



Request for Proposals: Minority- and Women-owned
Business Enterprise Support Grants FY24
MASSCEC-WFD-02232024

Date of Issue: February 23, 2024
Proposals Due: April 26, 2024

Anticipated Funding Available: \$4,040,000

All proposals must be submitted to:
rfpworkforce@masscec.com
by 11:59 on April 26, 2024

1. SUMMARY OF OPPORTUNITY

Through this Request for Proposals (“RFP”), the Massachusetts Clean Energy Technology Center (“MassCEC”) continues the Minority- and Women-owned Business Enterprise (“MWBE”) Support Grants. MWBE Support Grants support initiatives that assist Massachusetts-based MWBEs entering and expanding into fields that are critical to meeting the Commonwealth’s climate goals of reaching net zero emissions by 2050. Proposed initiatives may include facilitating the attainment of Massachusetts Supplier Diversity Office or other similar certification by MWBEs, providing administrative and back-office support necessary for the creation and growth of new MWBEs, educating MWBEs about clean energy procurement opportunities and connecting them to prospective buyers, as well as supporting existing MWBEs in becoming competitive in clean energy and climate critical business fields.

Please refer to Section 3 of this RFP for a more complete definition of “Minority- and Women-owned Business Enterprise (MWBE)” and “climate critical business fields”.

Applicants may apply for MWBE Support Grants for programming that falls within one (1) or more of the following categories:

- **Strand A:** Training, Certification, and Support Services for Climate-Critical MWBEs; or
- **Strand B:** Access to Capital for Climate-Critical MWBEs.

Initiatives funded under this RFP are not intended to support one (1) or a very-limited number of MWBEs and are instead intended to standup or expand support programs accessible to a broad group of prospective MWBEs relative to the amount of funding awarded.

Based on coverage currently provided by active MWBE Support Grant awardees, MassCEC has identified a need for additional support initiatives eligible for funding under Strand A to be offered to MWBEs in several regions of the Commonwealth, including those regions that fall within the Central, Northeast, and Southeast Workforce Skills Cabinet Regions.¹ Applications serving MWBEs in these regions may be viewed more favorably, however applications covering other areas will be considered.

Strand B is designed to address one (1) of the significant barriers to MWBE success – disparities in access to needed capital for business growth. Strand B is not targeted at individual MWBEs seeking direct funding and is instead intended to support organizations that can coordinate the MWBE Support Grant awardees in developing a shared approach to increasing access to capital for climate-critical MWBEs. This work will likely include identifying existing resources for MWBEs, developing guidance content on accessing those resources for both support organizations and MWBEs, suggesting approaches to further tailoring those resources to the unique needs of climate-critical MWBEs, and designing mechanisms and shared frameworks to

¹ <https://www.mass.gov/doc/wsc-regional-map/download>

streamline the qualification of eligible MWBEs and distribution of funds to those MWBEs by MWBE Support Grant awardees.

Depending on the type of request, applicants to Strand A may apply for Two Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$250,000) to One Million Dollars (\$1,000,000) in funding for work completed over a period of one (1) to three (3) years, and applicants to Strand B may apply for up to Two Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$250,000) for work completed over one (1) or two (2) years. MassCEC may consider alternative award amounts if provided reasonable justification and scale of impact. Details about the range of acceptable funding requests across the various strand options are outlined in Section 4. Budget.

Details about the application process are outlined in Section 8. How to Apply.

Applications for MWBE Support Grants are due by 11:59 pm on April 26, 2024 and must be submitted via the rfpworkforce@masscec.com inbox.

2. ABOUT MASSCEC

MassCEC is a state economic development agency dedicated to accelerating the growth of the clean energy field across the Commonwealth to spur job creation, deliver statewide environmental benefits and to secure long-term economic growth for the people of Massachusetts. MassCEC works to increase the adoption of clean energy while driving down costs and delivering financial, environmental, and economic development benefits to energy users and utility customers across the state.

MassCEC's mission is to accelerate the clean energy and climate solution innovation that is critical to meeting the Commonwealth's climate goals, advancing Massachusetts' position as an international climate leader while growing the state's clean energy economy. MassCEC is committed to creating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive organization where everyone is welcomed, supported, respected, and valued. We are committed to incorporating principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and environmental justice in all aspects of our work to promote the equitable distribution of the health and economic benefits of clean energy and support a diverse and inclusive clean energy industry. MassCEC strives to lead and innovate in equitable clean energy and climate solutions.

