



Request for Proposals: Climate-Critical Underrepresented  
Business Support Grants FY25  
MASSCEC-WFD-02212025

Date of Issue: February 24, 2025  
Proposals Due: April 25, 2025

Anticipated Funding Available: \$4,400,000.00

All proposals must be submitted to:  
[rfpworkforce@masscec.com](mailto:rfpworkforce@masscec.com)  
by 11:59 pm on April 25, 2025

## 1. SUMMARY OF OPPORTUNITY

Through this Request for Proposals (“RFP”), the Massachusetts Clean Energy Technology Center (“MassCEC”) launches the Climate-Critical Underrepresented Business Support (“CUBS”) Grants, the next iteration of the Minority- and Women-owned Business Enterprise (“MWBE”) Support Grants, through the Equity Workforce Program. CUBS Grants fund initiatives that assist Massachusetts-based MWBEs and other underrepresented businesses (“Underrepresented Businesses”) entering and expanding in fields that are critical to meeting the Commonwealth’s climate goal of reaching net zero emissions by 2050. Historically, Underrepresented Businesses have faced systemic barriers<sup>1</sup> resulting in limited access to capital, procurement and workforce challenges, and insufficient networks. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensuring Underrepresented Businesses can participate meaningfully in Massachusetts’ growing clean-energy economy.

The MassCEC Equity Workforce Program aims to address these inequities through a strategic, phased rollout of a hub-and-spoke program delivery model. This approach supports Underrepresented Businesses in accessing a consistent baseline suite of services regardless of region. In this funding round, CUBS Grant Applicants can apply to act as a primary regional service provider (“Hub”) aligned with one (1) of the seven (7) Workforce Skills Cabinet Regions<sup>2</sup> or a secondary service provider providing specialized additional services designed to overcome sector-specific barriers in one or multiple regions (“Spoke”). *Hubs must offer a baseline suite of core services (“Core Services”), ensuring regional consistency and equitable access to essential support.* See Section 3: Program Goals and Description for more information about Core Services. Hubs and Spokes serving a specific region will be required to establish cross-referral agreements to solidify the ecosystem. This model (“Hub and Spoke”) offers a framework for statewide consistency and coordination and enables a unified marketing and outreach approach to enhance the activity of all grantees, while retaining flexibility for regional adaptability. Recognizing the complexity of supporting lasting infrastructure, MassCEC will support a phased rollout of the Hub and Spoke model, allowing for geographic expansion and model alignment leading to full regional coverage anticipated by FY27.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://library.mbda.gov/view/mbda/8> “Contracting Barriers and Factors Affecting Minority Business Enterprises: A Review of Existing Disparity Studies,” Minority Business Development Agency, U.S. Department of Commerce.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mass.gov/doc/wsc-regional-map/download>

Through this approach, the Workforce Equity Program seeks to spur market development by increasing Underrepresented Business clean-energy expertise, business activity, and revenue while fostering workforce development and long-term sustainability in clean-energy industries. Initiatives funded under this RFP are not intended to support one (1) or a very-limited number of Underrepresented Businesses and are instead intended to deliver support services and training programs to a broad group of Underrepresented Businesses relative to the amount of funding awarded. Proposed initiatives may include supporting Underrepresented Businesses in obtaining Massachusetts Supplier Diversity Office (SDO) certification or similar credentials, delivering tailored administrative and back-office services to improve operational efficiency, and offering targeted financial planning and business coaching. Programs may also focus on equipping Underrepresented Businesses with procurement-readiness training, including bid preparation and vendor identification, while facilitating connections with clean-energy procurement opportunities. Additionally, initiatives should aim to strengthen existing Underrepresented Businesses by providing industry-specific training, workforce development resources, and capacity-building services to enhance competitiveness in clean energy and climate-critical sectors.

Applicants proposing a Hub may apply for Four Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$400,000.00) to Eight Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$800,000.00) in funding for work completed over a period of two (2) or three (3) years. Applicants proposing a Spoke may apply for up to Four Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$400,000.00) for work completed over one (1) or two (2) years. MassCEC may consider alternative award amounts based on regional variables and scale of impact. Details about the range of acceptable funding requests are outlined in Section 4: Funding Available. Details about the application process are outlined in Section 8: How to Apply.

Applications for CUBS Grants are due by 11:59 pm on April 25, 2025 and must be submitted via the [rfpworkforce@masscec.com](mailto:rfpworkforce@masscec.com) inbox. This RFP is posted on the MassCEC Funding website at <https://www.masscec.com/funding> and MassCEC reserves the right to post revisions to solicitation documents prior to March 28, 2025.

## 2. ABOUT MASSCEC

MassCEC is a state economic development agency dedicated to accelerating the growth of the clean energy field 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 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.

### 3. PROGRAM GOALS AND DESCRIPTION

Funds for this program will be expended from Equity Workforce Training Funds, initially created through the March 2021 Climate Legislation, *An Act Creating a Next Generation Roadmap for Massachusetts Climate Policy*<sup>3</sup> and re-defined by the August 2022 Climate Legislation, *An Act Driving Clean Energy and Offshore Wind*<sup>4</sup>. The Act allocates \$12 Million annually in funding to MassCEC to support:

- Small business enterprises that are minority- and women-owned;
  - Individuals residing within an Environmental Justice or low-income community;
  - Current and former workers from the fossil fuel industry;
  - Federally recognized and State-acknowledged tribes within the Commonwealth;
- and
- Other businesses or communities underrepresented in the clean energy workforce or clean energy industry.

Please refer below for a more complete definition of “Minority- and Women- owned Business Enterprise (MWBE),” other businesses underrepresented in the clean-energy workforce, and “climate-critical business fields.” Should additional relevant funds become available through the Equity Workforce Fund or other sources, MassCEC may add funding to this RFP.

#### **Climate-Critical Underrepresented Business Support (CUBS) Program Goals:**

- **Increase MWBE and underrepresented business activity** in climate-critical business fields;
- **Increase expertise of MWBEs and underrepresented businesses** in climate-critical business fields;

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<sup>3</sup> <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2021/Chapter8>

<sup>4</sup> <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2022/Chapter179>

- **Grow employment and revenue of existing MWBEs and underrepresented businesses** that operate in climate-critical business fields and continue long-term sustainability and growth strategies;
- **Create new MWBE and underrepresented business firms** in climate-critical fields and support healthy long-term growth of those firms;
- **Bridge gaps in existing support systems for MWBEs and underrepresented businesses**, ensuring alignment with broader clean-energy workforce and economic development initiatives;
- **Develop tailored business pathways** supporting MWBEs and underrepresented businesses unique needs and capacity levels; and
- **Align with MassCEC-funded career pathway training programs** by supporting MWBE and underrepresented businesses market development leading to growth of openings for occupations targeted by those training programs.

These goals will be achieved through the coordination and targeted service delivery enabled by the Hub and Spoke model, a strategic evolution in MassCEC’s approach to supporting Underrepresented Businesses. This model is designed to balance centralized, statewide goals with localized service delivery fostering economic and skills development in all regions of the Commonwealth – Berkshire, Pioneer Valley, Central, Northeast, Greater Boston, Cape, and Southeast regions.

Goals and Expectations for Hubs

With this funding, MassCEC seeks organizations to serve as regional Hubs that will collectively provide baseline Core Services to Underrepresented Businesses across the Commonwealth and will serve as focal points in each region for recruiting and navigating Underrepresented Businesses to appropriate Spokes for additional services via referrals. Hubs will help Underrepresented Businesses transition to being “business ready” through the Core Services which must include training and services within the major categories of: **Financial Planning, Operations, Management, Network Access, Business Development, and Certification Support.**

Table 1. Core Services from Hubs and Examples, identifies the Core Services as well as program delivery examples. Note that the examples below are not a comprehensive list and other related activities may be acceptable.

