

Proposals for NEPA/Environmental and Historic Preservation Consulting Services

(2026-MBI-06)

Questions and Answers
January 30, 2025

NOTE: MBI has appended a map at the end of this Q&A document that shows the broadband serviceable locations and community anchor institutions that are included in the BEAD Final Proposal that was approved by NTIA on December 19, 2025. As noted in the Q&A, Massachusetts is still waiting for the BEAD notice of award from NIST.

	Question	Answer
1.	<p><i>RFP Section 2, page 4: Does the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) allow hybrid provision of services—remote and on-site?</i></p> <p>Should the consultant budget for in-person meetings, or will all engagement be virtual? (This includes Permitting Roundtables and working groups referenced in (Section 2.2.6.3.)</p>	<p>Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) allows a hybrid provision of services, which may include a combination of remote and on-site work, as appropriate to effectively deliver the required services and meet program needs.</p> <p>Consultants should budget for a hybrid approach. Engagement is expected to include both in-person and virtual meetings, for permitting roundtables and working groups.</p>
2.	Has Massachusetts been issued by NTIA an updated set of General Terms and Conditions as a result of their final proposal approval?	<p>NTIA has publicly posted the updated BEAD General Terms and Conditions for Eligible Entities.</p> <p>The updated Terms and Conditions is available on the NTIA website at https://broadbandusa.ntia.gov/sites/default/files/2026-01/BEAD_GTCs_11_18_2025.pdf.</p>

3.	Have all Massachusetts subgrantees signed their subgrantee agreements at this time?	No. Massachusetts has not received the BEAD notice of award yet. MBI will begin the contracting process with subgrantees after receipt of the notice of award.
4.	Can you please provide a copy of the Budget Template? The link provided in the RFP does not grant access to users outside of Mass Tech.	The link to the Budget Template in Attachment C of the RFP has been fixed. There is also a direct link to the Budget Template on the procurements page on MBI's website. <u>Request for Proposals for NEPA/Environmental and Historic Preservation Consulting Services for BEAD Program MBI</u>
5.	How many subgrantees are anticipated?	MBI anticipates awarding BEAD Deployment grant funding to five subgrantees.
6.	How many environmental documents (EA, EIS, CatEx) are you anticipating?	At this time, MBI is not able to estimate how many environmental documents (Environmental Assessments, Environmental Impact Statements, or Categorical Exclusions) will be required for BEAD-funded projects. MBI does not have sufficient information on the projects that will be undertaken by the subgrantees to predict the number and breakdown among EAs, EISs and CEs. This will depend on (1) the number of projects entered into ESAPTT; and (2) the characteristics, including the geographic footprint, of each project to be undertaken by a subgrantee. However, NTIA has indicated their expectation that most BEAD projects will qualify for a categorical exclusion. Also, please refer to the answer to Question #7 for additional context.
7.	Do you have an estimate of the number of individual projects that will need to receive NEPA clearance? Would it be the 20 deployment projects listed in	At this time, MBI does not have an estimate of the number of individual projects that will require NEPA review. It is not yet determined whether NEPA review will be conducted at the level of the 19 regional project service areas in Section 1.3 of the RFP or whether those projects will be further subdivided by

	Attachment B of the RFP or would they be broken down into many more individual project?	MBI into additional smaller projects in NTIA's Environmental Screening and Permitting Tracking Tool for purposes of environmental review.
8.	For Task 2.2.3, Monitoring of Pre-Implementation Activities, do you expect that field inspections would be necessary?	MBI does not expect field inspections to be conducted by the selected consultant as part of Task 2.2.3.
9.	We understand that MBI anticipates awards to five providers. Can the names of these providers be provided? This information is required to assess whether there are any conflicts with existing clients or projects.	At this time, MBI is not able to provide the names of the BEAD awardees. MBI is awaiting receipt of the notice of award from the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), after which awardee information will be released by MBI.
10.	Can project names be provided, if they have been identified?	<p>At this time, MBI has not identified specific project names.</p> <p>Please refer to the answer to Question #7 for additional context.</p> <p>Respondents should refer to Section 1.3 of the RFP, which outlines the regional project service areas, including the corresponding Broadband Service Locations (BSLs), Community Anchor Institutions (CAIs), number of municipalities, and technology types. The regional project service areas and their corresponding municipalities are also listed in Attachment D.</p>
11.	When will materials be available for each region? For example, is permitting currently underway in certain areas or for certain projects?	Materials for each region are not yet available. MBI is awaiting receipt of the BEAD notice of award from NIST before commencing contracting with each BEAD subgrantee. There are no permitting activities currently underway.

