



**Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Alternative Cyber
Career Education (ACE) Grant Program**

NOFO No. 2025-Cyber-02

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

Procurement Team Leader: Maxwell Fathy

NOFO Issued:	October 21, 2024
Informational Webinar:	November 6, 2024
Questions Due:	November 13, 2024
Answers to Questions Posted:	November 20, 2024
Responses Due:	December 31, 2024 by 3 PM EST

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Massachusetts Technology Collaborative (“Mass Tech Collaborative” or “MassTech”), on behalf of the MassCyberCenter is issuing this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO No.2025-Cyber-02) (the “NOFO”) for the Alternative Cyber Career Education (ACE) Grant Program. This program provides grants to organizations to support programs in Massachusetts that train young adults and retrain existing professionals to enter the cybersecurity workforce. The goal of this NOFO is to expand pathways that are not part of an academic degree (i.e. associates, bachelors, master’s or doctoral) leading to cybersecurity employment in Massachusetts. Through this NOFO, MassCyberCenter is seeking to enhance existing non-degree training programs.

Mass Tech Collaborative will be the contracting entity on behalf of MassCyberCenter for the purposes of this NOFO, and (except where the specific context warrants otherwise), MassCyberCenter and Mass Tech Collaborative are collectively referred to as Mass Tech Collaborative or MassTech. Mass Tech Collaborative will enter into an **Operations Grant Agreement** with selected Respondents containing certain standard provisions (the “Agreement”), located under *Receiving a Grant from MassTech* [HERE](#).

1.2 Mass Tech Collaborative and MassCyberCenter

Mass Tech Collaborative is an independent public instrumentality of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts chartered by the Commonwealth to serve as a catalyst for growing its innovation economy. Mass Tech Collaborative brings together leaders from industry, academia, and government to advance technology-focused solutions that lead to economic growth, job creation, and public benefits in Massachusetts. For additional information about Mass Tech Collaborative and its programs and initiatives, please visit our website at www.masstech.org.

The MassCyberCenter has a vision for a diverse, vibrant, and competitive Massachusetts cybersecurity ecosystem that enhances resiliency for public and private entities, provides workforce development opportunities, and elevates public cybersecurity awareness. The Center carries out this vision through its mission to convene the Massachusetts cybersecurity ecosystem to improve cybersecurity resiliency, workforce development, and public awareness within the state by developing cutting edge programs, organizing engaging events, and leading collaborative working groups. For more information about MassCyberCenter and its programs and activities generally, please visit the web site at <https://masscybercenter.org>.

2. The Grant

2.1 Background

There is a supply shortage of trained and experienced workers available to meet the cybersecurity industry’s workforce demands in Massachusetts. According to *Cyberseek.org*, there is an 86 percent supply of workers for cybersecurity jobs in demand and 12,337 job openings in Massachusetts. This shortage is especially acute for workers with experience. While a 12 percent worker surplus exists for jobs requiring under two years of experience, only 77 percent of cybersecurity jobs requesting two or more years of experience can be filled with existing workers.

Additionally, multiple entry points exist for careers in cybersecurity. While 8% of existing cybersecurity workers were hired directly after completing a bachelor’s or sub-bachelor’s degree, 26% were sourced

from other non-cybersecurity IT roles and 39% were sourced from non-IT fields.¹

This data indicates that building a cybersecurity talent pipeline that meets employer demand in Massachusetts requires enhancing pathways that progress learners through either academic degrees or non-degree training programs and integrate experiential learning and on-the-job training components.

2.2 Grant Overview

The MassCyberCenter is soliciting applications from organizations operating programs in Massachusetts that train young adults and/or retrain existing professionals to enter the cybersecurity workforce. The goal of the grants is to expand pathways that are not part of an academic degree (i.e. associates, bachelors, master's or doctoral) leading to cybersecurity employment in Massachusetts.

Through this NOFO, MassCyberCenter is seeking to enhance existing non-degree training programs. Due to the limited funding available, only programs already in existence are eligible to apply.

