Request for Proposals: Ocean Innovation Network

OSW-2025-02

Date of Issue: May 16, 2025

Proposals Due: June 30, 2025

Total Funding Available: $7,650,000

All proposals must be submitted to:

Offshorewind@masscec.com

I. SUMMARY

The Massachusetts Clean Energy Technology Center ("MassCEC") has launched a new Ocean Innovation Network Program ("Program") that will provide competitive funding for assets and initiatives that will strengthen the route to commercialization for start-ups and early stage companies working in marine science and technology and promote and connect organizations and entities to further grow existing clusters of businesses, suppliers, and associated institutions fostering mutual growth, innovation, and competitiveness through collaboration. Through this Request for Proposals ("RFP"), MassCEC is seeking applicants ("Applicants") to MassCEC's Ocean Innovation Network Program for funding through grants and service agreements in two (2) complimentary program tracks:

Track 1: Development and Operation of OceanTech Testing Facilities and Sites

In this track, MassCEC seeks to advance the development of ocean testing and product validation sites, covering a range of archetypes from dockside test sites to open-ocean test beds. Cost-shared funding will be made available for:

- Design, engineering, permitting, construction, deployment, and commissioning costs to create, improve, or expand access to facilities that enable testing and validation of ocean technology in representative ocean environments;
- Initial phase of operations and maintenance (18-24 months) for the funded sites/facilities

Track 2: Ocean Innovation Network Support

In this track, MassCEC seeks to support and grow the ocean technology innovation ecosystem and smooth the path to commercialization. Cost-shared funding will be made available for:

- Improving and enhancing existing co-work, office and maker spaces for start-up and early-stage companies;
- Providing business coaching and supply-chain networking;
- Supporting industry engagement and initiatives through events, workshops, roundtables, and working groups;
- Coordinating access and vessel transportation, technical support, and deployment logistics to test sites/facilities;
- Conducting marketing, outreach, and promotional activities to support startup engagement and industry visibility;
- Scholarships that reimburse startup companies for expenses related to commercialization and in-water testing, including access and use of test sites.

Through this Program, MassCEC seeks to accelerate the growth of Massachusetts' ocean technology innovation ecosystem through targeted investments that leverage existing assets, programs, partnerships, and concentrations of maritime industry and infrastructure, and further establish marine science and technology clusters to advance the Commonwealth as a leader in ocean technology innovation.

In addition to this grant opportunity, MassCEC is committing program resources to promote and highlight the Ocean Innovation Network, its projects, partners, and success stories. MassCEC anticipates working closely with awardees, as well as the broader ocean technology community, to identify opportunities, share resources, and connect the companies, institutions, nonprofits, and government agencies that comprise the MA ocean technology cluster.

II. ABOUT MASSCEC

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 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 in order 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. PROGRAM BACKGROUND

MASSACHUSETTS' CLIMATE GOALS & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

In recognition of the environmental, social, and economic risks posed by climate change, Massachusetts has enacted laws and advanced policies which require greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction over the next twenty-five years to get to at least net zero GHG emissions by 2050. The state's *Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2050* highlights specific goals, strategies, policies, and actions to achieve net zero emissions in 2050 across specific sectors of the economy—such as power, buildings, transportation—and identifies cross-sector strategies such as expanding workforce development, supporting technology innovation, and ensuring a just economic transition. The Commonwealth sees the opportunity inherent in the energy transition and has shared its vision to become a global leader in climatetech, building on over a decade of momentum, capitalizing on growth opportunities, and rising to meet the challenge posed by climate change.

It is estimated that about 34% of the emissions reductions needed to achieve global Net Zero 2050 goals will come from technology that is not yet commercialized. Massachusetts' innovation ecosystem can catalyze the maturing and scaling of technologies, which will play a crucial role in reducing its GHG emissions to meet statutory goals.

In February 2025, MassCEC and the Executive Office of Economic Development released the *Massachusetts Climatetech Economic Development Strategy & Implementation Plan* ("Plan"). The Plan's strategies and actions focus on increasing the state's resources for climatetech firms across the stages of business maturity, emphasizing programs and efforts for protype validation, piloting and launching, and scaling and growth. One of the core strategies of the Plan is to invest in shared infrastructure and equipment to build a testing and demonstration network, and to enhance and promote the Massachusetts climatetech ecosystem on a state, national, and global scale.

