MASSACHUSETTS
TECHNOLOGY
COLLABORATIVE

Notice of Funding Opportunity Solicitation for Applied AI Models Innovation Challenge

RFP 2026-JAII-05

Questions & Answers

February 18, 2026

1.   **Data Commons Collaborative contribution: What level of data/model sharing is required? Our platform relies on trade secrets for target prediction algorithms, which form the basis of our pharma partnership strategy. Can the DCC contribution be limited to validation datasets or specific use cases rather than core platform IP?**

All awardees under the Massachusetts Applied AI Models Innovation Challenge are required to contribute to the Massachusetts Data Commons Collaborative (DCC) as a condition of funding.

Each awardee must contribute at least one meaningful, reusable artifact to the DCC. Eligible contribution formats include, but are not limited to:

- Curated or annotated datasets (preferred)

- Validation or benchmark datasets

- Synthetic datasets

- De-identified datasets (preferred)

- Trained model with model cards and technical documentation (in addition to other artifacts)

- Evaluation scripts or benchmarking pipelines (in addition to other artifacts)

- Use-case performance reports (in addition to other artifacts)

- Controlled research API access

- Digital twins

All contributions must be structured to enable reproducibility, benchmarking, or downstream innovation within the Massachusetts AI ecosystem.

<u>Protection of Proprietary Information</u>

The Challenge recognizes that certain projects may involve trade secrets, proprietary algorithms, confidential partnerships, or regulated data. Core platform IP, proprietary architectures, or commercially sensitive algorithms are not required to be publicly disclosed.

Awardees may request structured protection for IP-sensitive components, provided that a meaningful alternative contribution is supplied.

<u>Delayed Release Option</u>

Awardees may request a time-bound delay of up to 24 months for certain DCC contributions when necessary to support commercialization, venture formation, or regulatory clearance. Delayed contributions must:

- Be detailed in a Data Commons Contribution Plan that includes a defined release timeline

- Be approved by the Massachusetts AI Hub

2. **I'm reaching out to request clarification on the program requirement that all awardees contribute at least one publicly shareable artifact (e.g., datasets, trained models, documentation). Our project involves research conducted in the Emergency Department, where obtaining prospective consent is not always feasible, and much of the data we work with contains protected health information. As a result, any dataset we share would need to be fully de-identified. Would a thoroughly de-identified dataset meet the requirement?. We want to ensure that we fully align with the program's goals while maintaining compliance with patient privacy regulations and IRB requirements.**

Yes, a fully de-identified dataset is acceptable.

3. **I wanted to ask a clarification question related to team structure. In that context, is it acceptable under the program for a significant portion of the effort to be performed by a partner or subcontractor? Or does the program expect the primary applicant to**

be the entity contributing the majority of technical time and resources to the model development itself? Being a private organization interested in leading development, we want to be sure we're structuring partnerships in a way that aligns with the program's intent and review criteria, especially for projects that are deeply applied and interdisciplinary.

The lead or primary applicant must be a research university, non-profit research institution, or other non-profit entity legally organized in Massachusetts. Collaboration with other academic or research institutions and private companies, including startups, SMEs, or large corporations, is highly encouraged.