

Request for Proposals: EmPower Massachusetts Program Evaluation EMP-03

Questions Submitted by Interested Applicants & MassCEC Responses

Updated: April 4, 2025

- Updated response to Question 3
- Added Question 24 and Response

#	Question	Response
1	For Task 3, can you please clarify whether the “interview notes compilation” of the cleaned data sets deliverables includes the individual notes, or would a summary suffice?	MassCEC does not seek a summary of the interview notes. Our aim with the Task 4 deliverables is to obtain the cleaned data set(s) that the selected contractor used in analyses based on data collection(s) that took place. In the event that MassCEC may have additional questions of the data set after the engagement with the selected contractor concludes, MassCEC would like to have access to the dataset to further utilize it as a data source. This product may look different based on the analysis tool(s) that the selected contractor utilizes.
2	Can you also clarify whether Personally Identifiable Information should be scrubbed from the data set?	Yes, Personally Identifiable Information should be removed from the data set prior to sending deliverables to MassCEC.
3	Is there a cap on indirect costs in the budget?	No, MassCEC has no official cap on indirect costs in the budget. Budget will be evaluated as part of the "Budget Approach/Cost Effectiveness" selection criteria as indicated on page 11 of the RFP.
4	Does this RFP require an applicant to have a history of working with Priority Groups or otherwise must work with at least one partner that does? Does this requirement apply to non-profits?	Applicants will be evaluated based on the "Selection Criteria" on page 11 of the RFP, including criteria articulated under "Overall Experience of Consultant Team & Demonstrated Results," Question 7. This criterion is applicable to all applicants regardless of non-profit status.
5	Are there any essential deadlines besides the overall six-month completion window?	No, MassCEC has no other interim deadlines.

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6	Based on the RFP, it sounds like grantees provide project progress reports and final reports at project conclusion. If available, can MassCEC please provide any reporting guidelines or templates that have been given to grantees?	MassCEC has uploaded an Attachment D, "EmPower FY24 Progress Report Template" in "Application Materials" section of the website.
7	Could MassCEC clarify what expectations have been set with grantees in terms of contributing time/attention to evaluation research, if requested?	EmPower grantee agreements contain the following clause under Other Requirements: "Program Evaluation. Grantee agrees to support MassCEC's program evaluation activities, and MassCEC's dissemination of information regarding Grantee's experiences. To this end, Grantee agrees that its key personnel and contractors working on the Project will be available at reasonable times with advance notice to be interviewed by MassCEC or its authorized representatives for purposes of program evaluation or case study development." However, MassCEC notes that we have not exercised this portion of the grantee agreement before and ask that applicants be mindful of the time and resource demands of the grantees associated with proposed data collection approaches.
8	What is MassCEC's perspective on the appropriateness of compensating grantees for their participation in evaluation activities?	MassCEC does not have an official stance on the appropriateness of compensating grantees or other stakeholders for their participation in evaluation activities. In the past, MassCEC approved of compensation to stakeholders aligned with best practices in data collection approaches; particularly as it relates to engagement with underserved populations. Applicants should account for any recommended compensation to grantees or other stakeholders in their budgets.
9	If the evaluation includes requesting further information from grantees (e.g. reporting form, survey, interviews, focus groups, etc.), is MassCEC open to providing introductions to introduce and build trust with the evaluators?	Yes, MassCEC fully anticipates providing introductions between the selected contractor and the grantees.

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10	If the evaluation includes research beyond grantees - e.g. with stakeholders or organizations who haven't directly received funds - does MassCEC have any funding restrictions or guidelines for compensating research participants, particularly in Environmental Justice communities?	MassCEC does not have an official stance on the appropriateness of compensating grantees or other stakeholders for their participation in evaluation activities. In the past, MassCEC approved of compensation to stakeholders aligned with best practices in data collection approaches; particularly as it relates to engagement with underserved populations. Applicants should account for any recommended compensation to grantees or other stakeholders in their budgets.
11	What language accessibility considerations should be taken into account when engaging with EmPower grantees?	MassCEC EmPower grantees are multilingual and all speak English. However, the populations they serve may not speak English; some of the documents that grantees produce to reach these audiences may be in languages that are not English. Top languages spoken by audiences of EmPower grantees are Spanish, Portuguese, Mandarin, and Haitian Creole. Additionally, there is at least one project aimed at Lao speaking populations and one project aimed at Khmer speaking populations. Task 5 of the RFP asks the selected contractor to develop a compendium of successful resources and materials from EmPower grantees that may aid other EmPower grantees. In developing this compendium, the selected contractor may anticipate reviewing documents in the aforementioned languages.
12	The RFP (selection criteria) requires “proven and substantial experience working with Massachusetts-based Priority Group stakeholders” and a “clear commitment to advancing DEI and/or environmental justice principles.” Given this requirement, there will likely be some overlap between qualified Applicants/Project Partners, and firms who have received an EmPower grant. If a Project Partner works on an EmPower grant, please confirm this is acceptable as long as the Applicant discloses this and provides a mitigation plan (e.g., the Project Partner will not evaluate work related to the grant they work on).	Yes, if an applicant team includes a project partner that worked or currently works on an EmPower grant, applicants should disclose this information and provide a mitigation plan.