3. MWBE SUPPORT PROGRAM GOALS AND DESCRIPTION

Funds for this program will be expended from Equity Workforce Training Funds, created through the March 2021 Climate Legislation, *An Act Creating a Next Generation Roadmap for Massachusetts Climate Policy* (the "Act"). The Act allocates \$12 Million annually in funding to MassCEC to support:

- Small business enterprises that are minority- and women-owned;

- Individuals residing within an Environmental Justice or low-income community;
- Current and former workers from the fossil fuel industry;
- Federally recognized and State-acknowledged tribes within the Commonwealth; and
- Other businesses or communities underrepresented in the clean energy workforce or clean energy industry.

Minority- and Women-owned Business Enterprise (MWBE) Support Program Goals:

Funding from this RFP is intended for an organization that can support Minority- and Women-owned Businesses Enterprises and the creation of MWBEs in Massachusetts for the following goals:

- **Increase MWBE business activity** in climate critical business fields;
- **Increase expertise of MWBE's** in climate critical business fields;
- **Grow employment and revenue of existing MWBEs** that operate in climate critical business fields and continue long-term growth strategies;
- **Create new MWBE firms** in climate critical fields and support healthy long-term growth of those firms; and
- **Tie together relevant existing support for small businesses and fill gaps in support** for MWBEs focusing on climate critical business fields.

This funding is **not intended to benefit a single MWBE**, but instead is intended to support an organization that can help several different MWBEs grow and excel in climate critical business sectors.

For the minimum award amount of Two Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$250,000) under Strand A, MassCEC expects that applicant organizations should be supporting at least five (5) MWBEs. MassCEC does not expect applicant organizations proposing to spend more than Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000) per MWBE supported under Strand A to score competitively unless there is a very strong rationale and evidence of transformative outcomes.

Key Considerations in Program Design under Strand A:

While by no means exhaustive, the list below highlights relevant design considerations and best practices:

- **To effectively address specific barriers to success**, strategies to support MWBEs must be tailored to the specific challenges, mindful of the stage of business development, and transparent about how the model may or may not fit the needs of different businesses and individuals.
- **Support organizations can maximize impact by addressing both “supply” and “demand” needs.** For example, working with MWBEs to ensure that they are certified by the Massachusetts Supplier Diversity Office has greater effect when organizations

also work to increase the demand for certified MWBEs and help their stakeholders understand how best to access these procurement opportunities.

- **Tailor recruitment, retention services, and resources to the specific types of MWBEs that are to be served.** Depending on the sector and stage of businesses that organizations seek to support, different models and service offerings are likely to have variable success and impact. Stakeholder engagements to inform a needs assessment process and model development can ensure that organizations have a clearer idea of whether offerings like MWBE incubators/ accelerators, communities of practice, business advisory services, industry-specific programming, or other strategies are going to be the most beneficial.
- **Establish clear eligibility requirements and rigorous, transparent, and thorough intake and assessment processes.** Intake and assessment stages not only allow for program administrators to check eligibility and gauge level of need, both in terms of support services and capital, but also serve as important touchpoints to set clear participation and reporting standards with participants that may impact long term success.
- **Comprehensive support and wraparound services for program participants** can improve retention and extend the capacity of MWBEs to engage fully in proposed programming. Building these supports into the design and budget of the program in advance not only prioritizes the needs of the participants, but it also normalizes that entrepreneurs can be successful and still need additional support in the form of access to transportation, training stipends, extended career counseling, and referrals for other services.
- **Partnering is essential for the success of individual programs and the growth of the broader support ecosystem.** Business support needs span so many categories and services that is important for support organizations to clearly delineate which services they are best equipped to offer internally, which ones they want to partner to offer, and which services can only be offered through referral to other organizations.

Applicants under Strand B should not intend to directly distribute funds to MWBEs. The award amount of up to Two Hundred Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$250,000) is intended to support research of existing resources, engagement with stakeholders, development of a strategy to address barriers to utilizing existing resources, direct education of current MWBEs on existing programs, and creation of a recommendation on the best approach to addressing gaps to access to capital faced by MWBEs.

Key Considerations in Program Design under Strand B:

While by no means exhaustive, the list below highlights relevant design considerations and best practices:

- **Research existing funding resources and opportunities available to MWBEs** in the Commonwealth by identifying key financial institutions and organizations serving

MWBEs, ascertaining eligibility criteria and application processes, and gauging applicability to climate-critical MWBEs.