Core Services from Hubs	<i>Examples</i>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Financial Planning</b>	Provide access to a consultant to support Bookkeeping and Accounting
	Host webinars and office hours on applying for Tax Savings and Incentives

	Provide resources to enable Access to Capital and Financing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Operations</b>	Help with Process Improvement such as streamlining reporting
	Assist with Regulatory and Legal Compliance such as filing tax reports
	Guide through Business Registration to attain incorporation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Management</b>	Assess Talent Recruitment processes to enable equitable labor recruitment
	Provide Human Resources support to ensure inclusive work environments
	Streamline Payroll and Benefits administration to reduce burden
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Network Access</b>	Run procurement summits or workshops to promote Industry Relationship Building
	Nurture warm connections to increase Union, Municipal, Company Engagement
	Direct to relevant Networking Events
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Business Development</b>	Guide through market research to develop Market Strategy
	Help set up sound processes for Customer Discovery
	Coach through Pitch Development
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <b>Certification and Licensing</b>	Guide MWBEs through MWBE certifications (SDO, NMSDC, WBENC, etc.)
	Assist businesses with general certifications (e.g., Veteran-owned, B Corp, etc.)
	Support businesses to self-represent as a DBE

Hubs are required to offer all Core Services but may subcontract with partners or third-party vendors, subject to the approval of MassCEC, to deliver elements of Core Services. Hubs that opt to subcontract some pieces of Core Services out are still responsible for the administration, oversight, monitoring, and outcomes of those Core Services to ensure that participating Underrepresented Businesses attain or move significantly towards becoming “business ready.”

Since being “business ready” can vary depending on the procurement opportunity and/or clean energy sector targeted by the participating Underrepresented Business, Hubs will need to be prepared to offer Core Services at varying levels responsive to the unique situation of each Underrepresented Business. Delivery of Core Services by a Hub will be expected to result in a reasonable proportion of participating Underrepresented Businesses becoming “business ready” or making reasonable progress towards

becoming “business ready” in relation to the service provided, which will be signaled by those Underrepresented Businesses attaining one or multiple performance metrics. Performance metrics include, but are not limited to, secured clean energy contracts, revenue/credit growth, increase in personnel, inclusion on preferred vendor lists, or attainment of licenses or certifications. Hubs will be expected to deploy a service plan to ensure successful administration of Core Services. A service plan workflow will typically include, but not be limited to, marketing and outreach to recruit Underrepresented Businesses and engage procurement decisionmakers, managing referrals to and from Spokes, defined intake and assessment processes to assess eligibility, administering business assessments to tailor Core Services, delivery of Core Services, and retention and follow-up to ensure attainment of performance metrics and continued success of Underrepresented Businesses, including referrals to Spokes when appropriate. Service plans will also clearly define anticipated methods of delivery and dosages and staff and partner roles and responsibilities in relation to each component of the service workflow.

To ensure that investments of Equity Workforce funding into the Hub and Spoke ecosystem drives impact and market development in the clean energy sector and aligns with programmatic goals, inclusive of the goals of the parallel career pathway training funding investments, **Hubs will be expected to serve predominantly Underrepresented Businesses that employ workers that are directly involved in the design, manufacturing, installation, and maintenance of clean energy projects**, who typically fall within the highest growth climate-critical occupations. While growth is projected across 144 climate-critical occupations, 65% of the occupational growth is anticipated across twenty (20) occupations.<sup>5</sup> See Table 6 below in the Program Definitions section for a list of the top ten (10) highest growth climate-critical occupations and Table 7 for additional information about climate-critical occupations inclusive of the top twenty (20). In addition, while sector-specific procurement navigation will fall within the additional specialized services anticipated to be offered by Spokes, Hubs will be required to provide Procurement Navigation services focused on at least one clean energy sector to ensure that Underrepresented Business clients have exposure to clean energy opportunities while utilizing the Hub, regardless of the Spokes partnered with the Hub.

### Goals and Expectations for Spokes

Spokes instead focus on offering complementary services geared towards addressing sector-specific barriers to Underrepresented Businesses in attaining success in climate-critical clean

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<sup>5</sup> Massachusetts Clean Energy Center. (2023). *Powering the Future: A Massachusetts Clean Energy Workforce Needs Assessment*. <https://www.masscec.com/resources/massachusetts-clean-energy-workforce-needs-assessment>

energy sectors, with a focus on procurement opportunities in building decarbonization, clean transportation, net-zero grid, and offshore wind. Spokes should not be providing only the equivalent of Core Services to the targeted Underrepresented Businesses; while Core Services can be part of the broader service plan of a Spoke or integral to the overall success of its service plan workflow, a Spoke focused on additional specialized services (“Additional Services”) must also provide services that directly aide in or enhance the ability of Underrepresented Business clients to successfully undertake clean energy sector-specific Procurement Navigation.

Table 2. Additional Services from Spokes and Examples, identifies the Additional Services as well as program delivery examples. Note that the categories of additional services and examples below are not a comprehensive list and other related activities may be acceptable.

Additional Services from Spokes	<i>Examples</i>
Procurement Navigation	Assist with identifying and applying for appropriate clean energy Procurement Opportunities such as municipal bid to install electric vehicle (“EV”) chargers or support decarbonization municipal offices
	Guide through reaching Procurement Readiness for specific opportunities such as reaching certain revenue threshold and insurance coverage to qualify to bid on a major solar-installation project
	Provide direct Matchmaking and Networking with prime vendors to increase successful attainment of subcontracts to install heat pumps on building electrification projects
Certification and Licensing	Identify the needed certifications and licenses to support heat pump installation and whole home electrification service
	Connect to training to attain necessary certifications to run energy audits
	Provide industry-specific training to enable applying for a refrigerant license
Financial Planning <sup>6</sup>	Offer bridge loans and microgrants to building retrofit contractors to ensure Access to Capital and Financing
	Run targeted workshops on the tax incentives offered to diverse solar installers
	Assist loan application to enable EV charger installers or geothermal drillers Access to Capital

<sup>6</sup> Spokes focusing on Financial Planning services leading to Access to Capital and Financing will be required to adhere to the recommendations and best practices identified by the MassCEC Access to Capital grantees awarded in FY24.

	and Financing to obtain heavy equipment to trench
Business Development	Host summits involving procurement decisionmakers running largescale retrofit projects
	Provide warm introductions to procurement officials overseeing bids on fleet maintenance contracts
	Connect to industry-specific networks and alliances focused on solar energy

Like Hubs, Spokes will be expected to navigate a reasonable proportion of participating Underrepresented Businesses to reach “business ready” status or to make progress towards becoming “business ready” relative to the services provided, which will be signaled by performance metrics. Since most Spokes will be focused on sector-specific Procurement Navigation and other Additional Services directly contributing to successful procurements in climate-critical sectors, reasonable performance metrics for Spokes will be focused more towards securing clean energy contracts. However, depending on the model and service plan of the Spoke, other performance metric categories – revenue/credit growth, increase in personnel, inclusion on preferred vendor lists, or attainment of licenses or certifications – may also signal success.

Spokes will also be expected to deploy service plans designed to ensure Underrepresented Business participants enjoy the maximum benefits of the Additional Services. While some of the service plan components may be reliant on or supported by Hub activities, Spoke service plans should still include, but not be limited to, marketing and outreach for recruitment, management of cross-referrals from Hubs, defined eligibility criteria and intake processes, business assessments appropriate for the specific Additional Services, delivery of the Additional Services, and retention and follow-up. Spokes will also have established methods of delivery and dosages with assigned staff and partners for each step of the service plan.

As with the Hubs, a majority of the Underrepresented Businesses served by a Spoke must provide occupations within the highest growth climate-critical occupations to be considered eligible for services supported by funding from this solicitation. Similarly, the Additional Services provided by a Spoke must be focused on and around sector-specific Procurement Navigation leading to opportunities that support the highest growth climate-critical occupations.

Coordination, Roles, and Staffing and Capacity Expectations for Hubs and Spokes

The Hubs and Spokes within each of the seven (7) workforce regions will be required to operate as an integrated network to support Underrepresented Businesses in the clean energy sector within that region.<sup>7</sup> **The designated Hub within a workforce region will be required to sign a memorandum of understanding (“MOU”) with each Spoke selected by MassCEC establishing cross-referral processes and standards.** See Attachment 6: Sample Memorandum of Understanding.