OCEAN TECH HUB

Over the next decade, America's ocean economy is poised to grow by $300 billion, supporting critical sectors like clean energy, climate mitigation, national security, aquaculture, and others. In 2023, the US Economic Development Agency designated the region of southeastern Massachusetts and Rhode Island as an official "Tech Hub", the only one in the Nation specifically focused on ocean technology. Leveraging the region's existing assets and nation-leading expertise, the Ocean Tech Hub will provide access to world-class facilities and marine testing assets, and provide business growth support including technical assistance and access to capital. MassCEC is a member of the Ocean Tech Hub consortium.

OCEANTECH ECOSYSTEM NEEDS

Informed by work done for the Ocean Tech Hub, a feasibility and business case study on ocean renewable energy innovation conducted for MassCEC by DNV, a formal Request for Information call, and ongoing engagements with start-ups, accelerators and incubators, universities and research institutions, and others in the ecosystem, MassCEC has identified four (4) key areas of need for start-ups and small businesses seeking to commercialize new marine-based technologies and solutions:

1. Entrepreneur Support, including access to services and shared facilities, customized advice on a range of business and technical issues, and accelerator programs;
2. Product Validation and Testing, including access to pre-permitted testing and demonstration facilities and infrastructure in representative ocean environments;
3. Supply Chain Development and Networking, including programs and activities that coordinate collaboration between local suppliers, facilitate introductions to larger firms, and provide customized business development support to local companies; and
4. Joint Industry Programs, including focused industry engagement that identifies, prioritizes, and accelerates development of technologies and solutions affecting companies and other stakeholders in ocean industries.

OCEAN TECHNOLOGY FOCUS AREAS

OceanTech is a subset of a growing global focus on the marine or "blue" economy and for the purposes of this Program, includes the following primary subsectors[1]:

- Ocean Renewable Energy (ORE): Technologies that convert ocean winds, waves, tides, currents, and temperature differences into electrical energy. Includes the primary components, sub-components and materials, and other construction and operational aspects of ORE facilities.
- Ocean Robotics: a broad subsector that includes Autonomous Underwater Vehicles, Autonomous/Unmanned Surface Vehicles, Remotely Operated Vehicles, and Hybrid Ocean Robots with associated technology needs for power efficiency, communications, on-board processing, and many others.

[1] Adapted by MassCEC with references to (1) *Ocean Tech Market Analysis* (June 2024, prepared by Fourth Economy under commission by the Rhode Island Commerce Corporation for the Ocean Tech Hub of Southeastern New England), (2) *Ocean Renewable Energy Testing Facility Needs Assessment* (July 2024, prepared by DNV for MassCEC), (3) *Innovation on the Horizon: Cultivating Technology at the Ocean-Climate Nexus* (January 2025, JPMorgan), and (4) *Data Collection and AI in the Blue Economy: Innovation and Investment Opportunities* (April 2024, prepared by SeaAhead and New England Aquarium), among others.

- Marine Sensors: electronic devices that can be attached to a fixed structure or to a buoy, boat, or ocean robot used to gather, process, and convey environmental, oceanographic, operational, and other data to users.
- Advanced Materials: New materials and technologies for use in the marine environment that are more sustainable and efficient, with broad application including ocean renewable energy facilities, vessels, marine construction, cable and scour protection, anchors and moorings, and many others.
- Data Processing/Mapping, Artificial Intelligence, and Machine Learning: Technologies that complete automated tasks using "human-like" learning and provide significant advancements in processing and comprehending images, numbers, and other variables. Broad application and uses across many ocean-based industries and economic sectors.
- ORE Power to "X": Conversion technologies that turn ocean renewable electricity into carbon-neutral synthetic fuels or other forms of energy (represented by "X"), such as hydrogen, ammonia, synthetic natural gas, or liquid fuels that can be stored, with strong application for sectors that are hard to decarbonize.
- Carbon Capture: Technologies to capture and sequester carbon dioxide from seawater or finding ways to safely store carbon in the ocean, such as electrochemistry.
- Marine Organics: New biological ingredients and technologies with use cases for aquaculture, algae-based biotechnology, cell-based proteins and seaweed cultivation for food, skincare and compostable resins.