- **Engage with stakeholders to understand more deeply the barriers to accessing capital by MWBEs** in climate-critical sectors. Directly gathering feedback from both MWBE Support Grant organizations and MWBEs will enable determining whether the barriers stem from lack of awareness of funding resources, systemic barriers, unique funding needs of MWBEs in climate-critical sectors, or some other factors.
- **Develop a strategy to address identified barriers** including directly collaborating with existing MWBE Grant awardees to deliver educational training, produce tailored content, host convenings, or foster direct matchmaking with existing funders.
- **Create a final recommendation identifying gaps in funding and mapping out solutions to address the gaps.** The final recommendation should clearly propose approaches and mechanisms to provide additional access to funding for climate-critical MWBEs that may include leveraging a proven financial institution or organization with which MassCEC can partner to develop a portfolio of funding solutions geared towards climate-critical MWBEs. The proposal should cover best practices for qualifying MWBEs, administering and monitoring mixed stream funding sources, and overseeing reversions or rescissions.

Examples of Appropriate Programs:

MassCEC supports diverse approaches to achieving the goals of this solicitation. Some examples of appropriate proposed programs include, but are not limited to:

Strand	Examples
<p>Strand A: Training, Certification, and Support Services for Climate-Critical MWBEs</p>	<p>A community-based organization that historically provides social services to individuals from the neighborhood partners with a business network to identify and recruit small contractors from the neighborhood, provide them additional entrepreneurial training and back office administrative support to enable growth, and introduce them to the right buyers and networks to access project opportunities in the high-performance building sector.</p> <p>A nonprofit organization that historically supports MWBEs pivots into the clean energy sector by providing clean energy focused MWBEs with guidance while registering for certification as a MWBE and obtaining other necessary licenses and then continues supporting the certified MWBEs with navigating the procurement portals and bidding processes associated with larger clean energy projects such as offshore wind developments.</p>

<p>Strand B: Access to Capital for Climate-Critical MWBEs</p>	<p>A nonprofit organization that historically administers impact investments or equity investments works with MWBE Support Grant awardees to identify regular obstacles to access to capital for Climate-Critical MWBEs, develops content to enable awardees to guide participating MWBEs to existing resources, and collaborates with awardees to develop a plan to address gaps in funding resources, including a suggested framework to be deployed by awardees.</p> <p>A community-based organization with a history of supporting MWBEs coordinates research to create a roster of funding resources and opportunities appropriate for Climate-Critical MWBEs and partners with MWBE Support Grant awardees to establish clearer pipelines to access those resources.</p>
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Note: The hypothetical examples presented above are provided as an illustrative tool and do not necessarily reflect projects that MassCEC would commit to funding – see Section 12: Disclaimer & Waiver Authority of this Solicitation regarding MassCEC’s discretion to accept or reject applications.

Program Definitions:

For the purposes of this RFP and in accordance with the Program goals, MassCEC is defining the key terms as follows:

- **“Minority- and Women-owned Business Enterprise (MWBE)”** means a business at least 51% owned and dominantly controlled by adult (18 or older) minority or women principals who are U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents. MWBEs may have Massachusetts, federal or other city specific certifications in place already. MWBEs may also have the ownership structure in place already to gain certification but need assistance in order to gain federal, state, or other certifications. Other MWBEs may need support to create a business entity that would be able to gain certification once established. Early stage start-up companies with minority founders in executive roles are also included in this definition, regardless of equity stake in the company or the demographics of the other shareholders of the company.
- **“Minority”** means a person who meets one or more of the following definitions:
 - a) American Indian or Native American means: all persons having origins in any of the original peoples of North America and who are recognized as an Indian by a tribe or tribal organization.
 - b) Asian means: All persons having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian sub-continent, or the Pacific Islands, including, but not limited to China, Japan, Korea, Samoa, India, and the Philippine Islands.