By centralizing through each Hub, grantees within each region will be better able to centralize and share resources, offer more consistent service, rollout more impactful collaborative recruitment and engagement efforts, and consolidate data and research for evaluation and continuous improvement. In addition to delivery of Core Services and administering service plans, Hubs, acting as regional anchor, will:

- **Staff a known physical location** during established and publicized hours to provide in-person support to MWBEs and underrepresented businesses at least two days per week;
- Sign MOUs with Spokes and **oversee and coordinate the bi-directional cross-referral system** with Spokes;
- Lead ongoing **case management and tracking** of underrepresented businesses in the cross-referral system to ensure that participants are retained and reach success;
- Collect and consolidate **performance metrics and reporting data** from Spokes into regional reports for submission to MassCEC;
- Coordinate with MassCEC and Spokes to implement **statewide marketing and outreach campaigns and regional marketing strategies** to enhance recruitment;
- Maintain close communication with MassCEC and Spokes to align with state-level goals and ensure that resource expenditures align with sub-sector needs;
- Convene stakeholders, partners, financial institutions, workforce partners, and Spokes to support state-level goals and continuous program improvement through convenings, focus groups, and community workshops; and
- **Directly provide Procurement Navigation services for at least one clean energy sector.**

Hubs will be expected to have the staff capacity to effectively provide coordination and data collection across the designated workforce region and to undertake the ongoing case management to enable Underrepresented Businesses to fully realize the benefits of the regional cross-referral ecosystem. Hubs may provide this capacity with in-house staff or in collaboration with subcontracted partner organizations, to strengthen their administrative capacity.

While primary coordination across the workforce region will be provided by Hubs, Spokes will be expected to support the coordinated efforts in the workforce region. In addition to serving as

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.mass.gov/doc/dcs-jpp-01-2017-2a-wsc-regional-map/download>

specialized delivery agents focused on direct services and education to Underrepresented Businesses, Spokes will:

- Sign an MOU with the regional Hub to **take part in the cross-referral system** and refer participants to the Hub for Core Services when appropriate;
- Coordinate with the Hub to **ensure that cross-referred participants receive ongoing case management and tracking;**
- Report **performance metrics and reporting data** to both the Hub and MassCEC;
- Coordinate with MassCEC and Hubs to implement **statewide marketing and outreach campaigns and regional marketing strategies** to enhance recruitment;
- Maintain close communication with MassCEC and the Hub to ensure efforts align with state-level goals; and
- Participate in regional convenings and events led by the Hub.

Like Hubs, Spokes will be expected to have the staff capacity to administer the additional cross-referral, case management, and participation responsibilities necessary to participate in the Hub and Spoke ecosystem. Spokes may provide this capacity via in-house staff, through subcontracts, or in partnership with other organizations. Spokes may support more than one region but will be expected to maintain the requisite staff capacity to coordinate with multiple Hubs and fulfill the reporting requirements and case load.

Table 3. Hub and Spoke Roles and Responsibilities, identifies the additional roles and responsibilities that Hubs and Spokes will be expected to fulfill to ensure efficient coordination across a workforce region. Note that the categories of additional activities below are not a comprehensive list and other related activities may be acceptable or required.

Activity	Hub Roles and Responsibilities	Joint Responsibilities	Spoke Roles and Responsibilities
Direct Service	Provide Core Services and at least one sector-specific Additional Service	Cross-refer to ensure that participants receive comprehensive services	Provide sector-specific Additional Services
Hub and Spoke Coordination	Act as the central coordination point for cross-referrals of participants in a designated workforce region	Participate in bi-directional cross-referral and information sharing processes and sign MOUs formalizing this process	Collaborate with the Hub to support efficient cross-referrals and participant support
Physical Location	Maintain regular in-person staffing presence (minimum two days per week)	Raise awareness of in-person support and cross-refer participants	Refer participants to in-person support when appropriate

Case Management and Tracking	Lead case management process for cross-referred participants and direct participants	Maintain an ongoing case file on each participant to ensure participant receives needed supports and reaches success	Provide case management to direct participants and collaborate with Hub when cross-referring
Performance Metrics and Reporting	Collect and consolidate performance metrics and data from the region and report to MassCEC	Consistently collect and share performance metrics and other data	Report performance metrics and data to both the Hub and MassCEC
Marketing and Outreach	Develop regional marketing and outreach plans in alignment with MassCEC statewide marketing	Engage with community members, employers, procurement officials and other stakeholders	Participate in the roll out of regional and statewide marketing and outreach efforts
Stakeholder Convening	Host regional workshops and events to convene stakeholders to support goals and continuous improvement of regional approaches	Attend statewide ecosystem convenings	Participate in regional convenings and events hosted by the Hub

Key Considerations in Program Design

While by no means exhaustive, the list below highlights relevant best practices and design considerations:

- **To effectively address specific barriers to success**, strategies to support Underrepresented Businesses must be tailored to the specific challenges, mindful of the stage of business development, and transparent about how the model may or may not fit the needs of different businesses and individuals.
- **Support organizations can maximize impact by addressing both “supply” and “demand” needs.** For example, working with Underrepresented Businesses to ensure that they are certified by the Massachusetts Supplier Diversity Office has great impact when organizations also work to increase the demand for certified MWBEs and help their stakeholders understand how best to access these procurement opportunities.
- **Tailor recruitment, retention services, and resources to the specific types of Underrepresented Businesses that are to be served.** Depending on the sector and stage of businesses that organizations seek to support, different models and

service offerings are likely to have variable success and impact. Stakeholder engagements to inform a needs assessment process and model development can ensure that organizations have a clearer idea of whether offerings like incubators/ accelerators, communities of practice, business advisory services, industry-specific programming, or other strategies are going to be the most beneficial.

- **Establish clear eligibility requirements and rigorous, transparent, and thorough intake and assessment processes.** Intake and assessment stages not only allow program administrators to check eligibility and gauge level of need, both in terms of support services and capital, but also serve as important touchpoints to set clear participation and reporting standards with participants that may impact long term success.
- **Comprehensive support and wraparound services for program participants** can improve retention and extend the capacity of Underrepresented Businesses to engage fully in proposed programming. Building these supports into the design and budget of the program in advance not only prioritizes the needs of the participants, but it also normalizes that entrepreneurs can be successful and still need additional support in the form of access to transportation, training stipends, extended career counseling, and referrals for other services.
- **Partnering is essential for the success of individual programs and the growth of the broader support ecosystem.** Business support needs span many categories and services. Therefore, it is important for support organizations to clearly delineate which services they are best equipped to offer internally, which ones they want to partner to offer, and which services can only be offered through referral to other organizations.
- **Research existing funding resources and opportunities available to Underrepresented Businesses** in the Commonwealth by identifying key financial institutions and organizations serving Underrepresented Businesses, ascertaining eligibility criteria and application processes, and gauging applicability to climate-critical Underrepresented Businesses.

Examples of Appropriate Programs:

MassCEC supports diverse approaches to achieving the goals of this solicitation. The examples presented below in Table 4. Examples of Application Types, are provided as an illustrative tool and do not necessarily reflect projects that MassCEC would commit to funding. See Section 12: Disclaimer & Waiver Authority of this Solicitation regarding MassCEC discretion to accept or reject applications.