Programs must also contain experiential and/or on-the-job training components that provide learners with the opportunity to gain experience required to obtain cybersecurity employment. Examples of experiential or on-the-job training include, but are not limited to, training on industry tools or performing projects that support an organization with cybersecurity services (i.e. assessments, incident response plans, policy/procedure development, tabletop exercises). **Programs that do not contain experiential or on-the-job training components for learners will not be considered.**

Target Population

MassCyberCenter is interested in receiving responses that provide training to the following individuals:

- Individuals seeking to transition into a cybersecurity career from a non-cybersecurity role
- Young adults
- Populations underrepresented in the cybersecurity field including women and minorities
- Socio-economically disadvantaged populations
- Veterans
- Unemployed and underemployed individuals

Eligible Applicants

Applicants from a single entity or multiple entities submitting a joint application are allowed. **Joint applications must designate a lead applicant.** The following entities operating full or part-time programs for learners are eligible to serve as lead or co-applicants to responses under this NOFO:

- Non-profit training entity
- For-profit training entity
- MassHire Workforce Board and/or Career Center
- Municipality or state government agency operating a workforce training program
- Other workforce development organizations
- High schools and vocational high schools

The following entities are not eligible to serve as a lead or co-applicant:

- Community college, college, or university.
- Elementary and middle schools.

¹ <https://lightcast.io/resources/research/quarterly-cybersecurity-talent-report-june-24>

Allocable costs

Grants are eligible to fund program operating costs for up to one year. Allowable cost may include but are not limited to:

- Staff time for program instructors
- Staff time devoted to program management and administration
- Staff time for partnership and program coordination, job development, and placement
- Marketing, communication, and outreach activities related to recruitment for the program
- Curriculum development
- Training delivery, including classroom, online, and formal on-the-job training
- Cost of licenses associated with delivery of digitally enabled training
- Cost associated with testing and credentialing for learners
- Support services needed to ensure participants' success (e.g., transportation, childcare, supplies, etc.)

The following are ineligible uses of funding under this NOFO:

- Capital expenditures
- Expenses for operating or participating in Security Operations Center or Cyber Range programs

Funding Availability

A total of \$150,000 is available under this program. MassTech anticipates awarding up to 3 grants.

Performance Period

Contracts will be issued for a period of up to 12 months. MassTech reserves the right to extend the contract terms beyond a 12-month period based upon availability of funding, consistent service delivery, and program performance.

3 APPLICATION PROCESS

3.1 Application and Submission Instructions

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

- a. Applications must be submitted by the lead applicant and delivered electronically to proposals@masstech.org (please include the NOFO number in the subject heading).
- b. Required Submissions- All applications must include the items listed below:
 - Application Cover Sheet submitted by the lead applicant (**Attachment A**)
 - Application narrative, submitted in in MS Word format, which must describe:
 - An overview of the lead applicant and any co-applicants, including
 - History and experience of each organization as related to the grant being sought.
 - Prior or current collaborations within the cybersecurity industry in Massachusetts.
 - Operational capacity to deliver the proposed program within the period of performance.