IV. PROGRAM GOALS AND DESCRIPTION

The Plan identifies the technology commercialization stages of prototype validation, piloting and launch of the business/technology, and scaling the business into commercial sales as the areas of highest need and economic development potential for the Commonwealth.

The Ocean Innovation Network is a new MassCEC initiative that was developed through collaboration between the Offshore Wind and Emerging Climatetech/Tech-To-Market teams. The goals of the Program are to:

- Establish a cost-effective and reliable path to in-water testing and demonstration by creating a network of test facilities/sites that cover a range of representative ocean conditions;
- Invest in partner organizations to support their endeavors to provide the OceanTech Startup community with valuable assets, resources, and programming; and
- Continue to grow and attract OceanTech Startups to Massachusetts.

Through this RFP, MassCEC is seeking Applicants for funding through the Ocean Innovation Network Program in the form of grants and service agreements in two (2) complimentary tracks as described below.

TRACK 1: DEVELOPMENT AND OPERATION OF OCEANTECH TESTING FACILITIES AND SITES

For most ocean technologies, testing in the intended environment for functionality and durability is required for protype demonstrations to move through commercial certifications (TRL 4-9). For most OceanTech Startups that are seeking to deploy their technologies, products and solutions in the marine environment, the time required to develop plans, engineer designs, gain requisite permits and

approvals, and make the necessary logistical and technical arrangements presents significant scheduling challenges, requires specialized knowledge, and involves costs that they do not have budgets for.

MassCEC recently conducted research on regional ocean energy industries and their innovation ecosystem capacities and needs to support development of the agency's programs and initiatives. Representatives of all key segments of the ecosystem contacted for this work consistently reported that permitted in-water testing facilities were needed to reduce time-to-market and constituted a critical gap. Representatives of startups and small businesses also reported difficulty in finding appropriate and affordable laboratory test facilities, while test facility owners reported difficulties attracting sufficient users. Through this work, MassCEC has identified several general archetypes or typologies (Table 1) that have a high value for a range of technology applications.

In this track, MassCEC seeks to advance the development of ocean testing and product validation sites, covering a range of archetypes from dockside test sites to open-ocean test beds. Cost-shared funding will be made available for:

- Design, engineering, permitting, construction, deployment, and commissioning costs to create, improve, or expand access to facilities that enable testing and validation of ocean technology in representative ocean environments;
- Initial phase of operations and maintenance (18-24 months) for the funded sites/facilities

Table 1. Priority OceanTech testing infrastructure, equipment, and/or assets archetypes

Location/Typology	Description	Potential Features
Quayside (dockside) or shore-based fixed structure	Dedicated or priority access berth or other quayside or shoreside site(s) of at least 25-35' that provides direct access to the marine environment from readily accessible upland location.	• Davit crane or other means of deploying equipment into the water or onto a vessel • Structures to mount hardware in or outside of the water • Benchmark met-ocean data measurements • Electrical power service (120V), secure ethernet or wifi access • Access restrictions and security monitoring
Nearshore fixed structure, mooring system(s), anchor(s), and anchorage sites	Nearshore site(s) in state waters that are relatively close in proximity to nearby docks, piers or other sites where vessel transit time and related logistics are low; environment in water depths generally ranging from ~15-30ft (mean low water) and in location(s) that have no or minimal use compatibility concerns	• Fixed structure with electrical power service (120V) and communication connections • Pre-set mooring system with anchor, chain, buoy(s) or floating structure (barge) • Pre-set anchor(s) for deploying buoys, floating or water column tech • Anchorage area for deploying and testing anchor systems • Benchmark met-ocean data measurements
Offshore fixed structure, mooring system(s), anchor(s), and anchorage sites	Offshore site(s) in state waters and open ocean environments with water depths generally ranging from ~30-90ft (mean low water) and in location(s) that have no or minimal use compatibility concerns.	• Fixed structure with electrical power service (120V) and communication connections • Pre-set mooring system with anchor, chain, buoy(s) or floating structure (barge) • Pre-set anchor(s) for deploying buoys, floating or water column tech • Anchorage area for deploying and testing anchor systems • Benchmark met-ocean data measurements

