

# Responses to Accelerate Clean Transportation School Bus Program RFP Questions

## Program Structure - Fleet Electrification Services vs. Deployment Project Services

### **1. Why divide into two RFPs?**

The selected Fleet Electrification Advisory Services Consultant and Deployment Technical Assistance Consultant will serve different school districts and fleets concurrently. MassCEC anticipates that the Electrification Advisory Services Consultant will provide services for school districts and fleets that may not be ready to electrify presently but are interested in assessing electrification opportunities in the near-to-medium-term. For example, MassCEC expects this Consultant to prepare these fleets to apply for future rounds of EPA Clean School Bus Funding. The Deployment Technical Assistance Consultant will serve school districts that are ready to implement electric school buses in their fleet in the short-term and ready to take meaningful steps towards full fleet electrification.

While the skillsets required for both opportunities are similar, providing services for the Deployment opportunity requires project management skills associated with implementing a substantial infrastructure project. Further, MassCEC recognizes the capacity constraints on the school district and fleets and seeks to ensure that the Consultants are able to adequately support these stakeholders given the anticipated staff time required per project.

### **2. How does MassCEC see the Fleet Advisory and Deployment Assistance projects operating together? How does MassCEC envision the team selected for the Fleet Advisory project to coordinate and collaborate with the team leading the Deployment Assistance project? In particular, how do you envision the timelines/selection processes fitting together (if at all)? In addition, how do you intend to treat areas of potential overlap across the statements of work (such as site assessment, for example)?**

These will be concurrent programs serving different school districts and fleets. MassCEC expects that the two teams will be in communication with one another and with MassCEC. There may be periodic check-ins to ensure consistency and share lessons learned on electrification planning. During the fleet application process for Deployment Project funding, MassCEC anticipates that some Applicants may switch to enrolling in Fleet Advisory Services.

### **3. Can one organization be selected as the Consultant Team for both the Advisory Services and the Deployment Assistance?**

Yes, one organization can act as the Consultant for both the Advisory Services and Deployment Assistance.

- 4. Are EPA priority school districts given prioritization for participation in this program?**  
**a. If yes, how will it be determined whether they should participate in the Fleet Advisory Service project and/or the Deployment Technical Assistance project?**

Yes, the program will prioritize Deployment Project funding applications and enrollment in Fleet Advisory Services from school districts who have been awarded EPA's Clean School Bus Rebate funding and schools that meet the criteria for EPA Clean School Bus priority funding but did not receive EPA funding. Selections for Deployment Assistance vs. Advisory Services will be determined through assessing Applicants' readiness to proceed with electrification.

- 5. What is the contract term of Electrification Advisory Services?**

MassCEC anticipates a two (2) year term length.

- 6. Is there a weighting benefit in scoring to having single Consultant for both RFPs?**

No, there is no weighted benefit to having a single Consultant for both RFPs.

- 7. Are there any potential conflicts or concerns with sharing information between the Deployment Technical Assistance Consultant team and the Fleet Electrification Advisory Services team?**

MassCEC expects to address confidentiality concerns in the Service Agreements with the chosen Consultants. MassCEC expects that the Consultant Teams will disclose sensitive information only to the extent that sharing such information is necessary for both teams to complete their scopes of service and that other sharing or use of such confidential information will be prohibited.

- 8. Is the Technical Consultant expected to lead or support recruitment of Project Applicants [school districts and fleets]?**

For Deployment Project funding the Technical Consultant is expected to take on a supporting role for Applicants, as MassCEC has existing relationships with potential Applicants. For Fleet Advisory Services, the Technical Consultant may take on a more active role to reach more school districts.

## Application Process and Eligibility

- 9. EPA's eligibility guidelines include charter schools that are part of a public school district and school buses that tribes operate. Are they also eligible in the MassCEC program?**

Yes, charter schools and tribal schools are also eligible applicants for ACT School Bus.

**10. Are services only for the bus fleet, or also for the white fleet?**

The Technical Consultant can also provide services for smaller vehicles (such as vans) as part of holistic fleet planning provided that these services do not detract from assessing the bus fleet. If requested, Consultants should be prepared to provide a budget breakdown for services including white fleet vehicles in the proposal.

**11. Are service providers or vendors eligible applicants for the Fleet Advisory Program and/or for the Deployment Technical Assistance? Will an organization included on a Consultant Team [for the Fleet Advisory Program] be eligible as an applicant or service provider under the RFP for school funding to come later [Deployment Project funding]?**

Fleet Advisory Program:

Service providers or vendors are eligible to apply as part of a Technical Consultant Team (but not as the Lead Applicant) for Advisory Services provided that they are able to advise participating fleets on a range of electrification options, including alternative operational models and vehicle makes and models. Service providers must be transparent about their role on the Technical Consultant Team. The Lead Applicant is ultimately responsible for the services provided and will be expected to ensure that the Advisory Services are unbiased and, in the event a recommendation is provided that overlaps with a service provider's or vendor's industry, the Lead Applicant will be responsible for ensuring a reasonable number of alternatives are presented to the recipient of the advice that do not require the recipient to specifically leverage the service provider's or vendor's services.

