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Request for Proposals: Green School Works Implementation Grants

Date of Issue: March 31, 2025
Proposals Due: April 30, 2025 11:59PM

Total Funding Available: \$52,500,000

All proposals must be submitted to:

greenschools@masscec.com

1. SUMMARY

Through this Request for Proposals (“RFP”), the Massachusetts Clean Energy Technology Center (“MassCEC”) seeks proposals for projects that improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions, or mitigate impacts of climate change at eligible public kindergarten through twelfth grade (“K-12”) school districts and educational collaboratives in Massachusetts. Schools must serve a significant percentage of students from low-income families to be eligible, as described in Section 4 (Eligibility & Award Details).

Massachusetts is home to approximately 1,800 public K-12 school buildings responsible for 880,000 metric tons of carbon every year. The electrification and decarbonization of school buildings represents a significant opportunity for the state to reach its goal of net zero emissions by 2050 while creating a healthier, more resilient learning environment for its students.

The Green School Works program is taking a multi-pronged approach to spur projects that improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions, or mitigate impacts of climate change in public K-12 schools serving low-income populations. As a part of the Green School Works program, fifty-two million five hundred thousand dollars (\$52,500,000) in grant funding is available through this RFP for the implementation of projects that improve energy efficiency, reduce carbon emissions, or mitigate impacts of climate change. In parallel, Green School Works has allocated five million dollars (\$5,000,000) to help fund technical assistance for eligible schools to help those schools prepare for project implementation. Eligible schools may participate in both Green School Works offerings, or either one separately, based on the needs of the school. Green School Works grant funding may be combined with other sources of private and/or public funding.

This funding opportunity is intentionally broad and flexible, designed to support a range of project types from a small project involving a single technology to a full school decarbonization. Awards could range from a minimum of fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) to a maximum anticipated award up to five million (\$5,000,000) for projects with a larger scope. MassCEC will prioritize implementation projects that can begin construction within twelve months of contract signing and achieve project completion within thirty-six (36) months of contract signing. MassCEC can be flexible with this timeline on a case-by-case basis. Recognizing that without an identified source of funding it is not always possible to fully develop a project scope, team, and budget, MassCEC welcomes responses from projects that are in the early planning stages.

Across this broad range of eligibility, MassCEC will be looking to fund a diverse array of projects that meet three high-level criteria, as described in Section 7 (Selection Criteria):

- Does the project meet the goals of Green School Works of serving low-income students, reducing energy and emissions, and providing other benefits to the school community including resilience?

- Is the relevant capacity, support, and budget in place to ensure the project’s success?
- Will this project contribute to developing school decarbonization best practices by testing an innovative solution, demonstrating a highly replicable approach, and/or filling a funding gap?
 - How does the project maximize available funding sources, including federal tax credits for certain clean energy technologies available under the Elective Pay provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act.¹ Technical Assistance will be available to selected Applicants to develop financial scenario planning.

2. ABOUT MASSCEC

MassCEC is a quasi-state economic development agency dedicated to accelerating the growth of the clean energy sector across the Commonwealth to spur job creation, deliver statewide environmental benefits, and to secure long-term economic growth for the people of Massachusetts. MassCEC works to increase the adoption of clean energy while driving down costs and delivering financial, environmental, and economic development benefits to energy users and utility customers across the state.

MassCEC’s mission is to accelerate the clean energy and climate solution innovation that is critical to meeting the Commonwealth’s climate goals, advancing Massachusetts’ position as an international climate leader while growing the state’s clean energy economy. MassCEC is committed to creating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive organization where everyone is welcomed, supported, respected, and valued. We are committed to incorporating principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and environmental justice in all aspects of our work in order to promote the equitable distribution of the health and economic benefits of clean energy and support a diverse and inclusive clean energy industry. MassCEC strives to lead and innovate in equitable clean energy and climate solutions.

3. PROGRAM BACKGROUND AND GOALS

Created as part of the state's Fiscal Year 2024 budget and renewed in the Fiscal Year 2025 budget, sixty million dollars (\$60,000,000) of revenue from the Fair Share Amendment has been committed to Green School Works to-date to provide financial support to public K-12 schools or districts to install or maintain clean energy infrastructure. The Green School Works funding was allocated to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (“DESE”) in consultation with MassCEC, and DESE contracted with MassCEC to administer the Program on its behalf.