The list in Table 1 is provided as an illustrative indication of test site characteristics and capabilities and is not intended to be a prescriptive specification. Applicants are strongly encouraged to propose alternative configurations that build on the above priority typologies (e.g., 2 mooring systems at a site, one for smaller equipment/technologies with loads similar to a moored met-ocean buoy or inshore vessel, and one for larger loads such as wave energy converter or larger offshore vessel). Additionally, Applicants may submit proposals for other OceanTech test site archetypes. As with the facilities, assets and equipment listed above, all proposals will need to demonstrate a good understanding of the market need. Examples of other archetypes might include, but are not limited to: (1) deepwater offshore site(s) for floating offshore wind and other technology applications with general water depths of 90-250+ft; and (2) sites for the testing of marine cable technologies.

As the focus of this solicitation is rapid development of assets to support in-water testing of OceanTech, MassCEC is not currently accepting applications for test sites on natural beaches or wetlands (e.g for erosion control technologies), facilities located in federal waters, fresh water test sites, or in-lab flume or tank-based test facilities.

Funding of Operations and Maintenance

Applicants for Track 1 funding are eligible to apply for additional funding to cover operations and maintenance expenses for an initial startup period of 18-24 months.

Eligible O&M expenses may include but are not limited to: site maintenance and repairs, environmental monitoring and compliance, equipment and instrumentation upkeep, and vessel service as required for essential operations and maintenance.

Ineligible O&M expenses include but are not limited to: administrative personnel costs, insurance, and any expenses related to revenue-generating activities, such as vessel service for commercial testing, usage fees, or business development.

Applicants should clearly articulate anticipated essential operations and maintenance functions for the initial 18-24 months, as well as their long-term plans and business models to ensure continued site viability beyond this period. Funding for O&M will be distributed based on milestone deliverables tied to the O&M plan.

Coordination with Program Support Services

Applicants for Track 1 can apply only to develop and operate the test sites, or they can also apply under Track 2 to provide the access and support services. In either case, a successful funding application will demonstrate awareness, readiness, and enthusiasm to work with Program-funded support service providers to streamline access to test sites.

Those organizations seeking funding to develop test assets under Track 1, but not provide support services under Track 2, will be required to establish a working agreement with Program-funded service providers to ensure that the Program goals are met in the amplification of a regional support network.

TRACK 2: OCEAN INNOVATION NETWORK SUPPORT

Startup and early-stage companies face numerous challenges to the growth and evolution of their businesses. Within a short period (2-5 years), the company must advance its prototype technology to market readiness, connect into national and global markets, and develop scalable production, sales and delivery processes. Representative startups engaged through MassCEC's market research and ongoing networks have pointed to the specific value and benefits of entrepreneurial assistance, through programming (e.g., incubators, accelerators and challenges), office and workshop/prototyping space ("maker space"), access to partners for prototype development and other specialized services, supply chain networking, and business development support.

Massachusetts is home to many organizations providing these services ("Entrepreneur Support Organizations" or "ESOs"), and through this Program, MassCEC seeks to amplify their impact through cost-shared capital and operational funding along two (2) tracks:

Track 2A: Capital and Operational Funds for Entrepreneur Support Organizations

- Capital funding to enhance co-working, office, and maker spaces for OceanTech startups and early-stage companies
- Operational funding to continue, enhance, or implement new programs and services that provide business coaching and supply chain networking
- Services to coordinate user access, vessel transportation to test sites/facilities, technical support, deployment logistics, and other needs.

Track 2B: Startup Scholarships

- Scholarships that reimburse startup companies for expenses related to commercialization and in-water testing, including access and use of test sites.

Track 2A: Capital and Operational Funds for Entrepreneur Support Organizations

Capital funding

Funding is available to enhance co-working, office, and maker spaces for OceanTech startups and early-stage companies. Eligible uses include renovating existing facilities to better serve the OceanTech ecosystem and purchasing shared-use equipment to accelerate prototyping and product development.

