



Request for Proposals: EmPower Massachusetts Program
Evaluation
EMP-03

Date of Issue: March 10, 2025

Proposals Due: April 14, 2025, by 11:59 pm Eastern Time

Total Funding Available: Up to \$250,000

All proposals must be submitted to:

ecleveland@masscec.com

DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this RFP and in accordance with the Program goals, MassCEC includes the following program definitions.

- **Priority Groups.** Contains three primary groups:
 - “Environmental Justice Populations” as defined by the Massachusetts Department of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Environmental Justice Policy. <https://www.mass.gov/doc/environmental-justice-policy6242021-update/download>.
 - Renters (primarily residential).
 - Communities or individuals disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, by the fossil-fuel based energy system, or other environmental hazards (e.g., air quality or heat).
- **Capacity building.** Efforts to increase the capacity of an organization to better fulfill its mission or broaden its impact. This may be done by (though is not limited to) hiring/increasing staff, offering training opportunities, or providing technical support.
- **Clean energy.** For the purposes of this RFP, “clean energy” is defined as technologies that generate renewable energy (e.g., solar PV, solar thermal), provide electrification opportunities (e.g., air source heat pumps), or reduce energy usage/load (e.g., energy efficiency). Other methods, practices, or measures that reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) or improve resiliency may also be considered “clean energy” for purposes of this RFP if they have a connection to clean energy (e.g., green infrastructure, battery storage). Access to the benefits of clean energy could take the form of direct adoption of clean energy (e.g., installing solar PV on your roof), or it may take a less direct form (e.g., utility bill savings through participating in a community solar project).
- **Energy burden.** Percentage of gross household income spent on energy costs.
- **Federally Recognized and State-Acknowledged Tribes.** Defined by the U.S. Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs as 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.

I. SUMMARY

EmPower Massachusetts offers multiple stages of investment in communities and community-based organizations so that they can explore, develop, and implement program models or projects that provide access to the benefits of clean energy for previously underserved populations. The EmPower program crowd-sources new and innovative ideas, then helps put them into action. After three years, three completed funding cycles (and a fourth in progress), 142 awarded projects that are active, and 41 completed projects, the EmPower Program is well-positioned for an outcome evaluation aimed at understanding the early lessons learned across both Innovation & Capacity Building and Implementation grants. Findings from the evaluation can improve program success, inform state energy and environmental justice policy, and further knowledge on effective efforts (e.g., materials, practices, approaches) in fostering the energy transition in environmental justice communities.

MassCEC seeks a qualified contractor or team of qualified contractors to conduct an early-stage outcome program evaluation of the [EmPower Massachusetts Program](#), hereafter the “Contractor.” The Applicant should send any questions on the RFP to the Director of Special Projects, Elizabeth Cleveland ecleveland@masscec.com; please CC Cat Foley, Deputy Managing Director of Accelerating Decarbonization, cfoley@masscec.com. All email communication should include, “EmPower Evaluation RFP EMP-03.” MassCEC will post questions and responses on the MassCEC website; all questions will be posted anonymously. To apply, the Applicant must provide an **anticipated budget, up to, but not exceeding \$250,000**, with the application (see “Proposal Requirements” below). MassCEC encourages teaming arrangements to meet the RFP’s expertise and eligibility requirements (see “Eligibility” below).

Proposals are due April 14, 2025, by 11:59 pm Eastern Time.

II. ABOUT MASSCEC

The Massachusetts Clean Energy Technology Center (MassCEC) is a quasi-state economic development agency dedicated to accelerating the growth of the clean energy sector 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 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.

III. EMPOWER PROGRAM BACKGROUND

The goals of the [EmPower Massachusetts Program](#) are to empower communities, organizations, and stakeholders to:

- Identify innovative solutions for increasing access to the benefits of clean energy and/or reducing energy burden to Priority Groups.
- Implement innovative solutions and continue long-term engagement strategies in Priority Groups.
- Increase organizational capacity to support long-term ability to identify and implement these solutions.

Through the Program, MassCEC also has several other objectives:

- Facilitate communication and relationships between interested and/or participating organizations or individuals.
- Inform participants about relevant opportunities or programs at MassCEC or from other agencies.
- Deepen MassCEC's relationships with community-based organizations and other organizations or individuals with a demonstrated history working with Priority Groups.
- Create and maintain an inclusive process and program structure that supports Priority Groups and Federally Recognized and State Acknowledged Tribes.
- Lower barriers to access clean energy or other environmental justice related grant opportunities, including education on clean energy and barriers to accessing clean energy.
- Utilize stakeholder engagement and program outcomes to inform future programming and policy.