Applicant Type	Examples
Hub Application	A business support organization with prior experience providing all Core Services proposes providing comprehensive support to

	<p>Underrepresented Businesses across its workforce region. The support organization will partner with the local community college to host in-person support hours every day from mid-afternoon to early-evening to enable small business owners to attend without missing out on work, and the support organization brings on additional in-house staff to ensure sufficiently responsive coverage. The support organization also has prior experience providing direct Procurement Navigation coaching and mentoring to businesses interested on bidding on solar installation projects. For this example, the support organization would have to submit a Hub application noting the subcontract with the community college, and the support organization would also have to concurrently submit a Spoke application for the Procurement Navigation focused on solar installation. If successful, the support organization would have to sign additional MOUs with awarded Spokes in its workforce region.</p>
<p>Hub Application (with subcontractors providing Core Services)</p>	<p>A regional Economic Development Agency (“EDA”) and a local small business support nonprofit will collaborate to deliver Core Services across their workforce region. EDA will provide centralized administrative staff, grants administration, Business Development planning, Financial Planning workshops, and coaching from expert consultants on Operations and Management through its primary city office, while also offering rotating in-person consultation days at its primary office and two satellite offices. While EDA will identify the need through the business assessment phase and oversee the overall process, the nonprofit will sign a subcontract to provide individual Underrepresented Businesses with direct consulting hours to guide them through attaining needed SDO Certifications and Licenses. EDA will also provide Procurement Navigation into local municipal building electrification bids. In addition, EDA also has preexisting agreements with organizations focused on providing necessary training and licensing for solar project bids, and on providing advanced training on high-performance building techniques and local regulations. For this model, EDA would have to submit both a Hub application, which notes the subcontract with the small nonprofit and reflects that subcontract in the budget, and a separate Spoke application detailing the Procurement Navigation into building electrification. The other organizations providing solar and high-performance buildings would each have to submit separate Spoke applications.</p>

Spoke Application	A nonprofit working to expand the growing heat pump market will offer tailored technical assistance and business support to experienced HVAC Technicians looking to transition to business ownership or enter cooperatives. The nonprofit has preexisting equity-focused pathway programs including training on ownership models, tailored one-on-one business plans with market analysis and pricing strategies, certifications, and licensing support. The nonprofit also has pipelines to connect participants to local manufacturers to learn about product-specific training. This nonprofit would have to submit a Spoke application. If selected, the nonprofit would have to sign an MOU with the Hub in the respective workforce region. If the nonprofit proposes serving multiple regions, the nonprofit would have to ensure sufficient staffing capacity to support cross-referrals, case management, and participation in regional efforts and sign MOUs with the respective Hubs in the regions awarded.
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Program Definitions:

For the purposes of this RFP and in accordance with the Program goals, MassCEC is defining the key terms as follows:

**Climate Critical Priority Occupations:** Occupations critical to the Commonwealth achieving 2030 emissions goals and net-zero emissions in 2050. Applicants are encouraged to consult the MassCEC Clean Energy Needs Assessment, and the companion data workbook, both available at <https://www.masscec.com/resources/massachusetts-clean-energy-workforce-needs-assessment> for a comprehensive detailing of climate critical priority occupations. The list below provides examples of Climate-Critical occupations by MassCEC focus area and the subsequent table lists them by occupational category. Applicants are welcome to make a case for additional occupations not listed here, but the majority of resources for a given region must align with supporting businesses involved in the design, construction, installation, manufacturing, and maintenance of clean energy projects.

- High-Performance Building Sector Occupations (for retrofit and new construction): Electricians and Electrical Contractors with expertise in building service upgrade, knob, and tube removal and/or heat pumps; Insulation Workers; Weatherization Crew Chiefs and Supervisors; Energy Auditors; HERS Raters; HVAC/R Technicians with heat pump expertise; Carpenters and Construction Laborers; Hazardous waste removal specialists (especially for asbestos and vermiculite removal); Building Operators/Maintenance Mechanics; Plumbers and Pipefitters; Customer Service Representatives.
- Offshore Wind Occupations: Installation, Maintenance and Repair Workers; Structural Metal Fabricators and Fitters; Wind Turbine Service Technicians; Metal and Plastic Workers, Assemblers and Fabricators; Customer Service Representatives.

- Net Zero Grid Occupations: Electricians and Electrical contractors specializing in solar, battery storage, grid upgrade, or time of use metering; Electric Power Line Installers and Repairers; Customer Service Representatives.
- Clean Transportation Sector Occupations: Electricians and Electrical Contractors specializing in vehicle charging infrastructure; Automotive Technicians and Repairers with experience in electric vehicle maintenance or large vehicle retrofit; Logisticians and Fleet Managers; Customer Service Representatives.

Table 5. Median Hourly Earnings of Highest-Growth Occupations

Occupation	Hourly Median Wage
Electricians	\$37.02
Construction Laborers	\$27.90
General and Operations Managers	\$60.62
First-Line Supervisors of Construction Trades and Extraction Workers	\$47.19
Insulation Workers	\$24.75
Office Clerks, General	\$22.53
Construction Managers	\$57.00
Solar Photovoltaic Installers	\$30.53
Line Installers and Repairers	\$48.02
Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	\$31.26

**WORKFORCE PRIORITY OCCUPATIONS BY OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORY<sup>8 9</sup>**

Occupation Title	2017 EOLWD Star Ranking	Median Wage	Additional Clean Energy Jobs by 2030	% Growth of Clean Energy Jobs by 2030
<b>BUSINESS &amp; FINANCIAL OPERATIONS OCCUPATIONS</b>				
Cost Estimators	3.9	\$ 46.87	331	35%

<sup>8</sup> \*Designates occupations where clean energy job growth partially offsets projected occupation job losses economywide.

<sup>9</sup> The occupation star ranking was developed by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development in 2017 and is based on a five-star ranking system in which higher-demand, higher-wage jobs are ranked higher, based on short-term hiring projections (2017), long-term hiring projections (2024) and occupation median wage.

Logistician and Project Management Specialists (Fleet Managers)	3.6	\$	48.86	113	183%
Management Analysts	4.9	\$	52.02	252	15%
<b>COMPUTER &amp; MATHEMATICAL OCCUPATIONS</b>					
Software and Web Developers, Programmers and Testers	4.8	\$	60.56	455	13%
<b>CONSTRUCTION, INSTALLATION, MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR OCCUPATIONS</b>					
Automotive Technicians and Repairers*	3.2	\$	25.06	103	92%
Carpenters	4.1	\$	30.47	398	29%
Construction and Building Inspectors (including Energy Analysts)	3.2	\$	36.58	532	25%
Construction Laborers	4.1	\$	27.90	2,288	33%
Electricians	4.4	\$	37.02	4,444	69%
Hazardous Waste Removal Workers	2.7	\$	22.71	41	22%
Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning and Refrigeration Mechanics and Installers	4	\$	31.26	650	17%
Insulation Workers	2	\$	24.75	965	25%
Line Installers and Repairers	3.3	\$	48.02	722	98%
Maintenance Workers and Repairers, General (including building operators)	4.1	\$	24.62	161	57%
Operating Engineers and Other Construction Equipment Operators	4	\$	31.69	321	29%
Pile Driver Operators	4	\$	47.86	14	482%
Pipelayers, Plumbers, Pipefitters and Steamfitters	3.6	\$	37.91	397	11%

Roofers	3.2	\$	30.46	154	25%
Sheet Metal Workers	3.2	\$	35.55	281	28%
Surface Mining Machine Operators and Earth Drillers	N/A	\$	30.48	16	43%
Wind Turbine Service Technicians	N/A	\$	32.38	33	33%
<b>MANAGEMENT OCCUPATIONS</b>					
General and Operations Managers	5	\$	60.62	1,579	31%
<b>OFFICE AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT OCCUPATIONS</b>					
Customer Service Representatives*	4	\$	22.72	404	27%
<b>PRODUCTION OCCUPATIONS</b>					
Engine and Other Machine Assemblers	3	\$	19.46	52	697%
Miscellaneous Assemblers and Fabricators*	2.5	\$	18.94	358	23%
Miscellaneous Metal Workers and Plastic Workers*	1.6	\$	21.61	75	1851%
Power Plant Operators, Distributors and Dispatchers	3.8	\$	44.11	116	85%
Structural Metal Fabricators and Fitters*	2.4	\$	25.43	140	57%
Welding, Soldering, and Brazing Workers	2.5	\$	26.31	139	28%
<b>SALES REPRESENTATIVES OF SERVICES OCCUPATIONS</b>					
Miscellaneous Sales Representatives, Services	4.5	\$	38.13	333	22%
<b>TRANSPORTATION AND MATERIAL MOVING OCCUPATIONS</b>					
Crane and Tower Operators	2	\$	32.47	51	331%

Ship and Boat Captains and Operators	2.5	\$	30.81	40	136%
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Table 6. Workforce Priority Occupations by Occupational Category

**Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Initiatives:** Targeted support to disadvantaged business entities (DBE) such as Minority and Women-Owned Business Enterprises (MWBE), underrepresented founders, clean energy workers, etc.

**Environmental Justice Populations:** As defined by the Massachusetts Department of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA), are “segments of the population determined to be most at risk of being unaware of or unable to participate in environmental decision-making or to gain access to state environmental resources, or are especially vulnerable.”