	This is necessary to build out a schedule of review.	
12.	How many round tables should applicants assume as part of Section 2.2.6. (3)?	For planning and budgeting purposes, Applicants should assume that the NEPA consultant will assist MBI in establishing and conducting Permitting Roundtables that will be convened a total of five times. These roundtables or working groups may include relevant federal, state, local, and tribal authorities, as well as representatives of impacted industries such as utility pole owners, railroads, communications providers, and subgrantees.
13.	<i>(Sections 1.4, 2.2.5) Subgrantee vs. Consultant Responsibilities:</i> Will there be anticipated circumstances under which the Selected Consultant would directly prepare NEPA or EHP documentation such as Environmental Assessments (EAs), CatEx narratives, or Section 106 documentation rather than serving solely in a review, oversight, or quality assurance role for subgrantee-prepared materials?	No. The selected consultant will not prepare NEPA or EHP documentation on behalf of a subgrantee.
14.	<i>(Section 2.2.5) Environmental & Historic Preservation Compliance Support</i> Should reviews of draft EAs, EISs, and CatEx documentation include legal sufficiency reviews, or are reviews limited to technical completeness and impact	The selected consultant's review will encompass both technical and legal sufficiency of the documentation prepared by subgrantees. The selected consultant shall identify potential resources of concern and environmental and cultural resources impacts and provide recommendations for minimizing or mitigating those impacts to the extent that the subgrantee does not specify sufficient mitigation measures.

	<p>analysis? Will the consultant advise recommendations for identified resources? Is the Selected Consultant expected to attend or facilitate formal agency consultations (e.g., SHPO, USFWS), or only provide background technical support?</p>	<p>The selected consultant may be required to attend and participate in agency consultations. MBI will facilitate the consultations.</p>
15. <i>(Section 2.2.8) Archaeological Resource Monitoring</i> Approximately how many projects are anticipated to require archaeological monitoring? Are specific areas of human remains, or eligible resources expected within BEAD-funded ground disturbance areas? Will MBI identify areas requiring monitoring in advance, or is the Selected Consultant expected to screen projects for archaeological sensitivity? Are on-call or rapid-response archaeological services anticipated for daily construction inadvertent discoveries? Should costs for archaeological monitoring be included in the base budget or treated as task-order per-item services?	<p>MBI does not currently have sufficient information about the projects to provide an estimate of the number of projects that will require archeological monitoring or the potential for remains or resources to be discovered. This information will not be available prior to the selection of a consultant.</p> <p>The applicant should propose the most efficient method for the performance of archeological monitoring services.</p> <p>There is a specific line item in the budget template for Section 2.2.8 services.</p>	
16. <i>(Sections 3, 4.1) Budget & Cost Clarifications</i> Are indirect costs or overhead expected to be fully loaded into hourly rates? Are GIS, mapping software, or data	<p>There is a specific line item in the budget template for overhead. therefore, indirect costs are not expected to be fully loaded into hourly labor rates.</p> <p>GIS, mapping software and data acquisition costs are reimbursable expenses to the extent such expenses are directly related to the performance of services for MBI.</p>	

