



**Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for  
PROPEL Operations Program**  
Solicitation No. 2025-NEMC-01

**Massachusetts Technology Collaborative**  
75 North Drive  
Westborough, MA 01581-3340  
<http://www.masstech.org>

<b>Procurement Team Leader:</b>	<b>Mark Halfman</b>
<b>Date Issued:</b>	<b>August 15, 2024</b>
<b>Informational Webinar:</b>	<b>August 22, 2024 @ 1:00 PM</b>
<b>Questions Due:</b>	<b>August 23, 2024 @ 5 PM EST</b>
<b>Answers to Questions Posted:</b>	<b>August 26, 2024 @ 5 PM EST</b>
<b>Responses Due:</b>	<b>September 20, 2024 @ 5 PM EST</b>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Overview

The Northeast Microelectronics Coalition Hub ("NEMC Hub"), a division of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative ("Mass Tech Collaborative" or "MassTech") is issuing this Notice of Funding Opportunity for PROPEL Operations Program, (NOFO No. 2025-NEMC-01) (the "Solicitation") to solicit responses from qualified firms ("Respondents") interested in receiving grant funding to support microelectronics (hardware) startups and small companies and their need for affordable operational support to help them scale their technologies from the lab to commercial fabrication (the "Project"). Respondents will be competing against each other for grant funding and the submissions of all Respondents shall be compared and evaluated pursuant to the evaluation criteria set forth in this NOFO.

Mass Tech Collaborative will be the contracting entity on behalf of the Northeast Microelectronics Coalition Hub for the purposes of this NOFO, and (except where the specific context warrants otherwise), the Northeast Microelectronics Coalition Hub and Mass Tech Collaborative are collectively referred to as Mass Tech Collaborative or MassTech. Mass Tech Collaborative will enter into a **NEMC Sub-performer Agreement** with selected Respondents containing certain standard provisions (the "Agreement"), located on the NOFO webpage.

### 1.2 Mass Tech Collaborative and the NEMC

Mass Tech Collaborative is an independent public instrumentality of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts chartered by the Commonwealth to serve as a catalyst for growing its innovation economy. Mass Tech Collaborative brings together leaders from industry, academia, and government to advance technology-focused solutions that lead to economic growth, job creation, and public benefits in Massachusetts. Mass Tech Collaborative has six primary divisions: The Innovation Institute, Massachusetts Broadband Institute, Massachusetts CyberCenter, Center for Advanced Manufacturing, NEMC Hub, and Massachusetts e-Health Institute. For additional information about Mass Tech Collaborative and its programs and initiatives, please visit our website at [www.masstech.org](http://www.masstech.org).

The Northeast Microelectronics Coalition Hub is a network of 190+ organizations, including commercial and defense companies, leading academic institutions, federally funded R&D centers (FFRDCs), and startups concentrated in eight Northeast states. Established in 2023 and funded through the CHIPS and Science Act, the NEMC Hub is one of eight regional Microelectronics Commons Hubs acting on a shared mission to expand the nation's global leadership in microelectronics and accelerate domestic semiconductor prototyping. As a division of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative, the NEMC Hub fosters a vibrant, connected ecosystem to provide sustainable lab-to-fab enablement, boost education and workforce development, and spur new jobs.

For more information about NEMC and its programs and activities generally, please visit the website at <https://nemicroelectronics.org>

## 2. The Grant

### 2.1 Grant Overview

To develop a nascent semiconductor invention into a technology that can be used by millions typically necessitates a decade or more in time, requires capital investments of more than \$100M per technology, and falls outside the time frame private capital investors will consider. To enable growth of

such new ideas into transformative technologies, as part of a broader initiative NEMC is launching a PROPEL Operations Program to support startups and small companies. This support will help reduce the expertise and capital needed to advance novel technologies, maturing them to a point where venture capital or commercial entities are more able to invest in them.

A variety of existing programs, services, and resources presently form a network of support for startups in the Northeast. However, more must be done to enable this network to assist an even greater number of deep-tech ventures in launching and overcoming the high costs of scaling their technologies. NEMC will augment existing options and develop new resources through the PROPEL Operations Program modeled after an existing competitive voucher-based Massachusetts program.

The PROPEL Operations Program gives NEMC members with 100 or fewer employees access to grant funds to cover up to 75% of the costs associated with the utilization of various operations functions including EDA tool license costs, training costs, costs associated with securing a patent (including drafting and prosecution), and cybersecurity and resilience services costs to help accelerate transition of technologies from lab to fab. Grants to individual companies under this program shall not exceed \$100,000 annually.