The goals of the Green School Works program, as stated in the enabling legislation are to:

- “provide financial support to eligible K-12 public schools or districts for projects to install or maintain clean energy infrastructure;”

¹ See Internal Revenue Service Publication 5817 (Rev. 4-2024)

- “address the costs of installation, operation or upgrades of clean energy infrastructure that improves energy efficiency, reduces carbon emissions or mitigates impacts of climate change, including school rooftop construction or repair costs necessary for a clean energy infrastructure project to be safely installed;” and
- accelerate the adoption of energy efficiency and decarbonization measures by “schools serving low-income and environmental justice populations.”

Additional goals, based on stakeholder feedback and decarbonization goals for schools across the Commonwealth, are to:

- Serve as a source of gap funding for technical assistance and implementation of electrification and/or decarbonization projects;
- Leverage other sources of school decarbonization funding to the greatest extent possible;
- Enable Massachusetts to take advantage of existing federal clean energy tax incentives;
- Provide building-specific assessments and plans, as well as high-level, district-wide decarbonization planning; and
- Support districts in meeting 2050 and interim emissions targets.

4. ELIGIBILITY & AWARD DETAILS

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS

Applicants to this RFP can be school districts or municipalities (“Applicants”) proposing eligible projects at eligible schools and/or school districts/collaboratives as described below.

ELIGIBLE SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL DISTRICTS/COLLABORATIVES

To serve as a project site for this grant fundings, schools must be public K-12 schools in Massachusetts and must have served a student population that is at least 40% low income in at least one of the last three school years (2022-2023, 2023-2024, or 2024-2025) to be eligible for this funding. Additionally, Applicants must affirm that the project site will remain in use as a public K-12 school facility for at least 20 years.

For projects impacting multiple schools, all of the schools involved must individually meet the eligibility criteria. For projects involving more than three schools (e.g. solar panel installations through one contractor at multiple schools), MassCEC may consider exceptions if a student population that is majority low income will benefit from the project.

MassCEC will also consider projects that serve an entire school district or collaborative if at least 40% of the students in the entire district or collaborative were low income in at least one of the last three school years.

Applicants may review the [Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education’s data](#) to verify eligibility. To navigate to school level data, click on “School” or

“District” or “Collaborative” (as applicable) in the “Report Type” drop down menu, followed by “View Report”.

Public K-12 schools eligible for this funding include:

- Charter schools owning their buildings or with long term ground leases of at least 20 years.
- Educational collaboratives owning their buildings or with long-term ground leases of at least 20 years.
 - Note: Educational collaboratives within larger public schools are also eligible to receive funding. In this case, the application should be for the building as a whole, and the combined student populations must have been at least 40% low income in at least one of the last three school years.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

Projects at various stages of planning, design, and construction are eligible to receive grant funding. Applicants must demonstrate that proposed projects deliver decarbonization, energy efficiency, clean energy, and/or resiliency benefits beyond business-as-usual actions.

Recognizing that without an identified source of funding it is not always possible to fully develop a project scope, team, and budget, MassCEC also welcomes projects that are in the early planning stages. However, MassCEC will prioritize implementation projects that can begin construction within twelve months of contract signing and achieve project completion within thirty-six (36) months of contract signing. MassCEC can be flexible with this timeline on a case-by-case basis.

Grants can be used for energy efficiency, electrification, decarbonization, resilience, and clean energy projects. Eligible project types are listed below.