- “Environmental Justice (“EJ”) Neighborhood” means a census block group where:
  - Twenty-five percent (25%) of households have an annual median household income that is equal to or less than sixty-five percent (65%) of the statewide median income; or
  - Forty percent (40%) of its population is Minority; or
  - Twenty-five percent (25%) or more of the households lack English language proficiency; or
  - Minorities comprise twenty-five percent (25%) or more of the population and the annual median household income of the municipality in which the neighborhood is located does not exceed one-hundred fifty percent (150%) of the statewide annual median household income
- “Minority” refers to individuals who identify themselves as Latino/Hispanic, Black/African American, Asian, Indigenous people, and people who otherwise identify as non-white (see additional definition below).
- “Low-income” means median household income at or below sixty-five percent (65%) of the statewide median income for Massachusetts, according to federal census data.
- To see census block groups that meet the Environmental Justice definition, see Environmental Justice Map Viewer<sup>10</sup>.

**Federally Recognized and State-Acknowledged Tribes:** Defined by the US Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs as a federally recognized tribe that is 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

<sup>10</sup> <https://mass-eoeaa.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=1d6f63e7762a48e5930de84ed4849212>

Bureau of Indian Affairs. Massachusetts' Commission on Indian Affairs (MCIA)<sup>11</sup> 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.

**Fossil Fuel Workers:** Current and former workers from the fossil fuel industry, including but not limited to oil and propane dealer employees, including fuel delivery truck drivers; oil, gas, and propane heating technicians, sales, and administrative staff; gas station attendants; gas station equipment repair staff; gasoline car repair staff, and natural gas pipeline contractors.

**Gateway City:** Defined by the Massachusetts Legislature as twenty-six (26) mid-size urban centers that anchor regional economies around the state that face social and economic challenges but retain many assets with unrealized potential. These communities are municipalities with a population greater than 35,000 and less than 250,000 with a median household income below the Commonwealth's average, and rate of educational attainment of a bachelor's degree or above that is below the Commonwealth average.

- These communities include: Attleboro, Barnstable, Brockton, Chelsea, Chicopee, Everett, Fall River, Fitchburg, Haverhill, Holyoke, Lawrence, Leominster, Lowell, Lynn, Malden, Methuen, New Bedford, Peabody, Pittsfield, Quincy, Revere, Salem, Springfield, Taunton, Westfield and Worcester.

**Low/Moderate Income Initiatives:** Initiatives that serve low and/or moderate-income populations. "Low income" generally is defined as earning 60%-65% of the statewide median income. "Moderate income" varies more; defined as earning 60%-80% to 80%-120% of statewide median income. If your organization uses another definition for low/moderate income than above, please provide your definition on the application form.

**Minority- and Women-owned Business Enterprise (MWBE):** Defined by the Commonwealth, means a business at least 51% owned and dominantly controlled by adult (18 or older) minority or women principals who are U.S. citizens or lawful permanent residents. MWBEs may have Massachusetts, federal or other city specific certifications in place already. MWBEs may also have the ownership structure in place already to gain certification but need assistance in order to gain federal, state, or other certifications. Other MWBEs may need support to create a business entity that would be able to gain certification once established. Early stage start-up companies with minority founders in executive roles are also included in this definition, regardless of equity stake in the company or the demographics of the other shareholders of the company.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/indian-affairs>

**Potential Barriers:** For the purposes of the solicitation, MassCEC has identified potential barriers to entry and participation in the climate-critical workforce (“Potential Barriers”) to include, but not be limited to:

- Childcare and/or other caregiving costs;
- Transportation costs;
- Vehicle and/or public transportation access;
- Lack of a driver’s license;
- Lack of a high school diploma or GED;
- Tool/equipment purchase costs;
- Training fees, tuition, or other educational costs;
- Access to Internet and computers or other connective devices;
- Opportunity costs of time spent in training or educational programs;
- Housing and/or food insecurity;
- Short- and medium-term impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic;
- Lack of support systems providing guidance and raising awareness to make training/educational programs and job opportunities more accessible and achievable;
- Cultural barriers; and
- Language barriers.

**Supplier Diversity Office (SDO):** State office that promotes diversity, equity and inclusion in state contracting by certifying diverse small Massachusetts businesses and connecting them with business opportunities and resources.

- SDO Directory of Certified Businesses
- SDO Certification Self-Assessment for businesses and nonprofits
- Certifications include:
  - Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)
  - Women Business Enterprise (WBE)
  - Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)
  - Portuguese Business Enterprise (PBE)
  - Veteran Business Enterprise (VBE)
  - Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Business Enterprise (LGBTBE)
  - Service-Disabled Veteran-Owned Business Enterprise (SDVOBE)
  - Disability-Owned Business Enterprise (DOBE)

**Underrepresented Business:** Business that is at least 51% owned and operated by an individual or group that is part of a traditionally underrepresented or underserved group. MWBEs are Underrepresented Businesses. Note: To support equity goals, MWBEs and Underrepresented Businesses can substantiate eligibility for programming based on their home or workplace address.

#### 4. FUNDING AVAILABLE

The CUBS Grants Program will launch a Hub and Spoke model to equitably allocate resources across regions while addressing the unique needs of MWBEs and Underrepresented Businesses. MassCEC anticipates awarding a total of up to Four Million Four Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$4,400,000) but may increase the total awards should additional resources become available.

Funding decisions will take into account program variables, sector-specific barriers, and region-specific needs to ensure efficient use of funds, measurable outcomes, and alignment with programmatic goals. Variables may include the number of Underrepresented Businesses to be served, partnership model for delivery of Core Services, proportion of participants likely to support the highest growth climate-critical occupations, economic indicators for participants (e.g., poverty rates, number of Environmental Justice communities, climate impact), identified regional and sector-specific barriers, geographic considerations (e.g., rural vs. urban costs), regional infrastructure, and the scale of regional operations (e.g., number of Spokes).

Applicants submitting as a Hub may apply for up to Eight Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$800,000) in funding for work completed over a period of two (2) or three (3) years; this amount includes the funding requested by the Hub to fulfill the sector-specific Procurement Navigation requirement via the separate Spoke application. MassCEC anticipates that the portion of Hub awards dedicated towards Core Service delivery will average between Four Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$400,000) and Six Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$600,000) based on past MWBE Support Grant awards, with those awards exceeding the higher end of the average being unique cases where the applicant has demonstrated through data and evidence significant need and barriers and/or unique and impactful program models.

Applicants proposing a Spoke project may apply for up to Four Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$400,000) for work completed over one (1) or two (2) years. MassCEC anticipates that Spoke awards will average between One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000) and Three Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$300,000) based on past MWBE Support Grant awards. Spoke Applicants may apply for funding to provide services across multiple workforce regions, however the Applicant will be assessed for capacity and the maximum total funding amount still applies.

MassCEC anticipates offering expedited application opportunities to established Hubs and Spokes in good standing and meeting performance metrics in future rounds of the CUBS Grant solicitations. These expedited application opportunities may also facilitate scaling and expansion to other regions.

Table 7. Funding Thresholds for Hubs and Spokes, outlines the maximum award amounts based on applicant type and program scope:

<b>Application Type</b>	<b>Funding Term</b>	<b>Maximum Total Funding</b>
Hub	2 to 3 years	\$800,000

(includes funding requested via required separate Spoke application)		
Spoke	1 to 2 years	\$400,000

Maximum funding of Eight Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$800,000) for Hub Applicants indicated in Table 7. Funding Thresholds for Hubs and Spokes, is inclusive of the funding requested for the required Procurement Navigation services provided directly by the Hub via a separate Spoke application. The proposed budget submitted with the Hub application should only reflect administrative, programmatic, and subcontractor costs for delivery of Core Services and required Hub administration activities. **When totaled with the proposed budget submitted with the Hub’s separate and required Spoke application for Procurement Navigation services, the combined budgets should not exceed Eight Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$800,000).**

Hub Applicants responding to this FY25 RFP will not be required to subgrant funds to Spokes, however Hubs will be required to collaborate with selected Spokes within their workforce region and sign MOUs with those Spokes. **Hub Applicants should not include Spoke subgrant line-items in their proposed budgets or the requested funding amount.**

MassCEC reserves the right to consider Hub Applicants for Spoke awards if the proposal is more suited to fulfill the role of a Spoke. In these circumstances, the Applicant will be notified and be granted a period to submit additional supplemental documentation or decline consideration.