This funding prioritizes improving accessibility and functionality for the broader innovation community. Therefore, purchasing real estate, as well as acquiring equipment or upgrading facilities for the exclusive use of a single organization, is ineligible. Furthermore, as the focus of this solicitation is technology commercialization, facilities that serve a primarily or exclusively academic or research function are ineligible for this funding track.

Operational funding

Funding is available to continue, enhance, or implement new programs and services that provide business coaching and supply chain networking for OceanTech startups. Desirable Program activities also include supporting industry engagement and initiatives through events, workshops, roundtables, working groups, investor networking and demo days. Insofar as they demonstrably advance such activities, administrative, operational, and programmatic costs such as salaries and overhead are eligible for funding.

MassCEC also seeks to support one or more service providers that will serve as a point of contact/entry for OceanTech Startups and other users to coordinate access to test sites/facilities, help to arrange for vessel transportation to nearshore and offshore test sites/facilities, coordinate technical planning, configurations, and other necessary details with ocean test site owners, provide support for deployment and return logistics, and serve as key source of knowledge and connections within the ecosystem to help support other needs related to testing and validation.

Funded service providers will be expected to offer direct support to OceanTech startups, including but not limited to test site coordination, permitting assistance, vessel and equipment logistics, and deployment planning.

Track 2B: Startup Scholarships

Each awarded grantee will also have the option to offer scholarship funds to OceanTech Startups ("Scholarship Funding"). Section IV below provides more information on what Scholarship Funding can be used for. Entrepreneur Support Organizations interested in offering Scholarship Funding to MA-based OceanTech Startups should outline in their application an estimate of how many OceanTech Startups they anticipate supporting during the grant period and how much they anticipate offering for total Scholarship Funding. Scholarship plans should be based on a realistic pipeline of expected startup engagement. Individual scholarships are made on a 50/50 cost-shared reimbursement basis, capped at Twenty-Thousand Dollars ($20,000) per recipient company.

MassCEC will provide the Organization with an application form to distribute to eligible OceanTech Startups. MassCEC will review the applications to determine if the OceanTech Startup is eligible to receive a scholarship. Once deemed eligible by MassCEC, the ESO will evaluate the scholarship application forms and independently select the recipients. Upon acceptance, funds will be released to the ESO based on OceanTech Startup milestones. The ESO will be responsible for distributing the scholarship funds to the startups from its milestone payment, as well as aggregating and reporting on expenditures and startup progress.

IV. SOLICITATION DETAILS

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible Entities - Eligible applicants include nonprofits, universities, research institutions, and other organizations with the capacity to develop and operate ocean test sites and/or provide OceanTech entrepreneur support services. Applicants must demonstrate experience in ocean technology development, infrastructure management, business support services and/or, strategic partnerships and networking. Federal and state entities are ineligible to apply for this solicitation. Private OceanTech companies working to commercialize ocean technology themselves are not eligible to apply for this solicitation, but may be eligible for funding via Track 2B: Startup Scholarships, as administered by grantee service providers.

All Applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Applicants must be based in and registered to do business in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.
- Applicants should have experienced management team and leadership (Board of Directors) and a sustainable organizational model and/or strategic plan.
- Applicants must be established organizations with multiple sources of funding and at least three (3) years of operations.

Accessibility - As the intent of this solicitation is to develop, improve, and otherwise make accessible a network of ocean test sites, projects that limit access to one organization, private company, or another exclusive category are ineligible. Projects that make privately held assets and facilities accessible to a broad range of users are welcome, and MassCEC will evaluate such projects partially based on specific commitments and plans the applicant has for promotion and access.

Partnerships – Partnerships are encouraged, and applicant teams formed of complimentary organizations are welcomed, but not required. Applicant teams must designate a lead applicant to receive a grant (if awarded), execute a contract with MassCEC, and have responsibility for the completion of the grant tasks and budget management.

Applicants are welcome to submit Program proposals that incorporate elements of both funding tracks. For example, an organization developing an offshore test site could be eligible for both a capital grant and a service agreement for the provision of vessel service to access the facility. Likewise, an organization providing startup support services and business supply chain network services could partner with another organization developing and operating test sites.