	<p>acquisition costs considered reimbursable? Should travel costs be minimized by regionally assigned staff, or are centralized staffing acceptable? Is there a preferred labor category structure for the Budget Template (Attachment C)? Should optional services (Section 2.2.9) be clearly separated as a distinct budget line item?</p>	<p>The applicant should propose the most efficient and cost-effective staffing model that minimizes travel costs, to the extent feasible.</p> <p>There is no preferred labor category structure. However, the applicant should clearly identify the level of effort and hourly rates for each person that will perform services.</p> <p>There is a specific line item in the budget template for Section 2.2.9 optional construction monitoring services.</p>
17.	<p><i>(Section 6.1) Subcontracting & Teaming</i></p> <p>Are there any limitations on the number of subcontractors or teaming partners?</p> <p>Must subcontractors meet the same NEPA/EHP experience thresholds as prime respondents?</p> <p>Is MassTech receptive to specialized subcontractors (e.g., archaeology-only firms)?</p>	<p>There are no limitations on the number of subcontractors or teaming partners. However, the applicant should describe in the proposed approach to delivering the services how effective coordination will occur among the organizations that will be part of the project team.</p> <p>Subcontractors are expected to demonstrate experience comparable to the NEPA/EHP experience thresholds required of prime respondents.</p> <p>MBI is receptive to the use of specialized subcontractors (e.g., archaeology-only firms), at the applicant's discretion.</p>
18.	<p><i>(Section 1.3) RFP Excerpt: ... to expand broadband access for 2,565 broadband serviceable locations ("BSLs) and 1,243 community anchor institutions ("CAIs").</i></p> <p>How many discrete Subgrantees are represented by these BSLs and CAIs?</p>	<p>There are five subgrantees that are being awarded BEAD funding.</p>
19.	How many discrete NEPA reviews should we expect to conduct during the first-year	At this time, MBI is not able to estimate how many discrete NEPA reviews will be required during the first 12-month period of performance.

	12-month period of performance? (Section 1.3)	Please refer to the answer to Question #7 for more context.
20.	<p><u><i>(Section 2.2.2) RFP Excerpt:</i></u> <i>Review the NEPA Project Milestone Schedule submitted by each Subgrantee identifying environmental review and permitting activities, dependencies, and deadlines</i></p> <p>How many Subgrantee NEPA Project Milestone schedules would the contractor expect to review in the first-year 12 month period of performance?</p>	<p>At this time, MBI is not able to estimate how many Subgrantee NEPA Project Milestone schedules contractors are expected to review in the first-year 12 month period of performance.</p> <p>Please refer to the answer to Question #7 for more context.</p>
21.	<p><u><i>(Section 2.2.2) RFP Excerpt:</i></u> <i>The completion of NEPA, including the submission of Environmental Assessments (EAs) or Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) if anticipated</i></p> <p>How many EAs and how many EISs (as opposed to CEs) are anticipated for the Subgrantees in the first-year 12-month period of performance?</p>	<p>MBI does not have sufficient information on the projects that will be undertaken by the subgrantees to predict the number and breakdown among EAs, EISs and CEs. This will depend on (1) the number of projects entered into ESAPTT; and (2) the characteristics, including the geographic footprint, of each project to be undertaken by a subgrantee. However, NTIA has indicated their expectation that most BEAD projects will qualify for a categorical exclusion.</p> <p>Please refer to the answer to Question #7 for more context.</p>
22.	<p><u><i>(Section 2.2.3) RFP Excerpt:</i></u> <i>The Selected Consultant shall assist MBI with monitoring activities to ensure that each Subgrantee does not commence project implementation activities... prior to completion</i></p>	<p>The contractor should assume that monitoring of pre-implementation activities will be conducted through communications with subgrantees and document review.</p>

