or telecommunications equipment as required by individual building conditions within public and affordable housing buildings.

The majority of Program costs will fund the acquisition and installation of target capital assets. Capital

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<sup>1</sup> MassTech has been awarded a grant for the Residential Internet Retrofit Program from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Economic Development (“EOED”), funded from the U.S. Department of Treasury’s Capital Projects Fund (“CPF”) established under the provisions of the American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA”).

investments will be focused on multi dwelling unit (“MDU”) properties designated as public housing and deed restricted affordable rental housing. The objective is to remove barriers to reliable broadband service to enable eligible households to utilize the internet for essential activities that are best pursued in a private space, including remote work, education, and health monitoring.

MBI has structured this Program by first compiling an inventory of property owners and properties interested in participating in the program that will be updated on a quarterly basis. MBI has created an online Expression of Interest form that interested property owners can fill out to submit baseline criteria regarding each building’s size/number of units, construction, age, ownership status (public, private, non-profit), percent of affordable units, current wiring infrastructure, and other relevant information. Initial guidelines for the Program, including eligibility criteria, have been posted with the Expression of Interest form. More information about the Program can be found on the MBI website at <https://broadband.masstech.org/retrofit>.

MBI reviews the information provided by property owners to determine eligibility for participation in the Program and will execute agreements with each eligible property owner that is accepted for participation in the Program.

## **2. REQUEST FOR INFORMATION**

### **2.1 Introduction**

MassTech is issuing this RFI to publicize the list of potentially eligible properties based on information currently available to MBI (see Attachment C, “Potentially Eligible Properties”) and to gather information from Internet Service Providers (“ISPs”) to assess the level of interest and potential costs from the private market in making building-scale investments. The primary goal of this RFI is to gather information from qualified parties to support and inform a subsequent Request for Proposal (“RFP”) to solicit grant applications through an open and competitive process from ISPs and other broadband infrastructure owners for fiber construction and in-building and in-unit installation of cabling and related equipment at eligible properties. Each quarterly RFP will include a list of the actual properties that have been approved by MBI through the expression of interest process and that are being put out to bid. This RFI does not constitute a solicitation for bids or proposals and will not result in a contract award based on information provided in response to this request. Respondents are not constrained in providing information in response to this RFI and are encouraged to provide further information in support of the stated purpose that may be responsive and relevant. MassTech reserves the right to use any information obtained through this process to draft a procurement document in the future that requests responses in a more formal and binding nature than this RFI.

### **2.2 Questions**

**Question 1:** MBI plans to publish the following data points (in addition to basic address / ownership information) for the properties submitted by Housing Operators and determined to be eligible by MBI as part of the RFP to inform ISPs bids.

- Average Unit Square Footage
- Construction Material
- # 1 BR Units
- # 2 BR Units
- # 3 BR Units
- # 4 BR Units
- Total Units
- Total Buildings
- Stories
- Year Constructed
- Year Renovated

What additional property information would be useful in developing an initial bid?

**Question 2:** Which properties in Attachment C would you be interested in serving (based on

Expression of Interest and general MDU database)? Append with downloadable excel file – return RFI w/ selections.

**Question 3:** Please describe your current speed/pricing options that you would make available to residents of public and affordable housing as part of this Program, including discounted plans for income eligible residents. Please describe any bulk, enterprise, or building level service options that your organization is willing to offer as well.

**Question 4:** How can access to public real estate assets (rights of way, rooftops, water towers, etc.) be leveraged to reduce operating expenses/end user monthly service cost and what information would be required in a RFP to make an assessment of this opportunity?

**Question 5:** Under what conditions would capital installation costs decrease for installing fiber into apartment buildings and to the unit? Will providing service to multiple sites in close proximity, or scattered across the state impact efficiencies? How can MBI structure the RFP to increase efficiencies?

**Questions 6:** MBI will require grantees to deed three strands of fiber to MBI. MBI currently expects that this would include accessible service coils at ingress/egress points of any fiber extension and drop to a premise to insure a long-term public interest in these projects. Please describe how your organization would accommodate this public interest requirement, including any recommendations related to technical implementation.

**Question 7:** What are the anticipated needs around access to an appropriately skilled and trained workforce to meet the demands of this Program? At what scale of work would new and/or additional labor be required? Are there any labor categories/job classifications where a potential shortage could arise? Are there any existing gaps in training, apprenticeships, etc.? What relationships exist among academia (vocational schools, colleges, universities, etc.), businesses and workforce development providers? How can MBI facilitate these relationships?