Deployment Technical Assistance:

Service providers or vendors will not be eligible to apply as part of a team under the Deployment Technical Assistance RFP. However, MassCEC will allow service providers and vendors to apply with school districts as part of a Project Applicant Team under the School Bus Fleet Deployment RFP.

A service provider or vendor included on the Consultant Team for the Fleet Advisory Program may apply with school districts as part of a Applicant Team to receive services under the School Bus Fleet Deployment RFP.

**12. Will the implementation funding for districts, the portion of the program released after EPA funds are announced, be targeted towards individual school districts? Can third party groups pull together eligible applicants, or would it be only districts?**

School Districts must be the Lead Applicants applying to receive services from the selected consultants. However, third-parties, including third-party fleet operators, can be part of the Applicant Teams and are eligible to receive funding.

**13. Does the page count in “Proposal Requirements” (on page 8) mean a single page or does a page mean front-back (as if printed)?**

The page count refers to a single side of a page. All submissions will be electronic.

**14. Are dividers allowed?**

Yes, dividers are allowed but please note that all submissions will be electronic.

**15. What is the preference of “Cover Page” in the submission packages description on page 8? Is this a Cover sheet or a Cover letter?**

A cover sheet is preferred, including basic identifying information.

**16. Are letters of recommendation required to be included in the proposal package?**

Letters of recommendation are not required.

## Program Budget

**17. Is there a not-to-exceed budget amount to this project?**

MassCEC is not specifying a not-to-exceed budget for either the Fleet Advisory Services RFP or the Deployment Project Technical Assistance RFP. However, MassCEC anticipates the total budget for ACT School Bus to be \$8,000,000 (\$8M) (as referenced in the [ACT School Bus Notice of Intent](#)). This total budget includes Deployment Project funding for the fleets.

**18. Under Section 9. Budget [for Fleet Advisory Services], we are requested to show budget detail for low and high recruitment effort scenarios, but also that the project will be paid on a milestone basis. From the referenced sections below, is this milestone or reimbursable? Should we have high and low effort milestones?**

The project will be paid on a milestone basis and a per-fleet milestone basis where applicable. For example, there will be a payment associated with each subtask (or sub-milestone) under Task 3 (School Bus Electrification Analyses) that will be paid on a per-fleet basis. The Consultant is expected to propose budgets based on estimated time and effort required to complete

milestones. MassCEC is requesting that Consultants consider both high and low effort scenarios for recruiting fleets.

**The RFP states that payment will be made on a milestone basis based on a deliverable schedule which will be provided by the applicant. Can you specify if this award will be fixed-price, time and materials, or some combination thereof? If this is a combination award, please clarify.**

The award will be a fixed-price. The Consultant is expected to propose budgets based on estimated time and effort required to complete the milestones outlined in the scope of services. Funding amounts will be based on Consultant proposals and finalized with MassCEC.

Misc.

**19. Can you make the most-recent quarterly report from Mass Fleet Advisor available to review?**

No, MassCEC will not make the Mass Fleet Advisor quarterly report available for review during this RFP process. MassCEC expects the selected consultant to suggest a format for the quarterly reports. MassCEC will provide input as to the information and format. The quarterly reports should include the ongoing high-level takeaways and tracking information being collected for school districts and fleets participating in the program.

**20. Under the Accelerating Clean Transportation School Bus (“ACT School Bus”) Fleet Electrification Advisory Services” Section: Does MassCEC have guidance on the document length of the reports for Task 1C? Should this be delivered along the project, or as part of the conclusion?**

MassCEC expects that public-facing reports will be produced throughout the contract term (for example, one towards the beginning, one midterm, and one final) and should cover lessons learned throughout the program. The overall goal is for these reports to be digestible and usable for stakeholders to assess school bus electrification project opportunities. Consultant Teams will be expected to propose the format and length of these reports to meet this goal. The selected Consultant Team is expected to work with MassCEC to finalize the content of these reports.

**21. To scope and cost fleet recruitment activities, can MassCEC provide insight into the level of fleet recruitment done to date? Also, can MassCEC provide any insight into fleet interest to date?**

MassCEC has had preliminary conversations with approximately forty (40) school districts and ten (10) third-party fleet operators. There has been considerable interest from fleets in exploring electrification.

**22. For Task 1A, does MassCEC anticipate preparatory meetings with the consultant and MassCEC, in advance of check-ins with the applicants or selected fleets?**

Yes, meetings will start after the contract is signed by both parties.

**23. Can MassCEC share any initial insight into how applicants will be evaluated for the EV School Bus Deployment Grants?**

The ACT School Bus Fleet Deployment Program will prioritize applications from school districts who have been awarded EPA's Clean School Bus Rebate funding and schools that meet the criteria for EPA Clean School Bus priority funding but did not receive EPA funding. MassCEC has the following goals for the selected Deployment Projects:

- a. Demonstrate scalable and equitable paths to decarbonization in the transportation sector
- b. Maximize GHG emissions reductions, health, and economic benefits in priority populations, including by electrifying a significant number of vehicles or a disproportionately high-emitting set of vehicles
- c. Demonstrate efficient and effective project plan with MassCEC, the Technical Consultant, and third-party school bus fleet operators
- d. Represent the diversity of Massachusetts communities, from a geographic, demographic, and socioeconomic lens