	<p>Should the contractor assume that these monitoring activities would involve the contractor conducting physical inspection of each proposed Project construction site?</p> <p>Or should the contractor assume that these monitoring activities would be conducted through Subgrantee-consultant communications and document review?</p>	
23. <i>(Section 2.2.4) RFP Excerpt: Completing Tribal notification process, if applicable Providing support for engagement and/or consultation with ... Tribal Nations (if applicable).</i>	<p>MBI will be utilizing NTIA's Environmental Screening and Permitting Tracking Tool (ESAPTT) to identify federally recognized Tribes with potential interest in a project area. ESAPTT enables the initiation of Tribal notifications to ensure timely completion of historic preservation reviews.</p> <p>Subgrantees may separately communicate with impacted Tribal governments.</p> <p>There are two federally recognized Tribal Nations in Massachusetts – the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe and the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah). The number of projects requiring Tribal consultation is likely to be very limited. MBI will take the lead in coordinating any consultations with Tribal Nations.</p> <p>If the contractor would be involved in preparing and communicating Tribal communications, how many projects should the contractor assume will require engagement?</p>	

	What level of tribal consultation coordination is expected from the consultant versus MBI?	
24.	<p><u>(Section 2.2.4) RFP Excerpt: Completing Categorial Exclusion ("CE") Questionnaires.</u></p> <p>How many CE Questionnaires should the contractor assume there will be in the first-year 12-month period of performance?</p>	<p>The number of CE Questionnaires will depend on the number of projects entered into ESAPTT. MBI does not have an estimate of the number of individual projects that will require NEPA clearance.</p> <p>Please refer to the answer to Question #7 for more context.</p>
25.	<p><u>(Section 2.2.4) RFP Excerpt: Completing Extraordinary Circumstances ("EC") Questionnaires.</u></p> <p>How many EC Questionnaires should the contractor assume there will be in the first-year 12-month period of performance?</p>	<p>The number of EC Questionnaires will depend on (1) the number of projects entered into the ESAPTT; and (2) the characteristics, including the geographic footprint, of each project to be undertaken by a subgrantee. MBI does not have sufficient information to provide an estimate. However, NTIA has indicated their expectation that most BEAD projects will qualify for a categorical exclusion.</p>
26.	<p><u>(Section 2.2.5) RFP Excerpt: Conducting reviews of draft Environmental Assessment (EA), Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and Categorical Exclusion (CatEx) documentation</u></p> <p>How many of the Subgrantees' NEPA documentation in the first-year 12-month period of performance should the contractor assume to be CE, how many EAs, and how many EISs?</p>	<p>MBI does not have sufficient information on the projects that will be undertaken by the subgrantees to predict the number and breakdown among EAs, EISs and CEs. This will depend on (1) the number of projects entered into the ESAPTT; and (2) the characteristics, including the geographic footprint, of each project to be undertaken by a subgrantee. However, NTIA has indicated their expectation that most BEAD projects will qualify for a categorical exclusion.</p> <p>Please refer to the answer to Question #7 for more context.</p>

27.	<p><u><i>(Section 2.2.5)RFP Excerpt:</i></u> <i>Support MBI in identifying and escalating permitting challenges to NTIA, and coordinate with federal and state regulatory agencies as necessary to resolve issues.</i></p> <p>How many project permits should the contractor assume will be challenged and require escalation to NTIA?</p>	<p>At this time, MBI is unable to estimate how many project permits, if any, may be challenged and require escalation to NTIA.</p>
28.	<p><u><i>(Section 2.2.5) RFP Excerpt:</i></u> <i>Reviewing project plans and designs submitted by subgrantees</i></p> <p>How many discrete project plans should the contractor assume are to be reviewed in the first-year 12-month period of performance? i.e., how many subgrantees should be assumed and how many discrete project plans per subgrantee should be assumed?</p>	<p>MBI anticipates awarding BEAD grant funding to five subgrantees.</p> <p>At this time, MBI is not able to provide an estimate of the number of discrete project plans.</p> <p>Please refer to the answer to Question #7 for more context.</p>
29.	<p><u><i>(Section 2.2.6) RFP Excerpt:</i></u> ... <i>established a goal of permitting requests being approved or denied within 90 days...</i></p> <p>The RFP establishes a first-year 12-month period of performance for all tasks except for construction monitoring.</p> <p>Should the contractor assume that all contractor support for subgrantees' applications would be conducted during the 12-month period (subject</p>	<p>The 90-day period for permitting decisions is a NTIA goal but is not a mandatory requirement. While MBI has established a 12-month period of performance as an assumption for applicants to use in establishing proposed budgets, it is not certain that all subgrantee applications will complete the permitting process within a 12-month period.</p>