To achieve these goals and objectives the Program offers two funding opportunity types:

1. **Innovation & Capacity Building Grants.** Early stage, seed funding for:
 - a. The exploration, development, or refinement of innovative ideas for potential program models or projects.
 - b. Building organizational capacity of local organizations to conduct community-based programs or projects.
2. **Implementation Grants.** Funding for innovative place-based (e.g., within a Municipality or specific neighborhood) or network-based (e.g., a statewide membership organization) local programs or projects that increase access to the benefits of clean energy and/or reduce energy burden to underserved or vulnerable population Priority Groups and are ready for implementation.

Since 2022 the Program has made [142 awards](#), 51 Innovation & Capacity Building Grants and 91 Implementation Grants, and engaged over 200 communities, organizations, and individuals on these projects. To date the Program has completed 41 of the 142 awards, and while approaches can vary widely, projects generally fall into four broad categories:

- **Decarbonization & Retrofit Planning; Technical Assistance Models.** Projects focus on holistic retrofits of buildings including energy efficiency upgrades, clean energy, and electrification.

Technical assistance models provide technical assistance such as assessments or feasibility studies.

- **Education & Outreach Campaigns; Energy Coaching.** Projects are launching outreach or adoption campaigns focused on clean energy education and/or utilizing Energy Coaches or Ambassadors to guide the process.
- **Net-Zero Grid; Energy Democracy.** Projects use a variety of exploratory models to increase energy access, such as shared or community-owned solar PV, innovative financing models, resiliency hubs, or microgrids.
- **Workforce Development & Formal Education.** Projects focus on providing job training and mentorship within the clean energy sector.

PROGRAM DATA

EmPower Program staff utilize spreadsheets to consolidate data across programs presented in a quarterly internal program check-in. These check-ins include output metrics summarizing the number of awards, dollars spent, types of grants, and program activities. Staff also consolidate key observations, project highlights and accomplishments, grantee spotlight stories, reflections on projects completed, and recent program feedback from grantees during these check-ins.

In addition to internal spreadsheets, project data are presented on the [EmPower Awardees and Projects](#) website and the StoryMap on the [EmPower main site](#). The StoryMap contains grantee project overviews, which include partners, project descriptions and grantees' applications. Additionally, the Program collects information in project progress reports from grantees and requires delivery of final reports at project conclusion. Most of the detailed project information is in the grantee applications and progress and final reports. The Program does not have a standard set of metrics across project grantees as the nature of projects varies widely (as noted above). Instead, the Program asks grantees to provide suggested metrics to track and report on throughout the course of their project. To date, the program has consolidated some metrics information across projects to document basic project outputs, but this is not comprehensive, and the program has not systematically evaluated project outcomes.

IV. EVALUATION PURPOSE

After three years, three completed funding cycles (and a fourth in progress), 142 awarded projects that are active, and 41 completed projects, the EmPower Program is well-positioned for an outcome evaluation aimed at understanding the early lessons learned across both Innovation & Capacity Building and Implementation grants. Findings from the evaluation can improve program success, inform state energy and environmental justice policy, and further knowledge on effective efforts (e.g., materials, practices, approaches) in fostering the energy transition in environmental justice communities.

MassCEC includes several illustrative evaluation questions below:

1. What projects were most successful in meeting the goals and objectives of the EmPower program?
 - a. What barriers did these projects attempt to address?
 - b. What are the other characteristics of implementing organizations, projects, and target communities?

- c. What were the approaches, technologies, innovations, practices, partnerships, materials, etc., that the projects utilized?
 - d. What are the costs associated with implementing project components (e.g., training costs, technical assistant costs, outreach costs, etc.)?
 - e. What are the lessons learned from these projects that could be shared with others?
 - f. What barriers or challenges remain under addressed, or unaddressed?
2. What findings have implications regarding the Commonwealth's overall approach to environmental justice programming or policy (e.g., Mass Save Community First Partnership, Department of Energy Resources programs, etc.)?
3. What project approaches or project types have the potential for scaling?
 - a. What opportunities exist for scaling locally or regionally?
 - b. How could the project be scaled across the state?
 - i. What entity (or entities) are best positioned to implement a state-scale program?
4. What might be the best methods for sharing and disseminating information from this evaluation with EmPower grantees or the environmental justice ecosystem?
5. What could be done to maintain or improve the EmPower Program?

The Contractor will work with MassCEC to refine and finalize the evaluation questions as part of the evaluation plan; see Scope of Work section below for additional information.