In limited cases, MassCEC may recommend that one Hub Applicant partner with another Applicant to result in a larger and/or more effective regional Hub. In these situations, Applicants will be notified and be granted a period to collaborate and submit additional supplemental documentation to support a new collaboratively proposal or decline consideration.

**Applicants applying for funding to operate Hubs in multiple regions must submit a separate application for each region.** Applicants applying for funding to operate Spokes in multiple regions may submit a single application if the work does not significantly vary per region; if the work necessitates a different service plan per region or if different services or sector-focuses will be offered in different regions, the Applicant must submit applications for each distinct project.

Applicants will have an opportunity to clarify specific budget needs in their application. All Applicants selected for an award will be required to submit final, revised budgets for approval before contract execution.

## 5. ELIGIBLE FUNDING USES

Funding can support operational capacity, programmatic delivery, and ecosystem development. All programs must focus specifically on support of MWBEs and Underrepresented Businesses or the creation of Underrepresented Businesses in climate-critical business fields. The expectation is that CUBS Grant funds be utilized within three (3) years of contract execution for active programs, with an additional one (1) year of outcome and metric monitoring. MassCEC anticipates these grants shall be utilized for activities such as:

- Staff or individual time devoted to program, or project preparation and implementation; including under one-on-one business counseling, strategic business introductions, assistance navigating government procurement processes, assisting with recruitment and retention of employees, and support accessing capital;
- Marketing activities and expenses commonly associated with outreach initiatives such as purchasing marketing collateral, renting space for events, promotional mailers, and website or social media hosting costs;
- Technical support needed to move projects forward;
- Field-specific training and coaching;
- Training stipends to address anticipated losses of wages or revenue that Underrepresented Businesses may incur while participating in extended training offerings;
- Ongoing costs for accountants, lawyers, or other professional services;
- Costs associated with initial and ongoing Underrepresented Business engagement, including translation services; and
- Administration and distribution of small grants to provide Underrepresented Businesses with capital needed for clean energy projects.

Activities that are NOT eligible for funding include:

- Costs associated with preparing a proposal; and
- Support activities that have been undertaken prior to the execution of a grant.

## 6. WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

Organizations or a partnership/team are eligible to apply and are collectively termed “Applicants.” If there are multiple parties that are jointly applying, one party should take on the role of leading the application team (“Lead Applicant”). If a single organization is applying for this opportunity, that organization would also be the Lead Applicant. The Lead Applicant will sign a contract similar to Attachment 5: Sample Cost-Reimbursement Grant Agreement with

MassCEC (if selected), and receive funds from MassCEC. The following entities are eligible to serve as a Lead Applicant with the following conditions:

- Nonprofit organizations including Chamber of Commerce organizations, trade associations, clean energy incubators/accelerators, environmental justice organizations, and organizations representing tribes;
- Academic institutions with a business support program; and
- For profit entities such as clean energy installers, energy efficiency, or home performance contractors, technical or workforce training organizations, financial institutions, or other clean energy practitioners.

Additional eligibility notes:

- Lead Applicants must have a Massachusetts office or staffing.
- Lead Applicant is currently in good standing with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and can provide a Certification of Good Standing (COGS)<sup>2</sup>. Please note that community colleges, public vocational-technical high schools, and public state universities serving as the lead applicant do not need to submit a Certificate of Good Standing.
- Applicants will be expected to disclose any potential conflicts of interest created through partnerships or subcontracts with related family members, current and recent employers, or any other involved parties that may create such conflicts of interest and to detail the review and selection processes used by the Applicants to ensure selection of the best parties to perform the related work.
- **Reminder:** This funding is not intended to benefit a single or limited number of MWBEs or Underrepresented Businesses but instead is intended to support an organization that can help many different Underrepresented Businesses grow and excel in climate-critical business sectors.

**7. ESTIMATED TIMELINE FOR CUBS SUPPORT GRANTS**

This timeline is subject to change at MassCEC’s discretion, and notification timelines may vary based off the number of applications. Please note this is an estimated timeline.

The Pre-Application Webinar will be recorded and be available on MassCEC’s funding page. Additionally, questions regarding this RFP will be collected during open Pre-Application Office Hours and posted to the MassCEC website monthly.

Release of RFP	February 24, 2025
Pre-Application Webinar: How To Apply for CUBS RFP	March 10, 2025, at 1:00 PM
Pre-Application Office Hours	Thursday, March 13 at 12:00 PM

	Tuesday, March 18 at 12:00 PM Thursday, March 27 at 2:00 PM Tuesday, April 1 at 4:00 PM Thursday, April 10 at 12:00 PM Tuesday, April 22 at 11:00 AM
Questions due to MassCEC via email to <a href="mailto:rfpworkforce@masscec.com">rfpworkforce@masscec.com</a>	Ongoing through April 4, 2025
Questions with answers posted to MassCEC Website	Updated at least every month on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday through April 8, 2025
Proposals Due	April 25, 2025, by 11:59 pm
Initial Review and Interviews of Applicants	April - May 2025
Supplemental Documentation Due	May 23, 2025
Final Review	June 2025
Notification of Awards	June 2025

**8. HOW TO APPLY**

Applicants are encouraged to apply even if they do not yet have all program components fully developed, so long as the proposal submitted includes a clear and actionable plan to commence implementation of the proposed project during a reasonable timeframe within the grant period, typically within a six (6) month program development ramp up period. Additionally, Applicants who have not formalized partnerships through MOUs but confirm willingness to collaborate with Hubs and Spokes are encouraged to apply.

While not required, Applicants submitting proposals with multiple partners, signaled by Letters of Commitments or MOUs, may be viewed more favorably. Spoke Applicants may rely on Fiscal Agents (e.g., Regional Planning Commissions, Workforce Boards, Schools, Economic Development groups) to address administrative needs, however Applicants must have sufficient staff capacity to deliver services and provide participant case management at all stages of the service plan.

While Hub and Spoke Applicants are being required to submit separate applications, Applicants proposing integrated Hub and Spoke networks with clear, complementary roles are strongly encouraged to highlight these structures in their applications. Applicants are allowed to submit multiple applications if they represent partnerships in distinct regions, programmatic

approaches, or partnerships. **Hub Applicants are required to submit a separate Spoke application to fulfill the requirement to provide sector-specific, clean energy Procurement Navigation.**

Applicants proposing to operate Hubs in multiple regions must submit a separate application for each region. Applicants applying to operate Spokes in multiple regions may submit a single application if the work does not significantly vary per region, but Applicants must submit separate applications for distinct projects or regions, if the proposed work necessitates a different service plan per region or if different services or sector-focuses will be offered in different regions.

The application review process will be tiered into phases – initial review and final review. During the initial review, Applications will be assessed for eligibility, completeness, and alignment with the Hub and Spoke delivery model. Following initial review, prior to final review, Applicants may be asked to submit additional information (e.g., letters of commitment or MOUs, updated budgets, or written responses to clarification questions).

Additionally, MassCEC may deem a proposal a stronger fit for other procurements or for collaboration with other Hub and Spoke Applicants, including selecting one or part of a proposed network of partners. All requests for additional information and/or authorization to consider an application under additional procurement or funding opportunities will be clearly communicated, and Applicants will be given a defined timeline to respond to requests and provide supplemental documentation.

At the discretion of MassCEC, applications for CUBS Grants that are not detailed enough for initial award or need further development may be offered a planning grant or a capacity grant, and if funding is available, an opportunity to reapply in a later round of CUBS Grants for implementation. Planning grants are intended for the exploration, development, or refinement of innovative ideas for potential implementation initiatives to conduct CUBS projects, while capacity grants are designed to enable organizations to add key capacity needed to support programming to service Underrepresented Businesses entering and growing in climate-critical sectors.

Additionally, MassCEC may elect to award a portion of CUBS Grant funds requested by Applicants in their applications in the event a proposed project contains sufficient detail to merit a CUBS Grant but does not have a sufficient scope to justify the entire amount of the award request by the applicant.