**2.2 Grant Requirements and Guidance**

Application	<p>Applications as specified <a href="#">HERE</a> must be completed and submitted to MassTech in response to this NOFO.</p> <p>Applications will be evaluated on a first come first served basis and funded until funds are depleted</p>
Eligible Expenses	<p>Grants may be awarded by MassTech to startups and small companies whose use of the grant funding will, as determined by MassTech, further the goals of innovation and economic development.</p> <p>Grant funds must be used for operational costs such as EDA tool license costs, training costs, costs associated with securing a patent (including drafting and prosecution), and cybersecurity and resilience services costs.</p> <p>Grant funded expenses must be incurred after the notification of the award and within 12 months from that date.</p> <p>Grant funds will be paid on a cost reimbursement basis.</p>

Eligible Locations	<p>Applicant location utilizing the services must be in the Northeast.</p> <p>As determined by MassTech on a case-by-case basis, non-Northeast region entities may be considered for funding.</p>
Eligible Applicants	<p>Startups and small companies must also meet the following eligibility requirements, as determined by MassTech:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant must be a NEMC Hub member or have submitted a member application form.</li> <li>• Startups and small companies with 50 or fewer employees are eligible to receive a grant subsidy of 75%, not to exceed \$100,000.</li> <li>• Startups with 51-100 employees are eligible to receive a grant subsidy of 50%, not to exceed \$100,000.</li> <li>• Companies with 101 or more employees are not eligible.</li> <li>• Startups must demonstrate that they are advancing the goals of the NEMC Hub and lab-to-fab technology transition.</li> </ul>
Reporting	<p>Awardees must present at a NEMC Hub event, providing an overview of their operations and corresponding results.</p> <p>Awardees must provide quarterly update reports covering use of funds, work completed using those funds, and corresponding results of that work.</p>
Duration of Contracts	<p>All costs must be incurred and drawn within twelve (12) months of notification of award.</p>

### 3. APPLICATION PROCESS

#### 3.1 Application and Submission Instructions

Respondents are cautioned to read this NOFO carefully and to conform to its requirements. Failure to comply with the requirements of this NOFO may serve as grounds for rejection of an Application.

All Applications must be completed and submitted electronically via Airtable at:  
<https://airtable.com/appWhS2mupldPEyXV/pag8CI0z58e1o2DYK/form>

- a. Required Submissions- All Proposals must include the items listed below:
- Application, using the Application Form link above which shall include:
    - A description of Respondent.
    - The details of Respondent's proposed Operations.
    - The details of how proposed Operations further applicant's lab-to-fab transition
  - Exceptions to the **NEMC Sub-performer Agreement**, located [HERE](#).
  - Current W-9
- b. Any and all responses, Applications, data, materials, information and documentation submitted to Mass Tech Collaborative in response to this NOFO shall become Mass Tech Collaborative's property and shall be subject to public disclosure. As a public entity, the Mass Tech Collaborative is subject to the Massachusetts Public Records Law (set forth at Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 66). There are very limited and narrow exceptions to disclosure under the Public Records Law. If a Respondent wishes to have the Mass Tech Collaborative treat certain information or documentation as confidential, the Respondent must submit a written request to the Mass Tech Collaborative's General Counsel's office no later than 5:00 p.m. ten (10) business days prior to the required date of Application submission. The request must precisely identify the information and/or documentation that is the subject of the request and provide a detailed explanation supporting the application of the statutory exemption(s) from the public records cited by the Respondent. The General Counsel will issue a written determination within five (5) business days of receipt of the written request. If the General Counsel approves the request, the Respondent shall clearly label the relevant information and/or documentation as "**CONFIDENTIAL**" in the Application. Any statements in an Application reserving any confidentiality or privacy rights that is inconsistent with these requirements and procedures will be disregarded.

### 3.2 Application Timeframe

The application process will proceed according to the following schedule. The target dates are subject to change. Therefore, Respondents are encouraged to check Mass Tech Collaborative's website frequently for updates to the schedule.

Task	Date:
NOFO Released	August 15, 2024
Informational Webinar	August 22, 2024 @ 1 PM EST
Questions Due	August 23, 2024 @ 5 PM EST
Question and Answer File Posted	August 26, 2024 @ 5 PM EST
Applications Due	September 20, 2024 @ 5 PM EST
Notification of Award	Expected Date: October 18, 2024

### 3.3 Questions

Questions regarding this NOFO must be submitted by electronic mail to [proposals@masstech.org](mailto:proposals@masstech.org) with the following Subject Line: Questions – NOFO No. 2025-NEMC-01. All questions must be received by 5:00 p.m. EST on August 23, 2024 as specified above. Responses to all questions received will be posted on or before the above date to Mass Tech Collaborative's website.

### 3.4 Informational Webinar

An informational webinar will be held on August 22, 2024 @ 1 PM. Potential Respondents interested in participating in the informational session can register [here](#). Mass Tech Collaborative will post summary responses to procedural questions and issues addressed at the webinar to the MassTech Collaborative website.