**Question 8:** What did we miss? Respondents are invited to provide additional relevant information. Marketing materials are disfavored.

### **3. GUIDELINES FOR RESPONSES**

3.1 There is no specific page limit on the response to this RFI, but Respondents are asked to be concise. Elaborate proposals or extensive statements of qualifications are neither required nor expected.

3.2 Responses are due by **5:00 PM EST on April 17, 2024**. All responses must be submitted **electronically through MBI's online form, [linked here](#)**. The form requests that Respondents provide basic contact and organizational information and will allow for the upload of a .doc(x) or .PDF with responses to the eight questions outlined above. It will also allow for the upload of an .xls(x) file where your organization can indicate which potentially eligible locations it would be interested in serving (see Question 2).

3.4 Any and all data, materials, and documentation submitted to MassTech in response to this RFI shall become MassTech's property and shall be subject to public disclosure under the Massachusetts Public Records Act.

3.5 By executing the Authorized Respondent's Signature and Acceptance Form and submitting a response to this RFI, Respondent certifies that it (1) acknowledges and understands the procedures for handling materials submitted to MassTech, as set forth in Attachment A, (2) agrees to be bound by those procedures, and (3) agrees that Mass Tech shall not be liable under any circumstances for the disclosure of any materials submitted to it pursuant to this RFI.

3.6 Questions regarding this RFI may be submitted by via this [online form](#). Questions must be received by **5:00 PM EST on March 29, 2024**. All answers to questions will be posted on the MassTech website by **5:00 PM EST on April 5, 2024**.

3.7 This RFI does not commit the Mass Tech Collaborative to select any firm(s), award any work order, pay any costs incurred in preparing a response, award any grants, or procure or contract for any services or supplies. The Mass Tech Collaborative reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to accept or reject any or all submittals received, negotiate with any or all qualified respondents, and request modifications to responses in accordance with such negotiations; request supplemental or clarifying information from respondents; or cancel, amend or modify the RFI in part or in its entirety.

**ATTACHMENT A**

**THE MASSACHUSETTS TECHNOLOGY COLLABORATIVE**

**POLICY AND PROCEDURES REGARDING SUBMISSION OF “SENSITIVE INFORMATION”**

Any and all responses, applications, data, materials, information and documentation submitted to Mass Tech Collaborative in response to this RFI shall become Mass Tech Collaborative’s property and shall be subject to public disclosure. As a public entity, the Mass Tech Collaborative is subject to the Massachusetts Public Records Law (set forth at Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 66). There are very limited and narrow exceptions to disclosure under the Public Records Law. If a Respondent wishes to have the Mass Tech Collaborative treat certain information or documentation as confidential, the Respondent must submit a written request to the Mass Tech Collaborative’s General Counsel’s office no later than 5:00 p.m. five (5) business days prior to the required date of Response submission set forth in Section 3.2 above. The request must precisely identify the information and/or documentation that is the subject of the request and provide a detailed explanation supporting the application of the statutory exemption(s) from the public records cited by the Respondent. The General Counsel will issue a written determination within five (5) business days of receipt of the written request. If the General Counsel approves the request, the Respondent shall clearly label the relevant information and/or documentation as “CONFIDENTIAL” in the Response. Any statements in an Application reserving any confidentiality or privacy rights that is inconsistent with these requirements and procedures will be disregarded.

**ATTACHMENT B**

**MASSACHUSETTS TECHNOLOGY COLLABORATIVE**

**AUTHORIZED RESPONDENT'S SIGNATURE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM**

The undersigned is a duly authorized representative of the Respondent listed below. The Respondent has read and understands the RFI (No.2024-MBI-05). The Respondent specifically acknowledges the application of the procedures regarding submission and disclosure of sensitive information as set forth in Attachment A of the RFI, and specifically agrees that it shall be bound by those procedures.

I certify that the information provided in response to the RFI is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Respondent: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Printed Name of Respondent Organization)

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Authorized Representative)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**ATTACHMENT C**

**MASSACHUSETTS TECHNOLOGY COLLABORATIVE**

**POTENTIALLY ELIGIBLE PROPERTIES AS OF 3/19/2024 LINKED HERE:**

<https://masstech.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/Retrofit%20RFI%20Attachment%20C%20Potentially%20Eligible%20Locations.xlsx>