Applicants responding to this FY25 CUBS Grants RFP will not be required to subgrant funds to Spokes. All Spokes must apply directly via separate applications and will receive grant funds directly from MassCEC, if awarded. Separate applications linked to a collaborative proposal

should include MOUs and letters of commitment where available. See Attachment 6: Sample Memorandum of Understanding.

To apply:

1. Review this RFP to understand the opportunity, requirements, and MassCEC's objectives.
2. Review all RFP forms and attachments.
3. Attend MassCEC informational webinars and/or utilize other informational resources offered (see below: Resources and Support for Potential Applicants).
4. Contact MassCEC with questions and/or to discuss your idea(s) via email at [rfpworkforce@masscec.com](mailto:rfpworkforce@masscec.com).
5. Complete all RFP forms and attachments, adhering to word limits, format requirements, deadlines, and other instructions listed within this RFP and each attachment.
6. Submit all completed RFP forms and attachments by email to [rfpworkforce@masscec.com](mailto:rfpworkforce@masscec.com) by 11:59 on April 25, 2025, with "CUBS Grants Application" in the subject line.

A complete application packet will include the following:

- Attachment 1: Authorized Applicant Signature and Acceptance Form
- Attachment 2: CUBS Grant Applications
- Attachment 3: Budgets and Proposed Project Schedule
- Attachment 4: Sample Cost-Reimbursement Grant Agreement
- Attachment 5: Sample Grantee Progress Report
- Attachment 6: Sample Memorandum of Understanding

Attachments 1 and 2 must be submitted as separate documents in Word format. Attachment 3: Budget and Proposed Project Schedule, must be submitted as an individual Excel file and should include the Applicant's Proposed Budget, Program Schedule, and Organizational Annual Budget.

Attachment 4 is sample of a MassCEC Cost-Reimbursement Grant Agreement Contract and does need not be returned and is strictly for review and reference, unless the applicant is requesting changes to any of the language in the sample grant agreements; **if changes are requested to the grant agreement language, please note that in Section 5.4 of Attachment 2: Application Form and return an annotated version of Attachment 4: Sample Cost-Reimbursement Grant Agreement as part of your application packet.** Note: MassCEC has limited ability to change contract terms. Supporting documents such as Memorandums of Understanding ("MOUs") and Letters of Support ("LOSs") should be integrated into Attachment 2: Application Form, but Applicants may also submit these as distinct attachments. Additional attachments will **not** be considered during review and scoring.

Attachment 5 is a Sample Grantee Progress report and is included to inform Applicants of required data and metrics to be collected. Additional information on metrics is included under Section 3: Program Goals and Descriptions. Attachment 6 is a Sample Memorandum of Understanding between a Regional Hub and Partner Spoke.

*Attachments 4, 5, and 6 are for reference only.*

### Attachment 3: Budget Instructions

**Program Budget:** On tab one (1), provide a standard line-item program budget representing the full term of the proposed project, including staff salaries, direct program costs, support services and subcontracting costs, indirect costs and fringe costs. **Each line-item should include rates and units/quantities, as well as detailed narratives that align with the proposed activities described in Attachment 2: Application Form and should not reflect lump sums for the associated tasks.**

All line-items must be explained in the narrative column. For example, if applying for personnel funds, include the units (Full-Time Equivalent (FTEs) or hours) and rate (annual salary or wage) as well as the program responsibilities for each staff person. *Please note that while the budget form asks for names and titles for staff, applicants may elect to provide titles only.*

If multiple similar tasks are planned, each unique task with an assigned rate should be detailed on a separate line; for example, if two (2) different types of stipends are being offered to participants, each stipend should be reflected on a separate line under Support Services.

Applicants intending to designate Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000.00) or more of the grant funds to a subcontractor for the work proposed must submit a separate detailed line-item budget for the subcontractors using a copy of the provided budget template, Attachment 3. Budget and Proposed Project Schedule.

Applicants are encouraged to demonstrate a commitment to cost-sharing as MassCEC looks to leverage shared resources with limited funding. Projects with greater levels of cost-share will be prioritized in the selection process. Cost share is defined as monetary or in-kind costs supporting the proposed grant program. Cost share cannot include other grants from MassCEC.

**Organizational Budget:** Provide an annual organizational operating budget along with the proposed program budget. Key features of an operating budget include the lead applicant's projected revenue and expenses and top-level expense categories such as salaries, operational expenses, and administrative overhead.

**Proposed Project Schedule-Timeline and Phases:** On tab two (2), provide a proposed project schedule. Applicants must provide a project schedule including a timeline and phases aligned

with and fully reflected in the requested budget, ensuring all activities correspond with associated budget costs.

Complete application submissions will be accepted through **11:59 PM EST on April 25, 2025**. Under no circumstances will MassCEC accept responses past the deadline. Awards will be made competitively and until available funds are expended.

**Resources and Support for Potential Applicants:**

All applicants are encouraged to work with MassCEC and utilize MassCEC support when preparing an application. Attendance at the pre-application webinars and office hours is recommended. Links to helpful resources and past webinars will be provided on the MassCEC website along with the links to the funding opportunity documents.

Additionally, applicants are encouraged to leverage MassCEC networks to seek partnerships. MassCEC will maintain an opt-in listserv that will provide program updates, including descriptions of potential applicants seeking part. If you are not on the Workforce listserv and would like to be added, email [workforce@masscec.com](mailto:workforce@masscec.com).

MassCEC will offer a publicly accessible contact list of organizations seeking partnerships and their geographic and occupational interest areas for those seeking partnership opportunities. MassCEC may also seek to facilitate relationships directly upon request.

**Electronic Accessibility:**

If accessibility to a computer, internet, or software may prohibit you from submitting an electronic application, in general, or by any deadline, or if there are other challenges with accessibility, such as language or writing barriers, alternative options may be discussed, such as video application. Please email [rpfworkforce@masscec.com](mailto:rpfworkforce@masscec.com) or telephone the Workforce Equity Program Administrator at (617) 315-9300, option 7, option 2, to discuss accommodations.

**9. SELECTION CRITERIA**

Proposals submitted in response to this solicitation will be reviewed by MassCEC including a threshold criteria screening, a compliance screening, and a review committee. MassCEC reserves the right to request additional information from any Applicant. MassCEC will consider the following categories when evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of proposals:

<p><u>Applicant and Partner Experience</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applicants or Applicant teams have a demonstrated history engaging and supporting MWBE and Underrepresented Businesses and have a network established to attract</li></ul>
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	<p>existing Underrepresented Businesses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants demonstrate experience in fostering partnerships and collaboration.</li> <li>• Applicants have a track record of providing Core Services or Additional Services to help Underrepresented Businesses overcome typical barriers or sector-specific barriers, such as back office services, bridge and startup capital, or introductions to procuring agencies.</li> <li>• Applicant teams have a successful track record and approach and use data such as completion rates, scale/size, and participation rate to demonstrate historical success.</li> <li>• Applicant has experience or knowledge of climate-critical business fields.</li> <li>• Applicant has experience or knowledge of the regional economy.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Target Sectors / Demonstration of Market Opportunity</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant has defined climate-critical business fields to focus work on and uses data or research about the importance of the growth of this fields in meeting state climate goals.</li> <li>• Applicant has a strong tie to procurement pipelines and customers integrated into the project so that trained Underrepresented Businesses have business opportunities during or at program completion.</li> <li>• Applicant has clearly outlined gaps in current services for Underrepresented Businesses and has a strong plan and strategy to fill gaps and needs.</li> <li>• Applicants identify the type of</li> </ul>

	<p>MWBEs and Underrepresented Businesses to be served in the target region/s including target demographics or sectors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants plan to serve predominantly Underrepresented Businesses that directly participate in the design, manufacturing, installation, and maintenance of clean energy projects and that provide employment opportunities for the top twenty (20) highest growth climate-critical occupations.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Capability Statement</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants present a clear accounting of services and training to be offered under each Core Service bucket.</li> <li>• Applicants present a clear delivery and dosage model for each offering, including defining staff and partner roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>• Applicants propose reasonable performance metrics to gauge success of delivery of Core Services.</li> <li>• Applicants provide a staffing plan that accounts for administration and management of the Hub and Spoke ecosystem in the designated workforce region, including cross-referrals with Spokes, case management, collection and collation of participation and performance data from Spokes, and reporting to MassCEC.</li> <li>• Applicants offer a regional convening strategy and a regional collaborative marketing and outreach strategy.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Program Design and Delivery</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants present a comprehensive program design with a clear service plan to deliver specific Core Services or Additional</li> </ul>