- c) Black means: All persons having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa, including, but not limited to, African-Americans, and all persons having origins in any of the original peoples of the Cape Verdean Islands.
 - d) Eskimo or Aleut means: All persons having origins in any of the peoples of Northern Canada, Greenland, Alaska, and Eastern Siberia.
 - e) Hispanic means: All persons having their origins in any of the Spanish-speaking peoples of Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central or South America, or the Caribbean Islands.
 - f) Portuguese means: All persons having Portuguese origin. Portuguese persons shall only be included in the definition of minority if specifically set forth in programs funded by state transportation bond statutes which include such persons as eligible participants Group.
- **Federally Recognized and State-Acknowledged Tribes:** Defined by the US Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs as a federally recognized tribe that is an American Indian or Alaska Native tribal entity that is recognized as having a government-to-government relationship with the United States, with the responsibilities, powers, limitations, and obligations attached to that designation, and is eligible for funding and services from the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Massachusetts' Commission on Indian Affairs (MCIA) assists Native American individuals, tribes, and organizations in their relationship with state and local government agencies, and more information can be obtained from their website and office support line.
 - **Climate Critical Priority Occupations:** Occupations critical to the Commonwealth achieving 2030 emissions goals and net zero emissions in 2050. Applicants are encouraged to consult the MassCEC Clean Energy Needs Assessment, and the companion data workbook, both available at <https://www.masscec.com/resources/massachusetts-clean-energy-workforce-needs-assessment> for a comprehensive detailing of climate-critical priority occupations. The list below provides examples of Climate-Critical occupations by MassCEC focus area. Applicants are welcome to make a case for additional occupations not listed here.
 - a) High-Performance Building Sector Occupations (for retrofit and new construction): Electricians and Electrical Contractors with expertise in building service upgrade, knob, and tube removal and/or heat pumps; Insulation Workers; Weatherization Crew Chiefs and Supervisors; Energy Auditors; HERS Raters; HVAC/R Technicians with heat pump expertise; Carpenters and Construction Laborers; Hazardous waste removal specialists (especially for asbestos and vermiculite removal); Building Operators/Maintenance Mechanics; Plumbers and Pipefitters; Customer Service Representatives.
 - b) Offshore Wind Occupations: Installation, Maintenance and Repair Workers; Structural Metal Fabricators and Fitters; Wind Turbine Service Technicians; Metal

and Plastic Workers, Assemblers and Fabricators; Customer Service Representatives.

- c) Net Zero Grid Occupations: Electricians and Electrical contractors specializing in solar, battery storage, grid upgrade, or time of use metering; Electric Power Line Installers and Repairers; Customer Service Representatives.
- d) Transportation Sector Occupations: Electricians and Electrical Contractors specializing in vehicle charging infrastructure; Automotive Technicians and Repairers with experience in electric vehicle maintenance or large vehicle retrofit; Logisticians and Fleet Managers; Customer Service Representatives.

4. BUDGET

MassCEC anticipates awarding a total of up to Four Million Forty Thousand Dollars (\$4,040,000), but may increase the total awards should additional resources become available.

Grant Strand	Award Range	Duration Options
Strand A: Training, Certification, and Support Services for Climate-Critical MWBEs	\$250,000-\$1,000,000	One (1) to Three (3) year award. (an additional year of post-program monitoring and metrics tracking is required after the proposed project is complete, so applicants should plan and budget for that obligation)
Strand B: Access to Capital for Climate-Critical MWBEs	\$50,000-\$250,000	One (1) to Two (2) year award. (programs only proposing a single-year program are less likely to be competitive for the maximum funding award)

At MassCEC’s discretion, applications for MWBE Support Grants that are not detailed enough for initial award or need further development may be offered a planning grant or a capacity grant, and if funding is available, an opportunity to reapply in a later round of MWBE Support Grants for implementation. Planning grants are intended for the exploration, development, or refinement of innovative ideas for potential implementation initiatives to conduct MWBE support projects, while capacity grants are designed to enable organizations to add key capacity needed to support programming to service MWBEs entering and growing in climate-critical sectors.

Additionally, MassCEC may elect to award a portion of MWBE Support Grant funds requested by Applicants in their applications in the event a proposed project contains sufficient detail to merit a MBWE Support Grant but does not have a sufficient scope to justify the entire amount of the award request by the applicant.

Applicants may receive a portion of the funding upfront and will receive the remainder in amounts determined by the contract, based on deliverables agreed to by MassCEC and selected Applicants (see Attachment 4. Sample Grant Agreement as an example). Applicants will have an opportunity to clarify specific budget needs in their application.

Applicants may seek funding through this RFP to supplement a program or project that is also receiving other incentives, grants, or investments. There will be an opportunity to clarify this in the Application.

