Proposals for Broadband Service to Unserved Towns in Western Massachusetts
(No.2017-MBI-02)

Questions[1] and Answers
Published December 22, 2016

	Question	Answer
1.	Can we include in a proposal/bid a particular town or towns where we are proposing to serve less than 96% of the homes?	*If an applicant cannot achieve 96% coverage in a community with the funding available through the construction allocation, then MassTech encourages applicants to indicate the additional amount of funding required for the applicant to reach 96% coverage. MassTech is committed to working with the state and town to determine ways to close the funding gap to achieve 96% coverage in the event that the town wishes to pursue the proposal offered by that grant applicant.* *Please note that MBI will issue Addendum #2 that clarifies that the applicant must achieve coverage of 96% of residences in each town that it proposes to serve.*
2.	Will the content of an applicant's Grant Application be kept confidential until: i. All grant awards are publicly awarded or announced by MBI? or ii. Until all grant awards for the Town(s) applied for under the applicant's Grant Application are awarded by MBI? Such that *only after* all the grant awards in either (i) or (ii) are publicly announced or made by MBI, will the content of such Grant Application be subject to public disclosure under MA.GL Chapter 66?	*MassTech will post all grant applications to the MBI website shortly after the application period has closed. MBI will also post to the MBI website all requests for additional information and responses to requests for additional information after the responses have been received, in the event that any such requests are necessary.*

[1] Some of these questions were presented orally at the bidders' conference and also submitted to MBI in writing after the conference. The version of the question that was submitted in writing is treated as superseding the question submitted at the bidders' conference, and the written version appears in this document.

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3.	If a proposal/bid is submitted that MBI determines is incomplete for any reason, will there be there an opportunity to address that rather than having the entire proposal/bid disqualified?	*Section 5.1: "If a Respondent's Gant Application fails to meet any material terms, conditions, requirements or procedures, its response may be deemed unresponsive and disqualified. The Mass Tech Collaborative reserves the right to waive omissions or irregularities that it determines to be not material."*
4.	Can we include a link to our website, where the requested Annual Reports are located, rather than submitting five copies of hard copies of the Annual Reports?	*MBI prefers that copies of corporate annual reports be submitted as hard copies.*
5.	We would need information from a walk-out in order to submit detailed map information for any given town. Is it sufficient to submit a "mark-up" of the MBI town maps showing either the 96% of the town that we propose to cover or the 4% that we propose to exclude?	*An applicant may submit a mark-up of MBI's maps showing the area within each town that the applicant intends to serve.*
6.	Can you identify any towns that have removed themselves from the MBI list because they have decided to build their own municipal network? Can you identify those towns that have received from MBI the construction allocation or some other grant?	*MassTech has not received any formal notification from any town listed in Attachments D and E of the RFP that it has elected to opt out of this RFP. MassTech has executed a grant agreement with the town of Mt. Washington and has disbursed its construction allocation to the town. For that reason, Mt. Washington was not included in the list of towns for the RFP. MassTech has also executed a grant agreement with the town of Middlefield to support a wireless pilot project. The grant draws down on a portion of Middlefield's construction allocation.* *The recent action by the MBI Board with respect to Alford and Otis set aside the construction allocation for those two towns for the proposed municipally owned networks each town has indicated it seeks to build, own and operate. The Executive Committee of the MassTech Board must also take a vote to approve this action. The construction allocation for Otis and Alford will be reserved by MBI for the town's project and will be paid to Otis and Alford through a formal grant process if the town elects to build, own and operate a municipally owned broadband network. The MBI Board also approved a grant to the Town of Warwick for an upgrade to Warwick's wireless network at its December 6th meeting. The Executive Committee of the MassTech Board must also vote to approve this action. Neither the MBI Board, nor the*