AVAILABLE FUNDING

Available Funding - MassCEC has allocated the following funds for this RFP funding opportunity:

- Track 1: Development and Operation of OceanTech Testing Facilities and Sites
    - Up to Five Million Dollars ($5,000,000) for the development, improvement, or expanded access to ocean test sites/facilities, individual awards will be capped at Three Million Dollars ($3,000,000)
    - Up to Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand Dollars ($250,000) for 18-24 months of ocean test facilities/sites operation and maintenance
- Track 2A: Capital and Operational Funds for Entrepreneur Support Organizations
    - Up to Two Million Dollars ($2,000,000) for improvements and build-out of existing assets and operations, programs, and activities that will support and grow the ocean technology innovation ecosystem
- Track 2B: Startup Scholarships
    - Up to Four Hundred Thousand Dollars ($400,000) for Startup Scholarships for eligible expenses, as defined in Section IV

ELIGIBLE USE OF FUNDS

The Ocean Innovation Network Program provides funding to support capital investments, operational activities, and direct startup support that strengthens the regional ecosystem for OceanTech innovation and commercialization. All funded activities must demonstrably enhance the Applicant's capacity to serve OceanTech startups and contribute to a robust, inclusive, and accessible innovation network.

Capital Funds

Capital funding may be used for:

- Development or redevelopment of ocean test sites;
- Improvements to existing facilities, such as coworking spaces, fabrication labs, makerspaces, and prototyping workshops;
- Soft costs associated with capital improvements, including design, engineering, permitting, construction, deployment, and commissioning;
- Purchase of equipment that directly supports OceanTech innovation, testing, and commercialization.

Operational Funds

Operational funding may support the launch, enhancement, or expansion of programming and organizational functions, including:

- Operational staffing and management of network facilities and programs;
- Outreach and recruitment efforts targeting OceanTech startups;
- Delivery of business development services to startups;
- Development and delivery of programming, such as accelerators and supply chain support;
- Hosting of networking events and convenings;
- Development and delivery of educational workshops or mentoring sessions;
- Production of marketing and communication materials;
- Activities that support the development of strategic regional or sector-based clusters.

Startup Scholarships

Applicants may also propose a portion of funds to be allocated as reimbursable support to startups for eligible activities on a 50/50 cost-shared basis, such as:

- Membership or access fees for makerspaces, labs, or test facilities;
- Vessel services and other logistics costs;
- Expenses associated with testing, deployment, or validation of OceanTech systems;
- Travel stipends for Massachusetts-based Climatetech Startups.

Ineligible Costs

The following costs are not eligible for funding under this Program:

- Acquisition of land or buildings;
- Creation or improvement of indoor, fresh water, or tank-based test facilities.

ARPA FUNDS

The Track 1 funding available for capital expenditure is funded in part with federal assistance provided to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts by the U.S. Department of Treasury ("Treasury") under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 ("ARPA Funds"), Sections 602(b) and 603(b) of the Social Security Act, Pub. L. No. 117-2. As a result, the Contract is subject to certain provisions of the Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards in 2 C.F.R. Part 200, other than such provisions as Treasury has determined or may determine are inapplicable to the ARPA Funds.

All applicants for Track 1 funding must review Attachment D: ARPA Addendum and be prepared to comply with all provisions therein. Track 1 funded projects will be subject to federal reporting and compliance requirements, and all funds must be expended by **December 31, 2026**.

APPLICANT COST SHARE

All proposals must demonstrate a commitment to cost-sharing as MassCEC looks to leverage shared resources with limited funding. Specifically, project proposals must demonstrate a minimum ten percent (10%) cost-share, which can comprise financial contributions, in-kind contributions, or a combination thereof.

MassCEC encourages applicants to clearly describe the source, nature, and estimated value of any proposed cost share in their application. In-kind cost share must be reasonably documented and directly applicable to the objectives of the proposed work.

In addition to the required cost share, applicants are encouraged to identify any leveraged activities or external resources that, while outside the scope of the MassCEC-funded work, are expected to be advanced by the project and provide complementary value to the Commonwealth. MassCEC expects that relatively large grant requests will propose correspondingly higher levels of cost share and/or leverage additional benefits to Massachusetts.