5. ELIGIBLE FUNDING USES

For the MWBE Support Grants opportunity, Applicants must propose the implementation of innovative projects. All projects must focus specifically on support of MWBEs or the creation of MWBEs in climate critical business fields. The expectation is that MWBE Support Grant funds would be utilized within three (3) years of contract execution for active programs, with an additional one (1) year of outcome and metric monitoring under Strand A, and within two (2) years of contract execution for active programs under Strand B. MassCEC anticipates these grants shall be utilized for activities such as (without limitation):

- Staff or individual time devoted to program, or project preparation and implementation; including under Strand A one-on-one business counseling, strategic business introductions, assistance navigating government procurement processes, assisting with recruitment and retention of employees, and support accessing capital and under Strand B research, stakeholder engagement, resource development, and preparation of a final recommendation;
- Marketing activities & expenses commonly associated with outreach initiatives such as purchasing marketing collateral, renting space for events, promotional mailers, and website or social media hosting costs;
- Technical support needed to move projects forward;
- Field-specific training and coaching;
- Training stipends to address anticipated losses of wages or revenue that MWBEs may incur while participating in extended training offerings;
- Ongoing costs for accountants, lawyers, or other professional services;
- Costs associated with initial and/or ongoing MWBE engagement, including translation services; and/or
- Administration and distribution of small grants to provide MWBEs with capital needed for clean energy projects.

Activities that are NOT eligible for funding include:

- Costs associated with preparing a proposal; and
- Support activities for MWBEs that have been undertaken prior to the execution of a grant.

6. WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

Organizations or a partnership/team are eligible to apply and are collectively termed “Applicants.” If there are multiple parties that are jointly applying, one party should take on the role of leading the application team (“Lead Applicant”). If a single organization or individual is applying for this opportunity, that organization or individual would also be the Lead Applicant. The Lead Applicant will sign a contract similar to Attachment 4, contract with MassCEC (if selected), and receive funds from MassCEC. The following entities are eligible to serve as a Lead Applicant with the following conditions:

- Nonprofit organizations including Chamber of Commerce organizations, trade associations, clean energy incubators/accelerators, environmental justice organizations, and organizations representing tribes;
- Academic institutions with a business support program; and
- For profit entities such as clean energy installers, energy efficiency, or home performance contractors, technical or workforce training organizations, financial institutions, or other clean energy practitioners.

Additional eligibility notes

- Lead Applicants must have a Massachusetts office or staffing.
- Applicants are not required to have experience in clean energy or climate critical business fields.
- Lead Applicant is currently in good standing with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and can provide a Certification of Good Standing (COGS)². Please note that community colleges, public vocational-technical high schools, and public state universities serving as the lead applicant do not need to submit a Certificate of Good Standing.
- Applicants will be expected to disclose any potential conflicts of interest created through partnerships or subcontracts with related family members, current and recent employers, or any other involved parties that may create such conflicts of interest and to detail the review and selection processes used by the Applicants to ensure selection of the best parties to perform the related work.
- **Reminder:** This funding is not intended to benefit a single MWBE, but instead is intended to support an organization that can help several different MWBEs grow and excel in climate-critical business sectors.

7. ESTIMATED TIMELINE FOR MWBE SUPPORT GRANTS

² <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/dor-certificate-of-good-standing-andor-corporate-tax-lien-waiver-faqs>

This timeline is subject to change at MassCEC’s discretion, and notification timelines may vary based off the number of applications. All workshops and webinars will be recorded and be available on MassCEC’s workforce page.

Release of RFP	February 23, 2024
Pre-Application Webinar: How To Apply for MWBE Support RFP	March 13, 2024 at 3:00 pm
Pre-Application Office Hours	TBA
Questions due to MassCEC via email to rfpworkforce@masscec.com	Ongoing through April 5, 2024
Questions with answers posted to MassCEC Website	Updated at least every month on the 2 nd Tuesday through April 9, 2024
Proposals Due	April 26, 2024* by 11:59 pm <small>*Please note proposal deadline is extended from original deadline of April 12, 2024</small>
Potential Interviews of Applicants	April and May of 2024 as needed (applicants should hold time on their calendars on April 17 and May 2 as potential priority interview dates)
Notification of First Round of Awards	May 2024

8. HOW TO APPLY

To apply:

- Review this RFP to understand the opportunity, requirements, and MassCEC’s objectives.
- Review all RFP forms and attachments.
- Attend MassCEC’s informational webinars and/or utilize other informational resources offered (see below – Resources and Support for Potential Applicants).
- Attend Workforce Office Hours to discuss idea(s) or contact MassCEC with questions via email (rfpworkforce@masscec.com).
- Complete all RFP forms and attachments, adhering to word limits, format requirements, deadlines, and other instructions listed within this RFP and each attachment.
- Submit all RFP application materials by email to rfpworkforce@masscec.com by 11:59 on April 26, 2024, with “MWBE Support Grant Application” in the subject line.