- History of managing public funds and collecting program metrics.
 - Completion rates and job placement history of program learners.
 - Industry and employer engagement with the training program.
 - The proposed use of grant funds, including:
 - How the proposal will expand non-degree pathways that lead to cybersecurity employment beyond the existing program.
 - The experiential learning and/or on-the-job training components included in the proposed program, above what is already provided through the program.
 - How the grant will scale an existing program (i.e. the new number of learners trained because of the grant funding).
 - Target population to be served.
 - Projected grant outcomes, including:
 - Total number of learners served due to the grant.
 - How the grant will scale an existing program (i.e. the new number of learners trained because of the grant).
 - Job placement projections for learners.
 - Number of industry certifications or credentials supported (if applicable).
 - Geographic location (Massachusetts counties) where trainees are being supported.
 - Existing program funding the proposal will leverage
- *Optional:* Letter(s) of support from industry or employer partners that endorse the respondent's training approach.
- Authorized Application Signature and Acceptance Form (**Attachment B**). **By executing the Authorized Respondent's Signature and Acceptance Form and submitting a response to this NOFO, Respondents certify that they (1) are in compliance with the terms, conditions and specifications contained in this NOFO, (2) acknowledge and understand the procedures for handling materials submitted to the Mass Tech Collaborative as set forth in subsection c. below, (3) agree to be bound by those procedures, and (4) agree that the Mass Tech Collaborative shall not be liable under any circumstances for the disclosure of any materials submitted to the Mass Tech Collaborative pursuant to this NOFO or upon a Respondent's selection.**
- Provide the total not-to-exceed costs for providing the project or deliverables based on projected hours, proposed hourly rates, as well as any other appropriate costs, in the Budget Template (**Attachment C**). **Funding requests must not exceed \$50,000.** List additional fees, overhead charges, or reimbursable expenses, if any. As a general policy, the Mass Tech Collaborative does not pay mark-ups on reimbursables or out-of-pocket expenses. The Mass Tech Collaborative also does not pay for word processing, overtime or meals. For travel costs, the Mass Tech Collaborative pays the IRS rate per mile.
- Exceptions to the **Operations Grant Agreement**, located [HERE](#), if any.
- Your W-9.
- c. Any and all responses, applications, data, materials, information and documentation submitted to Mass Tech Collaborative in response to this NOFO shall become Mass Tech Collaborative's property and shall be subject to public disclosure. As a public entity, the Mass Tech Collaborative is subject to the Massachusetts Public Records Law (set forth at Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 66). There are very limited and narrow exceptions to disclosure under the Public Records Law. If a Respondent wishes to have the Mass Tech Collaborative treat certain information or documentation as confidential, the Respondent must submit a written request to

the Mass Tech Collaborative’s General Counsel’s office no later than 5:00 p.m. fourteen (14) business days prior to the required date of Application submission set forth in Section 4.2 below. The request must precisely identify the information and/or documentation that is the subject of the request and provide a detailed explanation supporting the application of the statutory exemption(s) from the public records cited by the Respondent. The General Counsel will issue a written determination within ten (10) business days of receipt of the written request. If the General Counsel approves the request, the Respondent shall clearly label the relevant information and/or documentation as “**CONFIDENTIAL**” in the Application and **shall only include the confidential material in the hard copy of the Application**. Any statements in an application reserving any confidentiality or privacy rights that is inconsistent with these requirements and procedures will be disregarded.

3.2 Application Timeframe

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

Task	Date:
NOFO Released	October 21, 2024
Informational Webinar	November 6 @ 12 EST
Questions Due	November 13, 2024 @ 5 PM EST
Question and Answer File Posted	November 20, 2024 @ 5 PM EST
Applications Due	December 31, 2024 @ 3 PM EST

3.3 Questions

Questions regarding this NOFO must be submitted by electronic mail to proposals@masstech.org with the following Subject Line: “Questions – NOFO No. 2025-Cyber-02”. All questions must be received by 5:00 p.m. EST on November 13, 2024. Responses to all questions received will be posted on or before 5:00 p.m. on November 20, 2024 to Mass Tech Collaborative and COMMBUYS website(s).

3.4 Informational Webinar

An informational webinar will be held on November 6, 2024 at 12 pm. All potential Respondents interested in participating in the informational session must register [here](#). Mass Tech Collaborative will post summary responses to procedural questions and issues addressed at the webinar [here](#) and the COMMBUYS websites.

4 EVALUATION PROCESS AND CRITERIA

Selection of a Respondent to receive funding as set forth within this NOFO may be based on criteria that include but are not limited to:

- Ability to provide a non-degree pathway leading to cybersecurity employment
- Inclusion of experiential learning and on the job training components
- Degree to which the proposal will scale an existing program
- Total number of workers to be trained
- Cost per learner trained
- Certification(s) attained as a result of this program
- Job placement potential
- Extent to which target populations listed in Section 2.2 are trained

- Level of industry engagement
- Respondent's past performance in operating and administering training programs
- Overall quality of proposal

MassTech shall evaluate each Application that is properly submitted. As part of the selection process, MassTech may invite Respondents to answer questions regarding their application in person or in writing. In its sole discretion, MassTech may also choose to enter into a negotiation period with a Respondent and then ask the Respondent to submit additional information.