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13	For context, can MassCEC summarize what decision points or other factors are driving the six-month evaluation timeline?	MassCEC's next fiscal year visioning cycle begins in January followed by strategic planning and budget allocations for approval by the Board in the May/June timeframe. Having information on the EmPower program will help inform future planning and budget for the EmPower program and other agency priorities.
14	Attachment B: Sample Agreement appears to be missing Section numbers. Termination (pg. 4) lists several Sections by number, but the Agreement currently does not include corresponding Sections. Will MassCEC please provide a revised version of Attachment B that includes the Section numbers?	MassCEC has uploaded a revised version of Attachment B in "Application Materials" section of the website with the appropriate numbering throughout.
15	Can MassCEC confirm that this will be a T&M award as indicated under Section X. Budget, page 12, and not FFP as indicated in the sample contract?	Yes, MassCEC confirms this will be a T&M award as indicated under Section X Budget, page 12. The sample contract is provided as a general sample across MassCEC and can be modified as indicated on page 13 of the RFP.
16	Can MassCEC clarify whether proposal submissions should go to Cat Foley as indicated on page 8 of RFP and/or Elizabeth Cleveland as indicated on the cover of the RFP?	Proposal submissions should be sent to Elizabeth Cleveland as indicated on the cover of the RFP and website.
17	Under page 10 Project Management Approach and Budget section, there is a reference to subrecipient; can Mass CEC confirm that this should be subcontractor?	Yes, MassCEC confirms that "subcontractor" should replace "subrecipient" on page 10 of the RFP.
18	Would MassCEC be able to provide a copy of the EmPower grantee application?	Information on both EmPower Implementation and Innovation and Capacity Building grant applications is available on the MassCEC website at: https://www.masscec.com/program/empower-massachusetts#apply .
19	Are there templates for the project progress and final reports that can be shared?	MassCEC has uploaded an Attachment D, "EmPower FY24 Progress Report Template" in "Application Materials" section of the website.
20	Will MassCEC share the metrics information regarding project outputs it has tracked thus far with the awardee of the EmPower Evaluation contract?	Yes, MassCEC plans to share all available EmPower data with the selected contractor.
21	To ensure the consultant can engage all relevant parties and align with equity principles, is there flexibility with the end date of the project? If there is, do you have a sense of what that timeline could look like?	Yes, there is some flexibility in project timeline; however, applicants should still plan to have initial findings by, at the latest January 2026. applicants should justify the change in timeline based on proposed methodology.

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22	We are comfortable with both in-person and virtual data collection. Based on your knowledge of the grantee partners, do you see any barriers to a mostly virtual data collection approach?	No, MassCEC does not see barriers to a mostly virtual data collection approach. Grantees are accustomed to working with MassCEC via virtual platforms.
23	Do you anticipate needing a multilingual evaluation team for this project?	MassCEC EmPower grantees are multilingual and all speak English. However the populations they serve may not speak English; some of the documents that grantees produce to reach these audiences may be in languages that are not English. Top languages spoken by audiences of EmPower grantees are Spanish, Portuguese, Mandarin, and Haitian Creole. Additionally, there is at least one project aimed at Lao speaking populations and one project aimed at Khmer speaking populations. Task 5 of the RFP asks the selected contractor to develop a compendium of successful resources and materials from EmPower grantees that may aid other EmPower grantees. In developing this compendium, the selected contractor may anticipate reviewing documents in the aforementioned languages.
24	The RFP mentions “loaded average hourly rate costs,” but the Q&A states that there is “no official cap on indirect costs in the budget. However, we encourage applicants to align with the Federal Indirect Rate of 15%.” Given this, should we present fully loaded billable rates in our proposal, or do we need to separately break out salary, fringe, and overhead? If the latter, can subcontractors be structured as fixed price?	Applicants should provide loaded average hourly rate costs.