- Heat pumps (including distribution conversion costs)
 - Ground-source heat pumps
 - Air-source heat pumps
- Photovoltaics
 - Rooftop
 - Ground mount
 - Parking canopy
- Electric battery energy storage systems
- Thermal energy storage systems
- Ventilation system upgrades, including energy recovery
- Electrification of other building systems and appliances (e.g. domestic hot water, kitchen equipment, laundry equipment, landscaping equipment)
- Electric vehicle supply equipment (i.e., charging infrastructure) for school buses and other fleet vehicles

- Electrical service and system upgrades if they are part of a broader electrification or clean energy project
- Building management systems if they are part of a broader electrification project
- Roof repair and window replacements may be funded if they are part of a broader energy efficiency, electrification, decarbonization, resilience, or clean energy project
- Other health and safety barrier mitigation if they are part of a broader energy efficiency, electrification, decarbonization, resilience, or clean energy project
 - Note: Green School Works grant funding cannot be used toward fire safety compliance or ADA compliance costs that may be triggered by these projects.
- Other energy efficiency and weatherization projects (e.g. high-performance building envelope improvements)
- Other electrification, decarbonization, resilience, and clean energy projects to be reviewed on a case-by-case basis
- Consideration will be given to projects that include technologies eligible for federal tax credits under Elective Pay provisions of the Inflation Reduction Act. Applicants may refer to IRS Publication 5817g for a list of eligible tax credits and technologies. ²

Selected Applicants completing projects that are eligible for federal investment tax credit funding may receive technical assistance from MassCEC and/or MassCEC’s consultants to develop scenarios and feasibility for potential federal direct pay investment tax credits.

For Applicants requesting awards equal to or greater than \$1 million, MassCEC expects:

- A plan for full school decarbonization has been or will be created (e.g. the Applicant has or will complete a comprehensive building assessment or equivalent, and/or has integrated decarbonization into capital planning).

For Applicants requesting awards equal to or greater than \$2.5 million, MassCEC also expects:

- Either:
 - The project will significantly reduce the school’s energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions, ideally reducing on-site fossil fuel usage by at least half (e.g. a fully fossil fuel-free HVAC system); or
 - The project tests decarbonization, energy efficiency, clean energy, or resiliency solution or approach that is highly innovative (i.e., untested in Massachusetts public K-12 schools), offers a high potential for replicability and scalability, and offers additional benefits beyond energy and emissions reductions.

ELIGIBLE COSTS & AWARD LEVELS

Eligible project costs include any costs associated with the eligible projects described above, excluding fire safety compliance or ADA compliance costs that may be triggered by these

² [Publication 5817-G \(6-2023\)](#)

projects. Up to 15% of total awarded funds may be used for project “soft costs,” including schematic design, project management, and other non-construction costs.

The minimum award size under this RFP is fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000). The maximum award per school district is expected to be five million dollars (\$5,000,000).

Applicants should request the amount of eligible project costs that is necessary for the project to happen. Applicants may request funding for up to the full eligible project cost; however, Applicants maximizing all other available sources of funding, including incentives, other grant programs, tax credits (e.g., federal investment tax credits), and financing are likely to be the most competitive. MassCEC encourages innovative and efficient financing solutions. MassCEC reserves the right to evaluate the public benefit of grant funding awarded to Applicants using a contract with an energy service company, a power purchase agreement, or any other private financing mechanisms to carry out the project.

Projects at an early stage should do their best to estimate the needed funding from MassCEC. MassCEC cannot guarantee that additional funding will be available if the project costs increase after an award.

5. ESTIMATED TIMELINE

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

Release of RFP	March 31, 2025
Informational webinar	April 8, 2025
Virtual office hours	April 9, 2025 11:00 am – 1:00 pm April 15, 2025 3:00 pm – 5:00 pm (Additional slots may be posted on the RFP webpage page based on demand)
Questions accepted by MassCEC via email to greenschools@masscec.com	March 31, 2025 through April 18, 2025 11:59 PM
Questions with answers posted to MassCEC website	Ongoing from March 31, 2025 through April 23, 2025
Proposals due	April 30, 2025 11:59 PM
Interviews of Applicants, as needed	May 2025
Notification of Award	Late May to June 2025

6. HOW TO APPLY

Responses to this RFP must be received by MassCEC no later than **Friday, April 30, 2025, at 11:59pm ET**. The response to the RFP should be submitted via email to greenschools@masscec.com. “Green School Works RFP – [Applicant (i.e. school district) name]” should appear in the email subject line.

For projects involving multiple schools:

- If a project is a connected and/or coordinated, multi-school effort, please submit one application.
- If there are separate projects at multiple schools or sites in your district, please submit separate applications for each project.