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 to this Solicitation as Attachment C which will set forth the respective roles and responsibilities of the parties.

MILESTONES AND DELIVERABLES

MassCEC payments under grant agreements or other forms of support will typically be linked to the achievement of specific defined milestones and/or delivery (and acceptance by MassCEC) of specified work products. In most cases, payments will be an agreed lump sum amount for specified milestones or work projects. In special cases MassCEC may agree to make payments on a time and materials basis.

Applicants are asked to propose milestones appropriate to their projects as part of their application (Attachment A). If awarded, MassCEC will work with the grantee to finalize an appropriate set of milestones by which to monitor, measure, and fund the project.

- Example milestones for a capital project award might be completion of major stages of construction, such as design drawings, permitting, construction, and commissioning. Track 1 projects applying for operations and maintenance funding must propose milestones appropriate to their anticipated operations and maintenance plans.
- Example milestones for an operating project award might include kickoff of the project, hiring of new staff, significant Program events, halfway points, or achievement-based milestones tied to project success, such as test campaigns completed.

Initial Startup Scholarship funds will be awarded upon acceptance of the startup's application, with further funds released based on startup-specific milestones proposed as part of the approved scholarship application.

Agreements will also include requirements for quarterly reporting, submittal of a comprehensive final report, and an in-person or virtual presentation on results of the project or initiative.

V. ESTIMATED TIMELINE

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

Release of RFP	May 16, 2025
Questions with Answers Posted to MassCEC Website	June 6, 2025
Proposals Due	June 30, 2025
Notification of Award	July 15, 2025
Deadline to spend Track 1 capital funds (ARPA)*	December 31, 2026
Deadline to spend all other funds	December 31, 2028

VI. HOW TO APPLY

Applicants must use and submit the pre-formatted application template Attachment A.

Proposals should be:

- Submitted via email to offshorewind@masscec.com
- Submitted in MS Word or PDF Format, using Calibri font in 11 pt. size
- Maximum of one file submitted; proposal followed by attachments

As described in Attachment A (Application Form), Applicants must provide detailed information about their organizations, experience and capabilities, their proposed scope of work, estimated budget, and

supporting information for related elements such as user access plans, user costs, marketing and outreach, and other pertinent information.

Application Required Documents

- Application Form (This Attachment A)
- Signature Page (Attachment B)
- Previous year's financial statements (One full Fiscal Year or one full Calendar Year)
- Resumes of Applicant Team

The application must be sent as one document, preferably as a searchable PDF file. Applicants should answer the questions as clearly and succinctly as possible.

Letters of Support

Letters of support are welcome and encouraged, but not required. Letters from relevant industry stakeholders that substantiate the Applicant's project impact and market needs will be viewed favorably.

SUPPLIER DIVERSITY SELF-ASSESSMENT

Optionally, Applicants are encouraged to complete the 30-second self-assessment as part of the Certification Program for the Supplier Diversity Office of Massachusetts (SDO).

MassCEC is committed to creating an organization where everyone is welcomed, supported, respected, and valued. We are committed to incorporating these principles in all aspects of our work to promote the fair distribution of the health and economic benefits of climatetech and clean energy. MassCEC strives to lead and innovate in climatetech and climate solutions.

MassCEC is interested in understanding the composition of its applicant and awardee pool in the Program. Applicants who choose to complete the SDO self-assessment tool are encouraged to provide a screenshot or print out of the results page with their application packages to support MassCEC's effort to collect data regarding the applicant and awardee pool for the Program. While this is not currently a Program requirement, applicant submission of the SDO questionnaire will help MassCEC better understand the composition of our applicant base today and may influence Program design in the future.

Do not disclose any proprietary information in your proposal. Applicants will receive a reply e-mail as confirmation for receipt of a completed proposal. MassCEC reserves the right to disqualify any submission at its sole discretion. Proposals that are not received by the closing deadline will not be considered.