V. ELIGIBILITY

Applicant teams may be comprised of one (1) or more individuals, sole proprietors, professional consultants, institutions, non-profits, professional organizations, or companies with multiple employees (in either case this person or group is called an "Applicant"). Where an Applicant has multiple members, the proposal must be submitted by one (1) member only, (the "Lead Applicant"), and must clearly describe the various roles, relationships, and experience of all members. Applicants should have expertise in the following:

- Mixed-methods evaluation design and implementation experience working with federal, state, or local energy, environmental, or community development programs.
- Ability to identify relevant metrics across diverse project types.
- Experience conducting interviews, surveys, focus groups, and/or other qualitative research methods.
- Meeting facilitation with and across various stakeholders.
- Analyses of qualitative and quantitative data from new and existing data sources.
- Ability to effectively communicate with the targeted users and audiences, including development of communication materials using data visualization best practices.

Additionally, the successful Applicant to this RFP will demonstrate:

1. Flexibility and ability to solve problems with a specific ability to offer recommendations to continue and/or improve program success, inform state energy and environmental justice policy, and further knowledge on effective efforts in fostering the energy transition in environmental justice communities.

2. Demonstrated experience with environmental justice initiatives, community-focused programs, and/or clean energy initiatives.
3. Sensitivity to the Program's principles (e.g., empowerment, participatory action, capacity-building).
4. Familiarity with MassCEC and its partners.

VI. ESTIMATED TIMELINE

This timeline is subject to change at MassCEC's discretion.

Task	Due Date
Release of RFP	March 10, 2025
Questions due to MassCEC via email to Elizabeth Cleveland, ecleveland@masscec.com	March 24, 2025
Questions with Answers Posted to MassCEC Website	March 31, 2025
Proposals Due	April 14, 2025
Notification of Award	May 13, 2025

VII. SCOPE OF WORK

MassCEC anticipates the Contractor will conduct several tasks associated with the evaluation.

- **Task 1. Project Administration and Meetings.** The Contractor will be responsible for working with the MassCEC project team to coordinate and schedule meetings including the project kick-off meeting and regular check-in meetings (such as weekly or bi-weekly, but to be determined at project kick-off meeting and adjusted throughout the timeframe of the evaluation as needed), take meeting minutes, and track and report progress on project implementation. Anticipated deliverables include,
 - Meeting agendas sent the working day prior to check-in meetings.
 - Brief meeting minutes including description of follow-on tasks and owner of each task.
 - Monthly status report including a progress tracking mechanism (to be submitted with monthly invoice).
 - Any other ad-hoc project administration tasks as agreed upon by MassCEC and the Contractor.
- **Task 2. Program Evaluation Plan.** The plan should include a final set of evaluation questions, proposed metrics, data sources, data collection approaches – including any proposed data collection efforts (e.g., interviews, surveys, focus groups, etc.) and associated targets (i.e., names of interviewees, organizations etc.), data management approach (including quality assurance processes), data analysis and interpretation plan, anticipated products from the evaluation, and finally the proposed evaluation timeline.¹ Anticipated deliverables include,
 - Draft Evaluation Plan, inclusive of draft data collection instruments (e.g., interview guide, survey instrument, etc.).

¹ Applicants should consider relevant metrics from EPA's Flexible Framework for Measurement of EPA's Community-Based Initiatives. Available at: <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-07/community-based-measurement-framework.pdf>.

- Final Evaluation Plan with final data collection instruments. The contractor shall present a revised evaluation plan based on feedback from MassCEC.
- **Task 3. Data Collection.** The Contractor will implement the program evaluation plan from Task 2, working with MassCEC where needed to ensure access to relevant data sources and that the data collection targets are responsive to the Contractor’s requests. Anticipated deliverables include,
 - Status updates on data collection progress. If barriers to proposed data collection approach emerge, the Contractor will propose an alternative plan.
- **Task 4. Data Cleanup and Analysis.** The Contractor will complete relevant data analysis associated with the data sources and data collection from Task 3. Anticipated deliverables include,
 - Cleaned data sets for analysis based on data sources and data collection in Task 3 (e.g., interview notes compilation, survey results, etc.).
- **Task 5. Findings, Reporting, and Recommendations.** The Contractor will work with MassCEC and other relevant stakeholders (e.g., community-based organizations) to aid in findings interpretation and develop relevant reporting materials. Anticipated deliverables include,
 - Initial findings presentation to guide a discussion with MassCEC and relevant stakeholders.
 - Draft evaluation report and recommendations; this may but is not limited to recommendations for program improvement, increased effectiveness in environmental justice communities, and outreach and communication approaches. The final report should be short in length, emphasize readability using plain language, and integrate best practices in data visualization.
 - Final evaluation report and recommendations. The contractor shall present a revised evaluation report based on feedback from MassCEC.
 - Compendium of successful resources and materials from EmPower grantees that may aid other EmPower grantees.
 - Draft and final communication tools for specific stakeholder groups, including but not limited to grantees or potential grantees. This may include website text, one-pagers, best practices guide, social media content, emails, or other communication methods intended to reach relevant audiences.