A complete application will include:

- a. Attachment 1: Authorized Applicant's Signature and Acceptance Form
- b. Attachment 2: Application Form
- c. Attachment 3: Budget and Proposed Payment Schedule
- d. Attachment 4: Sample Grant Agreement

Attachments 1 and 2 must be submitted as separate documents in PDF or Word format. Attachment 3 must be submitted as an individual Excel file with all tabs filled out. Attachment 4 need not be returned and is strictly for reference, unless the applicant is requesting changes to any of the language in the sample grant agreements; **if changes are requested to the grant agreement language, please note that in Section 9 of Attachment 2. Application Form and return an annotated version of Attachment 4 as part of the application packet.** (Note: MassCEC has limited ability to change contract terms.). Supporting documents such as Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs) and Letters of Support should be integrated into Attachment 2, but applicants may also submit these as distinct attachments. Additional attachments will **not** be considered during review and scoring.

Using Attachment 3, provide the program's proposed budget and payment schedule.

1. Program Budget

On tab one (1), provide a standard project budget, including staff salaries, direct program costs, subcontracting costs, indirect costs, and fringe costs.

2. Proposed Payment Schedule with Milestones and Deliverables

On tab two (2), provide a proposed payment schedule. During the fulfillment of the grant, MassCEC responds to timely invoices that provide documentation of deliverables to disburse grant funds; for this grant, MassCEC does not accept cost reimbursement invoices. **Applicants must provide a payment schedule proposing chronological invoice dates, where each invoice date is associated with clear milestones and deliverables related to defined tasks within the Scope of Work. Quarterly schedules are preferred. Please refer to the example in tab two (2).**

Complete application submissions will be accepted through **11:59 pm on April 26th of 2024.** Successful applicants will be notified of status by approximately May 2024.

Resources and Support for Potential Applicants:

All applicants are encouraged to work with MassCEC and utilize MassCEC support when preparing an application. Attendance at the pre-application webinars and office hours is recommended. Links to helpful resources and past webinars will be provided on the MassCEC website along with the links to the funding opportunity documents.

Additionally, applicants are encouraged to leverage MassCEC networks to seek partnerships. MassCEC will maintain an opt-in listserv that will provide program updates, including descriptions of potential applicants seeking part. If you are not on the Workforce listserv and would like to be added, email workforce@masscec.com.

MassCEC will offer a publicly accessible contact list of organizations seeking partnerships and their geographic and occupational interest areas for those seeking partnership opportunities. MassCEC may also seek to facilitate relationships directly upon request.

Electronic Accessibility:

If accessibility to a computer, internet, or software may prohibit you from submitting an electronic application, in general, or by any deadline, or if there are other challenges with accessibility, such as language or writing barriers, alternative options may be discussed, such as video application. Please email workforce@masscec.com or telephone Camilla Bacolod, Program Coordinator, at (617) 315-9319 to discuss accommodations.

9. SELECTION CRITERIA

Proposals will be evaluated using the following criteria:

<p><u>Applicant and Partner Experience</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants or applicant teams have a demonstrated history engaging and supporting MWBE or small businesses and have a network established to attract existing or MWBEs or minority and women entrepreneurs interested in creating new MWBEs. • Applicants propose ways to provide support services that help overcome typical barriers for MWBEs, such as language services, bridge and startup capital, introductions to procuring agencies, or starting bonus grants to attract new employees. • Applicant teams have a successful track record and approach and use data such as completion rates, scale/size, and participation rate to demonstrate historical success. • Applicant has experience/knowledge of climate-critical business fields. This experience is not required.
<p><u>Target Sectors / Demonstration of Market Opportunity</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant has defined a climate-critical business field/s to focus work on and uses data or research about the importance of the growth of this field/s in meeting state climate goals. • Applicant has a strong tie to workflow and customers integrated into the project so that trained MWBEs have a pipeline of work available at completion. • Applicant has clearly outlined gaps in current services for MWBEs and has a strong plan and strategy for how to fill gaps and needs. • Applicant clearly identifies MWBEs that will be served or be created by the project.