VII. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Evaluation Criteria	Details
Relevance and Alignment	• Alignment with the grant's objectives to enhance the conditions for OceanTech startup success in Massachusetts.
Articulation of Need	• Clarity in identifying specific infrastructure, resource, or equipment gaps that hinder OceanTech startup growth. • Justification for the proposed project based on industry trends, startup needs, and market demands.
Project Feasibility and Implementation Plan	• Coherence and feasibility of the proposed project plan, including implementation strategies, key milestones, and projected outcomes. • "Shovel Readiness" of the project, particularly the ability of Track 1 projects to meet 12/31/2026 ARPA spending deadline. • Long-term viability and sustainability of proposed infrastructure, including plans for maintenance, future funding, and continued relevance in the OceanTech ecosystem.
Anticipated Impact	• Potential for significant and measurable impact on the acceleration of OceanTech Startups and technology commercialization. • Expected outcomes and benefits to the industry sector and Massachusetts OceanTech innovation economy. • Plan to attract and retain new Oceantech Startups into the Massachusetts ecosystem. • Degree to which the project leverages or enhances existing assets, partnerships, networks, or industry clusters.
Qualifications and Experience	• Demonstrated track record and capabilities of project leaders and staff in managing and implementing similar projects and programs.
Budget	• Requested information is provided in sufficient detail. • Budget is aligned with Program needs and at competitive rates. • Applicants clearly describe and account for all necessary resources.
Value Demonstration	• Comparison of the proposed project to other applicants' proposals. • Overall value proposition of proposal to OceanTech ecosystem.

VIII. CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS

Questions regarding this RFP should be submitted to offshorewind@masscec.com by May 30, 2025. Responses will be posted on the MassCEC website by June 6, 2025.

IX. 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"). 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 particular document, material, data or other information is exempt from or subject to public disclosure. Thus, MassCEC urges applicant to carefully consider what documents, materials, data and other information is submitted to MassCEC in connection with 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.

In line with Public Records Law requirements, MassCEC generally considers the following types of information as confidential; trade secrets and proprietary methodologies, detailed financial projections or business models, employee or personnel information, and customer or partner lists.

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 submit an application 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 template agreement attached hereto as Attachment C: Ocean Innovation Network Draft Agreement, which will set forth the respective roles and responsibilities of the parties.

All awarded applicants ("Grantees") of the Program will be required to report on their progress throughout their participation in the Program.

MassCEC will disburse funds on a reimbursement basis in accordance with the budget, payment terms, schedules, and other terms and conditions established in the Grant Agreement and Statement of Work. Payment will be subject to:

- (i) execution of an agreement or contribution letter between or to the Grantee and each entity providing matching funds;
- (ii) submission of agreed upon deliverables, valid invoices and supporting detail from the Grantee evidencing the expenditures to be reimbursed, and certifying to the capital nature of the expense; and
- (iii) MassCEC's access to sufficient bond funding from the Commonwealth.

Within 30 days after the execution of a Grant Agreement, the Grantee and MassCEC will mutually schedule a launch meeting to review the activities to be conducted under the Agreement, schedule, and reporting requirements. All Grantees will be required to provide the following minimum deliverables to MassCEC:

- Quarterly project status reports;
- Quarterly invoices and supporting financial reports for costs incurred and match recognized;
- Annual reports detailing project status and outcomes, including the resulting economic activities and their related impacts.

All Grantees will be required to report metrics, as applicable. A final set of metrics will be more fully detailed in the Grant Agreement:

- Startup Metrics: for example, # startups served, # of startups from underrepresented groups, jobs created, capital raised, revenue growth
- Program Metrics: for example, # applications received, # workshops, usage of capital assets
- Innovation Metrics: for example, # new products or services developed, # new IP assets (patents, trademarks) filed, # prototypes developed or tested
- Diversity & Inclusion Metrics: for example, demographics of Program participants, geographic diversity of participants 10
- Ecosystem Metrics: for example, events, collaborations with industry, community engagement, network expansion
- Sustainability Metrics: for example, start-up survival rate 1-year post-program, co-investment or additional funds raised by awardee.

MassCEC will work with Grantees to establish additional metrics in order to evaluate the success of the project. Grantees may occasionally be required to host project site visits by MassCEC staff and contractors and participate in interviews by MassCEC or its designees for purposes of monitoring and evaluation.