	<p>Services that align with their stated goals for supporting MWBEs and Underrepresented Businesses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applicants provide a service plan workflow that includes clear steps including but limited to Marketing and Outreach, Intake and Assessment, Business Assessment, delivery of Core or Additional Services, and Retention and Follow-Up Supports, with approaches to provide responsive supports to Underrepresented Businesses appropriate to the needs of each participant.</li><li>• Applicants match outreach, engagement, and program design elements to the needs of the Underrepresented Businesses in the region and sectors they intend to serve.</li><li>• The program design and delivery are organized to maximize benefit to the supported Underrepresented Businesses and to allow the support organization to effectively capture data outcomes to continuously improve programming.</li><li>• Applicants incorporate a continuous improvement plan with clear reporting processes for tracking outcomes, collecting data, and refining program delivery based on feedback.</li><li>• Applicants provide a reasonable staffing plan for the work proposed with assigned roles and responsibilities for the proposed tasks including coordination between Hubs and Spokes.</li></ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants articulate how their programs align with the Hub and Spoke delivery model.</li> <li>• Applicants emphasize collaboration or openness to collaboration with other organizations and clearly signal agreements between Hubs and Spokes.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Outcomes, Budget, Leveraged Resources, and Sustainability</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants propose strong outcomes with reasonable performance metrics, a program design that can achieve these outcomes, and data collection practices that support effective outcome tracking.</li> <li>• Applicants propose clear, measurable outcomes aligned with clean energy market entry or growth.</li> <li>• Applicants present a budget aligned with program needs and a competitive \$/MWBE support considering types of support services and training provided and includes itemized budgets for subcontractors/partners.</li> <li>• Applicant leverages and takes advantage of existing government and other business support and workforce resources such as Small Business Administration, Supplier Diversity Office, State Workforce Board, MassHire Organizations, or Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (“EOLWD”) Workforce programs and/or demonstrates progress towards identifying appropriate funds to leverage in the initial award period and to sustain the programming beyond the grant period.</li> </ul>
<p><u>Diversity of Approaches</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diverse Applicants and Applicant Teams</li> </ul>

	<p>are encouraged to apply, especially those certified by the Massachusetts Supplier Diversity Office or equivalent certifying entity. If the Applicant organization meets the criteria for this but has not completed certification, Applicants may offer a statement to this regard on the application form.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Geographic Diversity:</b> Consideration may be given towards awarding applications from a representative spread of communities across Massachusetts, a variety of climate critical business field focuses, and diverse project plans. Based on current coverage by existing awardees, consideration may be given to proposals focused on areas currently lacking coverage.</li><li>• <b>Sector Diversity:</b> Consideration may be given towards awarding applications from a variety of high priority climate critical business sectors that have high growth opportunity in MA.</li><li>• <b>Heightened and Innovative Support:</b> Consideration may be given towards applications that propose heightened and innovative supports not offered by other programs, such as social supports removing childcare barriers or addressing food or housing insecurity potentially faced by small business owners. Or Applicants propose innovative ways to address common growth barriers faced by</li></ul>
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## 10. EXPECTATIONS FOR GRANT AWARDEES

In addition to fulfilling milestones and deliverables described in the Scope of Work, to be agreed upon and finalized upon award, awardees will be expected to satisfy the following responsibilities:

1. Finalize Grant Agreement

Awardees will work with the MassCEC Program Manager to develop and finalize their grant agreement to ensure that the statement of work, milestones and deliverables schedule, payment schedule, and other terms are in conformity to MassCEC standards prior to commencement of project work and disbursements of funding.

2. Attend Awardee Cohort Sessions and Training

Awardees will be required to send a representative to participate in regular webinars and meetings with other awardees from this round of the solicitation to check in, promote networking, synergize projects, share best practices, and overall strengthen the quality of the workforce development ecosystem related to climate critical occupations. Cohort sessions and training sessions will be scheduled every quarter.

3. Consult with MassCEC Workforce Technical Assistance

MassCEC will provide technical assistance via staff with extensive workforce development and climate critical occupation-related experience and via the services of a subcontracted provider. Technical assistance will consist of guidance and support during implementation, networking opportunities and partnership development assistance, and promoting continuous improvement to ensure the success and quality of the programs. Technical assistance will be delivered on an ongoing and as-needed basis to be agreed upon between the technical assistance provider and awardee. Applicants are encouraged to consider the staff time required to participate fully when developing plans and budgets for proposed programming.

4. Provide Regular Reporting and Case Studies

MassCEC requires awardees to provide regular reports typically timed to coincide with scheduled invoices for payment, with a preference towards quarterly invoices and reports. Awardees will be asked to provide interim progress reports using templated forms and by attaching additional documentation for program-specific deliverables not captured within the templates. The templated reports capture general programmatic and participant data, including but not limited to demographic and business data, revenue and wage data, dosage of service, and changes to status that signal progress towards program completion.

MassCEC regularly features awardees in social media blog posts, reports, and other media. To facilitate these activities, awardees will be expected to provide case studies and the regular reports as agreed upon in the Scope of Work. At a minimum, case studies will be expected to include a one (1) page text description of a successful program participant and an appropriate accompanying picture, with additional information, statistics, and photographs potentially requested by the MassCEC Program Manager. It is anticipated that case studies will be required on at least an annual basis.

## 11. CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS

For all questions related to this CUBS Grant RFP, please email [rfpworkforce@masscec.com](mailto:rfpworkforce@masscec.com).

## 12. GENERAL REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS CONDITIONS

### NOTICE OF PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

As a public entity, MassCEC is subject to Massachusetts' Public Records Law, codified in Chapter 66 of the Massachusetts General Laws. Thus, any documentary material, data, or other information received by MassCEC from an applicant is a public record subject to disclosure. Applicants shall not send MassCEC any confidential or sensitive information in response to 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.

### 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 a modification of the application, negotiate with all qualified Applicants, cancel or modify the RFP in part or 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. Applicants must 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 awarded applicant(s) will execute a contract, substantially in the form of the Sample Agreement attached hereto as Attachment 4 that will set forth the respective roles and responsibilities of the parties.



ATTACHMENT 1: AUTHORIZED APPLICANT SIGNATURE AND ACCEPTANCE FORM

**Climate-Critical Underrepresented Business Support Grants (the “RFP”)**

The undersigned is a duly authorized representative of the Applicant named below. The undersigned has read and understands the RFP requirements and acknowledges and confirms that the Applicant and each member of its team have read and understand the RFP Requirements. The undersigned acknowledges and agrees that all of the terms and conditions of the RFP are mandatory.

The undersigned and each Applicant and each member of its team acknowledges and agrees that (i) all materials submitted as part of the application are subject to disclosure under the Massachusetts Public Records Law, as explained in the RFP; (ii) that the Massachusetts Clean Energy Technology Center (“MassCEC”) has no obligation, and retains the sole discretion to fund or choose not to fund the application set forth herein; and (iii) that MassCEC’s receipt of the application does not imply any promise of funding at any time.

The undersigned and each member of the Applicant’s team understands that, if the Application is selected by MassCEC pursuant to this RFP, the Applicant will execute and deliver an agreement to be provided by MassCEC that shall set forth the terms and conditions, together the respective roles and responsibilities of the Applicant, and each member of its team, and MassCEC, with respect to the project described in the RFP.

I certify that the statements made in this Application, including all attachments and exhibits, are true and correct.

Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

(Printed Name of Applicant)

By: \_\_\_\_\_

(Signature of Applicant or Authorized Representative)

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

ATTACHMENT 2: CUBS GRANT APPLICATIONS

*Attached separately*

ATTACHMENT 3: Budgets and Proposed Project Schedule

*Attached separately*

*Attached separately*

ATTACHMENT 5: Sample Grantee Progress Report

*Attached separately*

ATTACHMENT 6: Sample Memorandum of Understanding

*Attached separately*