<p><u>Outcomes, Budget, Leveraged Resources, and Sustainability</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants propose strong outcomes, a program design that can achieve these outcomes, and data collection practices that support effective outcome tracking. • Applicants propose clear milestones, deliverables, timelines, and staff and resource allocations that align with programming and participant needs. • Applicants present a reasonable budget with competitive \$/MWBE support considering types of support services and training provided and that includes itemized budgets for subcontractors/partners (> \$50K). • Proposal leverages and takes advantage of existing government and other MWBE support and workforce resources such as Small Business Administration, Supplier Diversity Office, State Workforce Board, MassHire Organizations, or EOLWD Workforce programs and/or demonstrates progress towards identifying appropriate funds to leverage in the initial award period and to sustain the programming beyond the grant period.
<p><u>Diversity of Approaches</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diverse Applicants and Applicant Teams are encouraged to apply, especially those certified by the Massachusetts' Supplier Diversity Office. If the Applicant organization meets the criteria for this but has not completed certification, Applicants may offer a statement to this regard on the application form. • Geographic Diversity: Consideration may be given towards awarding applications from a representative spread of communities across Massachusetts, a variety of climate critical business field focuses, and diverse project plans. Based on current coverage by existing awardees, consideration may be given to proposals focused on areas currently lacking coverage. • Sector Diversity: Consideration may be given towards awarding applications from a variety of high priority climate critical business sectors that have high growth opportunity in MA. • Heightened and Innovative Support: Consideration may be given towards applications that propose heightened and innovative supports not offered by other programs, such as social supports removing childcare barriers or addressing food or housing insecurity potentially faced by small business owners.

Strand A: (Training, Certification, and Support Services for Climate-Critical MWBEs) will also be evaluated using the following criteria:

<p><u>Program Design and Delivery</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants present a comprehensive program design with specific services, strategies, and training offerings that align with their stated goals for supporting MWBEs. • Applicants match outreach, engagement, and program design elements to the needs of the specific segments of MWBEs that they aim to serve. • The program design and delivery are organized to maximize benefit to the supported MWBEs and to allow the support organization to effectively capture data outcomes to continuously improve programming. • The program design includes a reasonable timeline and concrete milestones with specific goals and/or target outcomes to track progress, and these milestones are reflected in the payment schedule and budget.
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Strand B: (Access to Capital for Climate-Critical MWBEs) will also be evaluated using the following criteria:

<p><u>Program Design and Delivery</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants present a clear workplan with distinct and detailed steps taken during each stage of the program, including research, stakeholder engagement, development of resources, and drafting of the final recommendation. • Applicants provide a reasonable staffing plan for the work proposed with assigned roles and responsibilities for the proposed tasks. • The workplan design engages organizations currently funded under the MWBE Support Grant program and the participating MWBEs in those initiatives. • The program design defines a reasonable reporting process and continuous improvement plan.
<p><u>Program Impact on MWBEs</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants present a reasonable preliminary vision of funding solutions and collaborations that would address existing gaps in access to capital by climate-critical MWBEs. • The preliminary vision takes into account MWBEs of different scales and proposes how to adequately leverage, administer, and monitor a portfolio of mixed stream funding sources. • The proposed number of MWBEs receiving direct education as part of the initiative appears reasonable relative to the funding requested.

10. EXPECTATIONS FOR GRANT AWARDEES

In addition to fulfilling milestones and deliverables described in the Scope of Work, to be agreed upon and finalized upon award, awardees will be expected to satisfy the following responsibilities:

1. Finalize Grant Agreement

Awardees will work with the MassCEC Program Manager to develop and finalize their grant agreement to ensure that the statement of work, milestones and deliverables schedule, payment schedule, and other terms are in conformity to MassCEC standards prior to commencement of project work and disbursements of funding.

2. Attend Awardee Cohort Sessions and Training

Awardees will be required to send a representative to participate in regular webinars and meetings with other awardees from this round of the solicitation to check in, promote networking, synergize projects, share best practices, and overall strengthen the quality of the workforce development ecosystem related to climate critical occupations. Cohort sessions and training sessions will be scheduled every quarter.