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		Executive Committee of the MassTech Board has taken any action with regard to New Marlborough. *Dozens of other unserved towns have received pilot grants or planning grants from MassTech, but these grants do not affect the construction allocation for those towns.* *If a potential respondent has questions about the intentions of any town, MassTech strongly encourages that respondent to reach out directly to that town's Selectboard for further information.*
7.	Can you describe for each town the process that MBI and/or individual towns undertook to verify the house count and road miles in each town?	*Premise counts were calculated from the MBI address point dataset, created using publicly available building, parcel, and assessor data and aerial photography. The primary data sources were MassGIS, Google Maps, and Bing Maps. (Please note that MBI data reflects premises that are standalone buildings that are single family or multi-dwelling unit (MDU's), such as condos, or single or multi-unit business or government complexes.* *The estimated Unit counts are based on data acquired from assessor records and town feedback, are households or businesses consisting of one or more people living or working together that occupy all or part of a standalone building.)* *The road miles are rough estimates of existing aerial routes only and do not account for areas that will require new pole sets or underground installation. The numbers were generated using MassDOT road data and WiredWest pole location data and very basic spatial analysis techniques.* *MBI's data is based on information from third party sources that MBI has not verified in the field. MassTech does not warrant the accuracy or completeness of this data. Respondents are responsible for verifying the accuracy of data used to compile their grant application.*

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8.	What is the process that MBI will follow after receiving proposal/bids on January 11th? Will there be a public announcements of which towns have or have not been included in proposal/bids from various providers? Or will MBI first initiate discussions with each of the providers who submit proposal/bids? How will MBI handle proposal/bids where there are multiple providers proposing to serve the same town(s)?	*Shortly after January 11th, MassTech will publish a document that lists all towns included in the RFP as well as which providers, if any, have submitted a proposal for that town. In that same document, MassTech will indicate whether that provider has met the eligibility requirements outlined in Section 2.2 (a-d) or whether that entity seeks consideration of "alternative measures to address the MBI's interests and the particular concerns that underlie these eligibility criteria," as provided in that Section.* *As described in the RFP, MBI may contact applicants with requests for additional information after January 11th.* *Additionally, as described in the answer to Question #2, the grant applications will be published to the MBI website.* *MBI will work closely during the grant application review process with towns that are subject to a proposal submitted by a grant applicant that has been qualified by MassTech. MassTech will only award a grant to a qualified provider if the town's Selectboard has voted to approve the provider's proposal. If multiple, qualified providers propose service in the same town, the Selectboard of that town will have the final decision as to which provider it chooses.*
9.	Can MBI provide applicants access to a copy of the proposed Grant Agreement template via a website link (like you did for the draft cable TV license agreement) by December 31, 2016?	*Because this RFP is designed and intended to facilitate flexible responses from potential grantees, MBI has not developed a standard grant agreement template in recognition of the fact that it is not a "one size fits all" program.*
10.	A recent Berkshire Eagle article stated that grant awards have been made by the MBI to the Towns of Alford, Otis, and Warwick. Those towns are listed within this RFP. a. How does the grant award affect this RFP? b. Are those funds no longer available for this RFP? c. Are those towns now not included in this RFP?	*Please see the Answer to Question #6.*
11.	There are towns listed within this RFP where the town has either decided or expressed a desire to proceed on their own. How do those decisions affect this RFP and a bidding company's response to this RFP?	*MBI has not received any formal notification from any town that it has elected to opt out of this RFP.* *RFP No. 2017-MBI-02 does not supersede any RFP that is done by a town on its own. A town that released its own*

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		RFP can still elect to move forward with a proposal submitted under RFP No. 2017-MBI-02 if the town has not completed its own RFP process. Any grant award to an applicant pursuant to this RFP to provide broadband service in a town will be subject to the approval of that town's Selectboard. MassTech will not authorize any expenditure of money to an applicant without the express approval of that town of the entrance of that applicant into that community to provide broadband service. If a potential respondent has questions about the intentions of any town, MBI strongly encourages that respondent to reach out directly to that town's Selectboard for further information.
12.	There are towns listed on the RFP that issued an RFP and is either still in that process or closed the RFP and actively negotiating with a bidder. How does that process weigh on this RFP?	*Please see answer to Questions #6 and #11.*
13.	With several towns pursuing alternative solutions where does this RFP sit in the Hierarchy of succession.	*As noted in the answer to Question #11, RFP No. 2017-MBI-02 does not supersede any RFP that is done by a town on its own.*
14.	How is this RFP affected by private companie(s)(sic) that are currently building or imminently building a last mile infrastructure in one of the towns listed in this RFP?	*If a potential respondent has questions about the intentions of any town, MBI strongly encourages that respondent to reach out directly to that town's Selectboard for further information.* *Similarly, MBI expects that any potential respondent would examine and investigate the circumstances concerning existing or potential broadband buildouts in each town prior to submitting a proposal for that town.*
15.	This RFP states companies under $100mm in revenue or company's purpose built for the buildout of last mile in the Berkshires is not favored. Can the MTC elaborate on how a small purpose built local ISP can be looked upon as viable if not preferable in the eyes of the MTC.	*MassTech and MBI's mission is to provide sustainable, long-term broadband access to all residents of currently unserved communities. In furtherance of MBI's mission we are seeking proposals from companies that are financially sound and stable, possess sufficient independent financial resources to complete and maintain any Network project undertaken, and can demonstrate a track record of successfully building, operating, and maintaining residential broadband networks.*