MassCEC seeks to complete this work in a timely manner, with the goal of finalizing the evaluation 6 months after the initial project kickoff.

VIII. HOW TO APPLY

To respond to this RFP, please submit a complete application. The submission must be in the form of a single PDF file, including all relevant attachments, sent by email to ecleveland@masscec.com. Please also CC Cat Foley, Deputy Managing Director of Accelerating Decarbonization, cfoley@masscec.com “EmPower Evaluation RFP EMP-03” should appear in the email subject line.

Submissions must include the following:

- I. Cover page.
- II. Applicant’s Signature and Acceptance Form (Attachment A).
- III. Proposal (see the Proposal Requirements below).

- IV. Reviewed and revised copy, with all revisions clearly marked using Track Changes, of the Sample Agreement (Attachment B).
- V. Team Member Resumes (as an appendix).
- VI. Supplemental materials (i.e., Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) statement (Attachment C), prior work examples, as optional appendices).

Please include a summary of you or your organization's commitment to DEI and/or environmental justice principles, or experience working with the Priority Groups. If available, please provide or link to any relevant materials (e.g., organization guidance documents, mission/vision statements, etc.). You may also include brief examples of initiatives, projects, or other work in which the Lead Applicant and/or Project Partners have demonstrated a clear commitment to advancing DEI and/or environmental justice principles or working with Priority Groups, see Attachment C.

The total compensation shall be up to a maximum of \$250,000, including any subcontractors or other direct or indirect costs. The Contractor will submit a monthly invoice reflecting time and material costs that includes a monthly status report summarizing key activities that occurred associated with each Task outlined above.

No additional materials shall be submitted. Any additional materials will not be considered in the evaluation. MassCEC does not anticipate accepting responses past the deadline.

PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS

Submission packages must address all elements described above under Section VII. All proposals must contain the following parts, not exceeding the number of pages given.

- **Executive Summary** (1 page): A summary of the Applicant's organization, qualifications, and proposed approach to the work, and their proposed approach for working with MassCEC.
- **Statement of Qualifications** (3 pages): A statement of the qualifications, experience, and description of the Applicant, including:
 - A brief description of the organization(s) behind the proposal, including any proposed sub-contractors. Include date founded, history, size, project portfolio and information on companies' Massachusetts presence.
 - An explanation of why the proposed organization or team is the best qualified to perform the work from a technical and business perspective. Identify other organizational qualifications relevant to the proposed work including evaluation and environmental justice experience. Include examples of related past work, particularly related to evaluation of environmental, and/or community development programs and the status of those projects. Responses may include appendices with relevant supplemental material (see below).
 - Identification of key individuals who will be involved in the program and who will serve as the day-to-day lead. Provide one (1) to two (2) paragraph summaries of relevant technical and business expertise of these individuals. Submit resumes (as appendices) of all key applicant team members. Resumes should include education and experience that are relevant to the proposed work.
 - If applicable, list other MassCEC contracts awarded to the Applicant and/or any subcontractors in the past five (5) years.

- **Proposed Evaluation Approach** (4 pages): An initial evaluation plan outline for evaluating the EmPower program based on the information contained in this RFP and responses to questions submitted. Applicants should include:
 - Anticipated data sources, data collection approaches – including any proposed data collection efforts (e.g., interviews, surveys, focus groups, etc.) and associated targets (i.e., interviewees, organizations etc.), data management approach (including quality assurance processes), and data analysis methods. Details on data collection efforts should include number of efforts, targets, goals, and length.
 - Anticipated travel or other expenses associated with data collection efforts.
 - Draft evaluation timeline.
 - If Contractor intends to use AI for any part of the project, including note taking during meetings, provide a clear description of the intended use of AI, with a description of how you will use MassCEC data and considerations related to safety and bias.
- **Project Management Approach & Budget** (3 pages): Responses must include a detailed budget based on the proposed evaluation approach, including information on rates of team members by categorical position, working on the project.² Where Applicants anticipate using outside expertise for a task, the Applicant should include estimated rates. Budgets may include a range of estimates, and applicants may propose several options based on their expertise and evaluation of MassCEC's needs. Budgets should include the following elements:
 - Estimate of minimum number of hours and minimum cost (per subrecipient, as applicable) for each task.
 - Loaded average hourly rate costs.
 - Travel costs for site visits including:
 - Cost per mile traveled (0-25, 25-50, 50-100, 100+ miles traveled).
 - Meal costs.
 - Personnel costs.
 - Total cost estimate for project scope. Applicants may provide a range of cost estimates based on proposed options.