Please include in your application:

- **Attachment A:** Authorized Applicant Signature and Acceptance Form
- **Attachment B:** Application Form
 - The following information should be included via Attachment B:
 - Applicant contact information
 - Project site information
 - Project description
 - Project goals and impact
 - Project team
 - Project budget & milestones. The project budget should specify the amount budgeted for clean energy technologies and potential associated costs eligible for tax credits under the Inflation Reduction Act.
 - Confirmation that the Applicant has reviewed **Attachment C – Sample Agreement**
- **Other Attachments:**
 - Team member resumes
 - Optional (as available)
 - Energy use data for the project site building(s) for the past 2 years. If project is awarded, MassCEC will require awardees to provide detailed energy records for the last 2 years as well as after project implementation.
 - Capital assessments of the project site/s
 - Project plans, narratives, drawings, and/or other project documents

MassCEC encourages projects at various stages of planning or construction to respond to this RFP. Applicants with projects in earlier stages may not have all the information requested in Attachment B, and they should provide as much information as is available.

7. SELECTION CRITERIA

MassCEC seeks to select proposals that meet the goals of Green School Works, are likely to be successful, and will maximize learnings for future school decarbonization efforts. MassCEC welcomes proposals at various stages of planning, design, and construction. Although projects in early planning stages are likely to score lower on some of the project feasibility criteria below, these early-stage projects may still be selected if they score well in the other selection criteria.

<p>Project goals and benefits: Does the project meet the goals of Green School Works?</p>	<p>Student population served</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What percentage of the students where the project is taking place qualify as low-income based on DESE data from the past three school years? (Preference will be given to projects that benefit a higher percentage of low-income students.)
	<p>Energy and on-site fossil fuel usage reductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the grant funding enable energy savings or on-site fossil fuel usage reductions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are the expected energy or on-site fossil fuel usage savings? ○ If energy or on-site fossil fuel usage savings are not expected, why?
	<p>Additional benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will this project improve the experience of staff and students using the building? • Will this project provide resilience benefits to the school and its community? • Will the project be incorporated into student learning? • Are there any other added benefits of the project, including improved indoor air quality, health, and wellbeing?
<p>Project feasibility: Is the relevant capacity, support, and budget in place to ensure the project's success?</p>	<p>Capacity, Support, & Timeline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there project management capacity at the school, district, or municipality that has successfully completed projects similar or relevant to the proposed project? • Is there an experienced and qualified project team assembled? If not, is there a credible path to assembling an experienced and qualified project team? • Does the project have strong local support? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What local approval steps are required for the project to go forward, and what is their status? • Does the project timeline align with the program timeline targets? • Is the project likely to meet projected timelines and are risks limited?

	<p>Project Scope</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the project scope well thought out? • If requesting higher amounts of funding, does the proposed project scope meet the additional project requirements detailed in Section 4 (Eligibility & Award Details)?
	<p>Budget</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the project fully funded and ready to go ahead if the implementation grant is received? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What are the other sources of funding, and are they secured? • Is the budget reasonable and focused on maximizing the impact of funding on decarbonization or energy efficiency? • Will the grant enable decarbonization, energy efficiency, clean energy, resilience, and/or work to enable decarbonization? • Is this project likely to trigger code and other upgrades? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To what extent? And is there an understanding of and a plan for these potential added costs?
<p>Maximizing impact: Will this project contribute to developing school decarbonization best practices?</p>	<p>Funding impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is MassCEC’s funding necessary for the project to move forward? • Would MassCEC’s funding fill a gap that other funding sources (e.g., other incentives, grants, tax credits) do not currently cover? • Does funding from MassCEC enable decarbonization or energy efficiency measures to be added to or remain in the scope of the project? • Does the funding deliver decarbonization, energy efficiency, clean energy, and/or resiliency benefits beyond business-as-usual actions? • Does the project maximize available funding sources and demonstrate an efficient use of MassCEC capital? <p>Innovation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the project helping test or prove out a new approach to school decarbonization? • Does the project include innovative technology that is relatively untested in Massachusetts? • Are innovative financing solutions being used? • Does the project include any other innovative aspects? <p>Replicability/Scalability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the project relevant to many public K-12 school buildings?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the proposed approach demonstrate the potential for replicability/scalability, especially with limited future incentive funding? • Will the project team share lessons learned with MassCEC?
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In addition to the criteria listed above, MassCEC may give consideration towards awarding a diverse set of projects, including those representing:

- communities across Massachusetts;
- school districts of different sizes;
- a variety of clean energy technologies; and
- diverse approaches.