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		The burden is on a grant applicant that does not meet the eligibility criteria to provide concrete evidence that the grant applicant can satisfy MBI's goals and interests that informed the development of the eligibility criteria. For example, an applicant could point to factors such as strong financial assurances in the form of cash on hand, detailed financing plans or Letters of Credit sufficient to build, maintain and operate the project. The applicant could also provide evidence of a multi-year history of building, operating, and maintaining similar residential subscriber-based utility business with a substantial subscriber base. These are two examples of the types of data points MassTech would expect an applicant to provide to MassTech in the event that it cannot meet the requirements of Section 2.2 (a-d).
16.	The RFP mentions the potential to isolate and turn over existing segments and attachments of the middle mile. a. How does this work with the existing Axia contract? b. Would this be a release of the physical asset or strands within the physical asset? c. How would existing services and pricing on those segments and other service commitments such as Eops, CW Mars, etc… be handled?	*The ability to answer this question will depend on the facts of the specific proposal that a grant applicant submits to MassTech. As such, it is impossible to answer this question without further detail. MassTech is dedicated to leveraging the Middle Mile to foster Last Mile broadband access and will work with qualified grant applicants and vendors to facilitate this outcome, to the extent legally and commercially possible.*
17.	What is the reasonable expectation of time to fulfill the requirement to achieve 96%	*The goal of this RFP is to provide broadband access to unserved communities as quickly as possible. To that end, and pursuant to Section 4(j) of the RFP, the duration of the proposed buildout schedule will affect the evaluation of a proposal.*
18.	This RFP lists statistics regarding the individual towns such as pole counts, premises, road miles, etc… a. How was this information compiled? Was it via field surveys, computer maps, or data collected from town officials. b. What is included in these statistics? i. Public roads. ii. Private roads. iii. Public easement conduits. iv. Private property conduits. v. Are utility poles that are premise only service poles included in the total count?	*Please see answer to Question #7.*

	Question	Answer
19.	Can you please elaborate on the preferred structure of a private / public relationship between the town, state, and private bidder.	*This question is unclear and unable to be answered.*
20.	Are the grants to be released in lump sums or on what schedule?	*MassTech anticipates that the grant payments will be disbursed in milestone payments to ensure that any potential grantee is demonstrating sufficient progress in completing the project and that funding is tied to that progress.*
21.	Many towns suffer a condition where some properties receive their existing utilities from a neighboring town. What requirement is there to serve those properties or how does this condition weigh on the 96% requirement?	*Please see the answer to Question #1.*
22.	Mount Washington is not included in the list of towns in Attachment B. Is that because they decided to "go it alone"? Or were they just excluded from this RFP?	*Please see the Answer to Question #6.*
23.	Will MBI provide any additional data or documentation to potential respondents prior to or after an award?	*MassTech will provide data or documentation to applicants upon request provided that it is a public record and in the custody of MassTech. All such requests should be submitted by email to proposals@masstech.org.*
24.	How does the coverage requirement address dirt roads, private roads, private driveways, and private communities? Are these incorporated into the measurement of 96% coverage? Or does the coverage requirement only account for public ways in each town?	*The coverage requirements include all residences within a town located along a public right of way. As provided for in Section 4(i), MassTech will look favorably upon those applications that propose to "extend coverage to private roads and ways in a cost effective manner."*