Project management should include:

 - Approach to client management and communication.
 - Approach to timeline management.
 - Approach to managing subcontractors (as relevant).
- **References** (1 page): All responses must include references from at least three (3) clients of the Applicant, and preferably clients who have hired the Applicant for similar services to this proposed work (MA clients are a plus). Each reference must include a contact person, postal address, email address, and telephone number. Current and former MassCEC staff may be included as supplementary.

² Please note that contractor rates are not considered confidential in the case of a public records request. Please see Section XII for additional information on the Massachusetts Public Records law.

IX. SELECTION CRITERIA

MassCEC is seeking proposals from qualified entities. All proposals must be responsive to the relevant scope of services and proposal requirements outlined in this RFP.

Criteria	Guiding Questions	Points
Application Requirements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Is the Application timely? 2. Does the Application provide all the information requested in this RFP? 3. Does the Applicant plan to provide services commensurate with the services requested by MassCEC? 4. Does the Application meet all the requirements of the RFP? 	5
Overall Experience of Consultant Team & Demonstrated Results	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. How relevant and extensive is the Applicant's experience in the field of work contemplated by this RFP? 6. What is the quality of the Applicant's performance on similar past assignments or its achievements related to the proposed work? 7. Does the Applicant have proven and substantial experience working with Massachusetts-based Priority Group stakeholders? 8. Does the Lead Applicant and/or Project Partners have a clear commitment to advancing DEI and/or environmental justice principles? 	35
Strategic Thinking/Planning Approach	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. Does the Applicant demonstrate an understanding of the concepts and motivations underlying this RFP? 10. Are the proposed Evaluation and Management Approaches clear and reasonable? 11. Does the proposed Evaluation and Management Approaches meet MassCEC's requirements and goals described above? 	35
Budget Approach/Cost Effectiveness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. Is the budget allocation reasonable and appropriate? 13. Has the Applicant demonstrated effective and efficient delivery of quality services in relation to the allocated budget? 14. Has the Applicant demonstrated sufficient time resources and flexibility to provide the required services? 	25
Total		100

X. BUDGET

The Applicant must provide an anticipated budget, up to, but not exceeding \$250,000, with the application (see “Proposal Requirements” above). MassCEC will evaluate this budget and consider it with other criteria when selecting the winning proposal. The successful Contractor will be paid for time and materials costs as the Contractor delivers the agreed plan of work.

XI. CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS

The Applicant should send questions on the RFP to the Director of Special Projects, Elizabeth Cleveland ecleveland@masscec.com. Please also CC Cat Foley, Deputy Managing Director of Accelerating Decarbonization, cfoley@masscec.com. The Applicant should send questions by March 24, 2025. MassCEC will post responses to questions on the RFP page no later than March 31, 2025 at 5 PM.

XII. GENERAL REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS CONDITIONS

NOTICE OF PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

As a public entity, MassCEC is subject to Massachusetts’ Public Records Law, codified at Chapter 66 of the Massachusetts General Laws (“Public Records Law”). The applicant acknowledges and agrees that any documentary material, data, or other information submitted to MassCEC is presumed to be public records. An exemption to the Public Records Law may apply to certain records, including materials that fall under certain categories under a statutory or common law exemption, including the limited exemption at Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 23J, Section 2(k) regarding certain types of confidential information submitted to MassCEC by an applicant for any form of assistance. Applicant acknowledges and agrees that MassCEC, in its sole discretion, shall determine whether any document, material, data or other information is exempt from or subject to public disclosure. Thus, MassCEC urges applicants to carefully consider what documents, materials, data and other information is submitted to MassCEC in connection with this RFP and to not submit any confidential information.

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 modification of the application, negotiate with all qualified Applicants, cancel or modify the RFP in part or in 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. It is the responsibility of Applicants to 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 applicant(s) awarded will execute a contract, in the form of the template agreement attached hereto as Attachment B which will set forth the respective roles and responsibilities of the parties.

Each Applicant is required to review the Sample Agreement in Attachment B, and if applicable, submit a revised version with any tracked changes clearly marked with its Application to this RFP. Please note that MassCEC may accept or reject any such proposed changes or further negotiate this agreement at its sole discretion.