Special Note on Elective Pay Federal Tax Credits

The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (“IRA”) makes several clean energy tax credits available to businesses; tax-exempt organizations; state, local, and tribal governments; other entities; and individuals. The IRA also enables non-taxable entities, including municipalities, to take advantage of certain clean energy tax credits through its elective pay provision (also colloquially known as direct pay). Elective pay allows several types of entities, such as tax-exempts and governments, to treat the amount of certain credits as a payment against tax on their tax returns and as a result receive direct payments for certain clean energy tax credits. In general, the value of the most common tax credit, the Investment Tax Credit (Section 48) can be 30% of the investment in the eligible clean energy technology. These tax credits are paid as a cash refund once the project has gone into service.

Grant awardees will be evaluated on how they may maximize the tax credits they are eligible to receive under the project proposal and to apply the tax refund to the overall project cost.

8. IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS BUDGET

The total budget for Green School Works Implementation Grants is \$52.5 million. The maximum award per school district is expected to be \$5 million (see Section 7 for selection criteria specific to awards over \$1 million and \$2.5 million).

MassCEC, in its sole discretion, may determine not to award the entire \$52.5 million.

9. CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS

Please email questions to greenschools@masscec.com and include “GSW implementation grant questions” in the subject line. Questions will be accepted until April 18, 2025 at 11:59PM and posted, with answers, on the Green School Works website on a rolling basis through April 23, 2025.

10. GENERAL REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS CONDITIONS

NOTICE OF PUBLIC DISCLOSURE

As a public entity, MassCEC is subject to Massachusetts' Public Records Law, codified at Chapter 66 of the Massachusetts General Laws ("Public Records Law"). Applicant acknowledges and agrees that any documentary material, data, or other information submitted to MassCEC is presumed to be public records. An exemption to the Public Records Law may apply to certain records, including materials that fall under certain categories under a statutory or common law exemption, including the limited exemption at Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 23J, Section 2(k) regarding certain types of confidential information submitted to MassCEC by an applicant for any form of assistance. Applicant acknowledges and agrees that MassCEC, in its sole discretion, shall determine whether any particular document, material, data or other information is exempt from or subject to public disclosure. Thus, MassCEC urges applicant to carefully consider what documents, materials, data and other information is submitted to MassCEC in connection with this RFP. If confidential information is submitted as part of the application and not clearly marked as confidential, such information may be made publicly available by MassCEC without further notice to the Applicant.

In line with Public Records Law requirements, MassCEC generally considers the following types of information as confidential:

- Blueprints, plans, policies, procedures and schematic drawings, which relate to internal layout and structural elements, security measures, emergency preparedness, threat or vulnerability assessments, or any other records relating to the security or safety of persons or buildings, structures, facilities, utilities, transportation, cyber security or other infrastructure located within the commonwealth, the disclosure of which, in the reasonable judgment of the record custodian, subject to review by the supervisor of public records under subsection (c) of section 10 of chapter 66, is likely to jeopardize public safety or cyber security.

DISCLAIMER & WAIVER AUTHORITY

This RFP does not commit MassCEC to award any funds, pay any costs incurred in preparing an application, or procure or contract for services or supplies. MassCEC reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applications received, waive minor irregularities in submittal requirements, modify the anticipated timeline, request modification of the application, negotiate with all qualified Applicants, cancel or modify the RFP in part or in its entirety, or change the application guidelines, when it is in MassCEC's best interests.

This RFP has been distributed electronically using MassCEC's website. It is the responsibility of Applicants to check the website for any addenda or modifications to an RFP to which they intend to respond. MassCEC accepts no liability and will provide no accommodation to Applicants who submit an application based on an out-of-date RFP document.

CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS

Upon MassCEC's authorization to proceed with the proposal, MassCEC and the awarded applicant(s) will execute a contract, substantially in the form of the template agreement attached hereto as Attachment C which will set forth the respective roles and responsibilities of the parties.