3. Consult with MassCEC Workforce Technical Assistance

MassCEC will provide technical assistance via staff with extensive workforce development and climate critical occupation-related experience and via the services of a subcontracted provider. Technical assistance will consist of guidance and support during implementation, networking opportunities and partnership development assistance, and promoting continuous improvement to ensure the success and quality of the programs. Technical assistance will be delivered on an ongoing and as-needed basis to be agreed upon between the technical assistance provider and awardee. Applicants are encouraged to consider the staff time required to participate fully when developing plans and budgets for proposed programming.

4. Provide Regular Reporting and Case Studies

MassCEC requires awardees to provide regular reports typically timed to coincide with scheduled invoices for payment, with a preference towards quarterly invoices and reports. Awardees will be asked to provide interim progress reports using templated forms and by attaching additional documentation for program-specific deliverables not captured within the templates. The templated reports capture general programmatic and participant data, including but not limited to demographic and business data, revenue and wage data, dosage of service, and changes to status that signal progress towards program completion.

MassCEC regularly features awardees in social media blog posts, reports, and other media. To facilitate these activities, awardees will be expected to provide case studies and the regular reports as agreed upon in the Scope of Work. At a minimum, case studies will be expected to include a one (1) page text description of a successful program participant and an appropriate

accompanying picture, with additional information, statistics, and photographs potentially requested by the MassCEC Program Manager. It is anticipated that case studies will be required on at least an annual basis.

11. CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS

For all questions related to this MWBE Support Grant RFP, please email rpfworkforce@masscec.com.

12. GENERAL REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS CONDITIONS

NOTICE OF PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

As a public entity, MassCEC is subject to Massachusetts' Public Records Law, codified in Chapter 66 of the Massachusetts General Laws. Thus, any documentary material, data, or other information received by MassCEC from an applicant is a public record subject to disclosure. Applicants shall not send MassCEC any confidential or sensitive information in response to this RFP. If confidential information is submitted as part of the application and not clearly marked as confidential, such information may be made publicly available by MassCEC without further notice to the Applicant.

DISCLAIMER & WAIVER AUTHORITY

This RFP does not commit MassCEC to award any funds, pay any costs incurred in preparing an application or procure or contract for services or supplies. MassCEC reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applications received, waive minor irregularities in submittal requirements, modify the anticipated timeline, request a modification of the application, negotiate with all qualified Applicants, cancel or modify the RFP in part or its entirety, or change the application guidelines when it is in MassCEC's best interests.

This RFP has been distributed electronically using MassCEC's website. Applicants must check the website for any addenda or modifications to an RFP to which they intend to respond. MassCEC accepts no liability and will provide no accommodation to Applicants who apply based on an out-of-date RFP document.

CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS

Upon MassCEC's authorization to proceed with the proposal, MassCEC and the awarded applicant(s) will execute a contract, substantially in the form of the Sample Agreement attached hereto as Attachment 4 that will set forth the respective roles and responsibilities of the parties.

ATTACHMENT 1: AUTHORIZED APPLICANT’S SIGNATURE AND ACCEPTANCE FORM

Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprise Support Grants (the “RFP”)

The undersigned is a duly authorized representative of the Lead Applicant named below. The undersigned has read and understands the RFP requirements and acknowledges and confirms that the Lead Applicant and each member of its team has read and understands the RFP Requirements. The undersigned acknowledges and agrees that all of the terms and conditions of the RFP are mandatory.

The undersigned and the Lead Applicant and each member of its team acknowledges and agrees that (i) all materials submitted as part of the application are subject to disclosure under the Massachusetts Public Records Law, as explained in the RFP; (ii) that the Massachusetts Clean Energy Technology Center (“MassCEC”) has no obligation, and retains the sole discretion to fund or choose not to fund the application set forth herein; and (iii) that MassCEC’s receipt of the application does not imply any promise of funding at any time.

The undersigned and each member of the Lead Applicant’s team understands that, if the Application is selected by MassCEC pursuant to this RFP, the Applicant will execute and deliver an agreement to be provided by MassCEC that shall set forth the terms and conditions, together the respective roles and responsibilities of the Applicant, and each member of its team, and MassCEC, with respect to the project described in the RFP.

I certify that the statements made in this Application, including all attachments and exhibits, are true and correct.

Lead Applicant Organization: _____

Authorized Representative: _____

(Printed Name of Authorized Representative)

(Signature of Applicant or Authorized Representative)

(Title)

Date: _____