	<p>to the 90-day permit approval guideline), and that all subgrantee applications would be approved for construction within the 12-month period?</p> <p>How many permit applications should the contractor assume would be approved for construction within the 12-month period?</p>
30.	<p><u>(Section 2.2.6) RFP Excerpt:</u> <i>...establishing and conducting Permitting Roundtables or working groups...</i></p> <p>How many discrete roundtables / working groups should the contractor assume will be organized / conducted during the first-year 12-month period of performance?</p>
31.	<p><u>(Section 2.2.8) RFP Excerpt:</u> <i>...Notifying NTIA of inadvertent discoveries and potential impacts to archeological resources...</i></p> <p>Should the contractor assume that all subgrantee applications would be approved for construction within the first-year 12-month period? i.e., should the contractor assume that all subgrantee applications reviewed in the first-year 12-month period would be included in the project scope for archeological resource monitoring?</p>

<p><u>32. (Section 2.2.8) RFP Excerpt:</u> <i>The [professional] archeologist will monitor ground disturbance for BEAD-funded project activities proposed in the vicinity of the National Register of eligible archaeological sites and suspected or known burial sites.</i></p> <p>How many project sites should the contractor assume will require on-site monitoring by a professional archeologist during the 24-month period of performance for Task 2.2.8?</p>	<p>MBI is not able to estimate the number of project sites that will require on-site monitoring. The applicant should propose an efficient and cost-effective approach to archeological monitoring services.</p> <p>Please refer to the answers to Questions #7 and #15 for more context.</p>
<p><u>33. (Section 2.2.9) RFP Excerpt:</u> <i>an approach with and estimated level of effort and budget to provide support to MBI to monitor BEAD-funded projects...</i></p> <p>Is it acceptable for implementation of Task 2.2.9 for the contractor to propose that MBI establish additional compliance monitoring and reporting requirements for Subgrantees for implementation during the 24-month period of performance for Task 2.2.9? i.e., is it acceptable for the contractor to propose Subgrantee self-reporting requirements in addition to proposing contractor on-site monitoring? (Section 2.2.9)</p>	<p>Yes. It is acceptable for the contractor to propose Subgrantee self-reporting requirements as well as other mechanisms for Task 2.2.9 in addition to contractor-conducted on-site monitoring.</p>

34.	<p><u><i>(Section 3) RFP Excerpt:</i></u> <i>The anticipated period of performance for the Services described in Sections 2.2.1 to 2.2.7 shall primarily be a twelve-month period commencing on or about April 1, 2026 (the “Base Period of Performance”).</i></p> <p>What does the word “primarily” refer to here? What activities under Tasks 2.2.1 through 2.2.7 would be conducted outside of the first-year 12-month period of performance? (Section 3)</p>	<p>MBI has established a 12-month period of performance for Tasks 2.2.1 through 2.2.7 as an assumption for applicants to use in establishing proposed budgets. However, it is not certain that all subgrantee applications will complete the permitting process within a 12-month period. MBI will execute a contract amendment to adjust the budget and period of performance, if necessary, to reflect permitting processes that extend beyond the initial 12-month period.</p> <p>While project management services are identified as a distinct set of tasks in Section 2.2.7, MBI expects that the selected consultant will still need to provide a lower level of project management support as a component of the services in Sections 2.2.8 and 2.2.9 and the associated project management costs should be incorporated in to the respective line item budgets in the budget template.</p>
35.	<p><u><i>(Section 4) RFP Excerpt:</i></u> <i>Provide the total not-to-exceed costs for providing the Services based on projected hours, proposed hourly rates...</i></p> <p>Will the contractor be held only to the proposed total not-to-exceed cost for the entire Project or will the contractor also be held to the total cost per Project task as shown in the budget template?</p>	<p>The contractor will be held not only to the proposed total not-to-exceed cost for the entire engagement but also to the total cost per project task set. The consulting services agreement will include an exhibit with the mutually agreed upon budget that will be in the same format as the budget template included with the RFP. The consulting services agreement will include provisions governing adjustments to budget line items.</p>
36.	<p><u><i>(Section 4) RFP Excerpt:</i></u> <i>The Mass Tech Collaborative also does not pay for word processing. What is the MTC definition of “word processing?”</i></p>	<p>In this context, the restriction on “word processing” is intended to clarify that MassTech does not reimburse or allow separate charges for administrative or clerical tasks associated with preparing documents (e.g., typing, formatting, editing, transcription, or document production). These activities are generally considered part of a firm’s overhead and are expected to be included within the proposed hourly rates, not billed as</p>