Lack of debarment status by either the state or federal government is also required.

The order of these factors does not generally denote relative importance. The goal of this NOFO is to select and enter into an Agreement with the Respondent that will most closely align with MassTech Collaborative's goals in the publication of this NOFO. Mass Tech Collaborative reserves the right to consider such other relevant factors as it deems appropriate.

4.3 Quarterly Reporting Metrics

Grantees will be required to report quarterly in the template located [here](#) on the following metrics as a condition of receiving grants until funding is fully expended:

- Demographic data on individuals enrolled in training
- Geographic location of individuals enrolled in training
- Number of individuals enrolled in training
- Number and hours of experiential and/or on-the-job training activities per individual trained
- Number of individuals that completed training
- Number of individuals that received an industry recognized credential
- Number of individuals placed in a job/internship
- Total dollars expended (including non-MassTech funds) as part of training program
- Project status (on track; some obstacles or project delays but will be overcome; off track/project in jeopardy)

5.0 GENERAL CONDITIONS

5.1 General Information

- a) If an application fails to meet any material terms, conditions, requirements or procedures, it may be deemed unresponsive and disqualified. The Mass Tech Collaborative reserves the right to waive omissions or irregularities that it determines to be not material.
- b) This NOFO, as may be amended from time to time by Mass Tech Collaborative, does not commit Mass Tech Collaborative to select any firm(s), award any contracts for services pursuant to this NOFO, or pay any costs incurred in responding to this NOFO. Mass Tech Collaborative reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to withdraw the NOFO, to engage in preliminary discussions with prospective Respondents, to accept or reject any or all Applications received, to request supplemental or clarifying information, to negotiate with any or all qualified Respondents, and to request modifications to Applications in accordance with negotiations, all to the same extent as if this were a Request for Information.
- c) On matters related solely to this NOFO that arise prior to an award decision by the Mass Tech Collaborative, Respondents shall limit communications with the Mass Tech Collaborative to the Procurement Team Leader and such other individuals as the Mass Tech Collaborative may designate from time to time. No other Mass Tech Collaborative employee or representative is authorized to provide any information or respond to any questions or inquiries

concerning this NOFO. Respondents may contact the Procurement Team Leader for this NOFO in the event this NOFO is incomplete.

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

5.2 Posting of Modifications/Addenda to NOFO

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

Attachment A
Application Cover Sheet

Name of Respondent			
Mailing Address	City/Town	State	Zip Code
Telephone	Fax	Website	
Primary Contact for Clarification		Primary Contact E-mail Address	
Authorized Signatory		Authorized Signatory E-mail Address	
Legal Status/Jurisdiction (e.g., a Massachusetts Corporation, LLC, LLP, etc.)		Respondents EIN or UEI No.	

Attachment B
Massachusetts Technology Collaborative
Authorized Respondent's Signature and Acceptance Form

The undersigned is a duly authorized representative of the Respondent listed below. The Respondent has read and understands the NOFO requirements. The Respondent acknowledges that all of the terms and conditions of the NOFO are mandatory, and that Respondent's response is compliant with such requirements.

The Respondent understands that, if selected by the Mass Tech Collaborative, the Respondent and the Mass Tech Collaborative will execute an agreement specifying the mutual requirements of participation. The undersigned has either (*please check one*):

- specified exceptions and counter-proposals to the terms and conditions of the [Operations Grant Agreement](#), or
- agrees to the terms and conditions set forth therein.

The undersigned acknowledges and agrees that the failure to submit exceptions and counter-proposals with this response shall be deemed a waiver, and the agreement shall not be subject to further negotiation.

Respondent agrees that the entire bid response will remain valid for sixty (60) days from receipt by the Mass Tech Collaborative.

I certify that Respondent is in compliance with all corporate filing requirements and State tax laws.

I further certify that the statements made in this response to the NOFO, including all attachments and exhibits, are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Respondent: _____
(Printed Name of Respondent)

By: _____
(Signature of Authorized Representative)

Name: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____

Attachment C
Budget Template

See Excel Spreadsheet