

## PROPEL Operations Program Informational Webinar

### Q&A Summary

**Webinar Broadcast Date:** August 22, 2024

**Time:** 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

**Facilitator:** NEMC Management Team

**Program Info:** <https://nemicroelectronics.org/propel-program/propel-operations-program>

#### Eligibility & Membership

- Q** May an organization submit more than one submission?
  - A** No, an organization is limited to submitting a single application or a single grant submission proposal.
- Q** I have an eligibility question. The NOFO says "Applicant location utilizing the services must be in the Northeast." which is a bit ambiguous in the common case of remote teams. In our specific case, we have offices in New England but with some remote workers who are not physically in New England. These remote workers would be using EDA tools, for example, funded under this program. Is this OK?"
  - A** Yes, remote employees who are working on projects funded under the program can be considered as part of the applicant's location, even if they are not physically in the Northeast.
- Q** Is there an annual cost to being a NEMC Hub member?
  - A** Currently, no, there is no annual cost to NEMC Hub membership. For more information on membership, visit <https://nemicroelectronics.org/membership>.
- Q** Can a company receive funding from both the PROPEL Manufacturing and PROPEL Operations programs?
  - A** Yes, a single organization can receive funding for both the PROPEL Manufacturing and PROPEL Operations programs but can provide only one submission for each program.
- Q** Can you clarify the competitive nature of this? The NOFO says "applications will be evaluated on a first come first served basis and funded until funds are depleted". Is there an advantage to applying earlier?
  - A** All applications received before the submission deadline will be reviewed equally. There is no advantage to applying early in the process. A corresponding clarification will be made to the NOFO.

#### Project Expenses & Reimbursement

- Q** Can the grant be applied to payroll/subcontractor costs?
  - A** No, the grant funding cannot be used for payroll or subcontractor costs.
- Q** Is it allowable to cover costs associated with licensing existing IP (for example, from a university), such as fees and ongoing patent costs charged to the company under a license agreement?
  - A** No, the grant funding cannot be used to cover licensing costs of existing IP.
- Q** Can costs for cloud computing (which is needed to run EDA simulations) be covered?
  - A** Yes, costs for cloud computing can be covered if they are directly related to the project (lab-to-fab development of a microelectronics technology or product concept).
- Q** For IT services costs, can that also cover costs such as PLM/MES/ERP systems? Or does it need to be more closely related to cybersecurity?
  - A** IT services costs such as PLM/MES/ERP can be eligible if they are directly related to the project (lab-to-fab development of a microelectronics technology or product concept).
- Q** Are filing fees for patents covered (including international fees)?

- A** Yes, filing fees for patents can be covered if they are directly related to the project (lab-to-fab development of a microelectronics technology or product concept).
- Q** Are fees for new EDA licenses only covered, or will you cover fees to renew a license?
- A** Fees for new EDA licenses can be covered. However, fees to renew a license might not be eligible.
- Q** To better understand the reimbursement process: 1) we receive an invoice, 2) we pay the invoice in full, 3) we send copy of invoice to NEMC, and 4) NEMC sends a check/direct deposit to reimburse?
- A** The reimbursement process involves the following steps: awardee receives an invoice from service provider, awardee submits invoice to MassTech, MassTech pays awardee (MassTech payment to awardee to be consistent with grant award, e.g., up to 50% of 75% of invoice amount dependent upon number of employees).
- Q** It sounds like you will be able to cover the ops cost associated with a specific product/development, but cybersecurity is usually a more global issue for companies. So how do I justify IT/cybersecurity expenses?
- A** You should justify IT/cybersecurity expenses by demonstrating their direct relevance to the project's operations.
- Q** Can we use the budget for 3<sup>rd</sup> party cleanroom access fees?
- A** No, the budget cannot be used for 3<sup>rd</sup> party cleanroom access fees.
- Q** If we are awarded \$100,000, do we put up \$25,000 and receive \$75,000?
- A** For a company with 50 or fewer employees, a 25% cost share is required. In an example where an application's total use of funds is \$100,000, the maximum grant award is \$75,000 (for an application with a total use of funds of \$133,333, the maximum grant award is \$100,000).

### Service Providers

- Q** The application form asks for service providers. Is it fine to change service providers after the grant award?
- A** Yes, you can change service providers after the grant award but may need to provide justification for the change and an updated quote.
- Q** There are a wide range of IP lawyers and firms. Are there any patent service fee criteria that includes/excludes vendors?
- A** There are no specific patent service fee criteria that include or exclude vendors.
- Q** Can you publish EDA providers contact information so we can get quotes?
- A** The NEMC Hub does not publish a list of EDA providers. However, they can make one-on-one introductions if you request specific recommendations.
- Q** Do I need to submit 3<sup>rd</sup> party quotes as part of the application/budget?
- A** Yes, you need to submit 3<sup>rd</sup> party quotes as part of the application/budget.

### General Program Questions

- Q** Is this grant "competitive"? (i.e., is there a limited number of grants available)?
- A** Yes, the grant is competitive. There is a maximum of \$1.5M of funding available.
- Q** For the proof of concept or prototype, does it have to be a physical POC/prototype, or could it be a piece of software?
- A** The proof of concept or prototype must be microelectronics hardware based.
- Q** When will grants be awarded?
- A** Notification of award is expected on or about October 18, 2024.

- Q** Will applicants to the PROPEL Manufacturing Program hear back before the deadline before this next PROPEL grant?
- A** Yes, applicants to the PROPEL Manufacturing Program will hear back before the deadline for the PROPEL Operations Program.
- Q** Who are the reviewers of the white papers?
- A** The reviewers of the white papers are kept confidential.
- Q** Does NEMC or others own the IP to be developed with this NEMC support?
- A** No, NEMC or others do not own the IP developed with NEMC support.
- Q** When are projects expected to be able to start, once an application has been successful?
- A** Projects must start and funds utilized within 12 months of the grant award.
- Q** We are a metrology provider; we would like to use TCAD to verify behavior inside of the devices we are measuring and collaborating with partners on proposal to create physics aware digital twins. How can we support the needs of the hub?
- A** You can support the needs of the hub by collaborating with other members and contributing your expertise.
- Q** Is the \$1.5M for one project, or is it a total dollar amount?
- A** The \$1.5M is the maximum amount for the PROPEL Operations program in total. The individual award amount maximum is \$100K.