	<p>Is use of technical editors reimbursable to the contractor, or are technical editors not reimbursable?</p>	<p>standalone or reimbursable expenses. In short, applicants should not list word processing as an additional fee or reimbursable cost in the budget; it is assumed to be absorbed within their labor rates for professional services.</p> <p>Technical editor services are reimbursable if the selected consultant has technical editors on the project team approved by MBI.</p>
37.	<p><u><i>(Section 4) RFP Excerpt:</i></u> <i>For travel costs, the Mass Tech Collaborative pays the IRS rate per mile.</i></p> <p>Are other forms of travel (e.g., Amtrak, rental cars) reimbursable? Or are only mileage costs reimbursable?</p>	<p>Yes. Reimbursable travel expenses include mileage, Amtrak, and rental cars are allowed under 2 CFR Part 200.475 Travel Costs. Out-of-state must be approved in advance by MBI.</p>
38.	<p><u><i>(Section 5.2) RFP Excerpt:</i></u> <i>Reasonableness of the proposed schedule and demonstrated ability to manage tight deadlines</i></p> <p>For the purposes of establishing a project schedule, would the contractor be receiving all of the subgrantee NEPA documentation included in the project scope at the inception of the project? Or would the contractor be receiving subgrantee NEPA documentation in batches throughout the first year 12 month period of performance?</p>	<p>The contractor will be receiving subgrantee NEPA documentation in batches throughout the first year (12 month) period of performance. MBI expects that the NEPA consulting services engagement will begin shortly after BEAD funding agreements are executed with subgrtees. MBI expects that most NEPA documentation will be submitted by subgrtees within the initial six months of the period of performance.</p>
39.	Are environmental reviews and permit coordination	Applicants should carefully review the BEAD Guidance on NEPA and NHPA for LEO Satellite Service issued by

	anticipated for the BSLS utilizing LEO satellite technology? (Note: Of the 2,565 BSLS, 1,326 are identified as “LEO Satellite” under Technology to be Deployed, per table in RFP page 2.)	NTIA in October 2025, which is available at https://broadbandusa.ntia.gov/sites/default/files/2025-10/NTIA_BEAD_LEO_Guidance_Oct_2025.pdf .
40.	Does MBI anticipate consultant involvement in direct coordination with state permitting authorities (e.g., MEPA, CZM, MassDEP), or will the consultant’s role be limited to review/oversight?	Please refer to the answer to Question #14.
41.	Is there a target or anticipated budget range for the contract?	No. There is no target or anticipated budget range for the contract. Please note that MBI will be evaluating the reasonableness of each applicant’s proposed budget.
42.	Will the consultant be required to provide 24/7 on-call availability for inadvertent discoveries during construction?	No. The selected consultant is not expected to provide 24/7 on-call availability for inadvertent discoveries during construction. The relevant members of the project team should be available during normal business hours.
43.	Will reimbursement be provided for overnight lodging costs?	As allowed under 2 CFR Part 200.475 Travel Costs.