## **4.0 EVALUATION PROCESS AND CRITERIA**

### **4.1 Process**

Applications will be reviewed, evaluated, and approved upon receipt of a completed Application that is responsive to the NOFO's requirements and includes all required components. As part of the selection process, Mass Tech Collaborative may invite a Respondent to answer questions regarding their Application. In its sole discretion, Mass Tech Collaborative may also choose to enter into a negotiation period with Respondent(s) and then ask the Respondent(s) to submit an updated Application and budget.

### **4.2 Criteria**

The order of these factors does not generally denote relative importance. Lack of debarment status by both the state and federal government is also required.

Mass Tech Collaborative reserves the right to consider such other relevant factors which will be evaluated based on combinations of criteria that includes but are not limited to:

- Use of grant funds for the continuation or expansion of operational activities of innovative microelectronic hardware technologies
- Degree to which Applicant's technology is innovative
- Applicant's technology's potential for impact if successfully brought to market
- Whether the microelectronics technology aligns with NEMC priorities
- Reasonableness of Budget
- Ability of grant funding to materially impact or accelerate applicant's lab-to-fab hardware development

## **5.0 GENERAL CONDITIONS**

### **5.1 General Information**

- a) If an Application fails to meet any material terms, conditions, requirements or procedures, it may be deemed unresponsive and disqualified. The Mass Tech Collaborative reserves the right to waive omissions or irregularities that it determines to be not material.
- b) This NOFO, as may be amended from time to time by Mass Tech Collaborative, does not commit Mass Tech Collaborative to select any organization(s), award any grant funds pursuant to this NOFO, or pay any costs incurred in responding to this NOFO. Mass Tech Collaborative reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to withdraw the NOFO, to engage in preliminary discussions with prospective Respondents, to accept or reject any or all Applications received, to request supplemental or clarifying information, to negotiate with any or all qualified Respondents, and to

request modifications to Applications in accordance with negotiations, all to the same extent as if this were a Request for Information.

- c) On matters related solely to this NOFO that arise prior to an award decision by the Mass Tech Collaborative, Respondents shall limit communications with the Mass Tech Collaborative to the Procurement Team Leader and such other individuals as the Mass Tech Collaborative may designate from time to time. No other Mass Tech Collaborative employee or representative is authorized to provide any information or respond to any questions or inquiries concerning this NOFO. Respondents may contact the NOFO Team Leader for this NOFO in the event this NOFO is incomplete.
- d) The Mass Tech Collaborative may provide reasonable accommodations, including the provision of materials in an alternative format, for Respondents with disabilities or other hardships. Respondents requiring accommodations shall submit requests in writing, with supporting documentation justifying the accommodations, to the Procurement Team Leader. The Mass Tech Collaborative reserves the right to grant or reject any request for accommodations.
- e) Respondent's Application shall be treated by the Mass Tech Collaborative as an accurate statement of Respondent's capabilities and experience. Should any statement asserted by Respondent prove to be inaccurate or inconsistent with the foregoing, such inaccuracy or inconsistency shall constitute sufficient cause for Mass Tech Collaborative in its sole discretion to reject the Application and/or terminate of any resulting Agreement.
- f) Costs that are not specifically identified in the Respondent's response and/or not specifically accepted by Mass Tech Collaborative as part of the Agreement will not be compensated under any contract awarded pursuant to this NOFO.
- g) Mass Tech Collaborative's prior approval is required for any subcontracted services under any Agreement entered into as a result of this NOFO. The selected Respondent will take all appropriate steps to assure that minority firms, women's business enterprises, and labor surplus area firms are used when possible. The selected Respondent is responsible for the satisfactory performance and adequate oversight of its subcontractors. Subcontractors are required to meet the same requirements and are held to the same reimbursable cost standards as the selected Respondent.
- h) Submitted responses must be valid in all respects for a minimum period of sixty (60) days after the deadline for submission.
- i) Mass Tech Collaborative reserves the right to amend the Agreement at any time prior to execution. Respondents should review the Agreement as they are required to specify any exceptions to the Agreement and to make any suggested counterproposal in their Application. A failure to specify exceptions and/or counterproposals will be deemed an acceptance of the Agreement's general terms and conditions, and no subsequent negotiation of such provisions shall be permitted.

## **5.2 Posting of Modifications/Addenda to NOFO**

This NOFO has been distributed electronically using the Mass Tech Collaborative website. If Mass Tech Collaborative determines that it is necessary to revise any part of this NOFO, or if additional data is necessary to clarify any of its provisions, an addendum will be posted to the website. It is the responsibility of each potential Respondent to check the Mass Tech Collaborative website for any addenda or modifications to the NOFO. The Mass Tech Collaborative accepts no liability and will provide no accommodation to Respondents who submit a response based on an out-of-date NOFO.