

Request for Proposal (RFP): "Hard Tech" Start-up Ecosystem Strategic Assessment

Project Overview

Maine's Forest Bioproducts Advanced Manufacturing Tech Hub, led by Maine Technology Institute (MTI) invites proposals for conducting a strategic assessment of Maine's ecosystem of resources and supports for startup ventures focused on technology-driven market opportunities based on new material systems, manufacturing method, or manufactured products -- sectors we are referring to in this report as Hard Tech.”

This assessment aims to identify strategic investment opportunities and barriers within the sectors, contributing to the design of future accelerators, public investments, and access-to-capital programs and to compare peer, challenger, and leading markets. The assessment is crucial in establishing strategies that will be leveraged to make Maine a competitive hub for advanced manufacturing and materials entrepreneurship, in line with the 2023 Maine Innovation Economy Action Plan (MIEAP), Maine’s climate and clean energy goal’s, and Maine’s designation as a Forest Bioproducts Advanced Manufacturing Tech Hub.

This RFP provides an opportunity for experienced consultants to play a pivotal role in shaping Maine's "Hard Tech" ecosystem, thereby driving regional innovation and economic growth.

Project Scope: The selected partner will execute a comprehensive analysis across geography and scale, focusing on the following key areas:

- **Resource Mapping:** Inventory existing ecosystem resources available to "Hard Tech" entrepreneurs, including financing, facilities, technical knowledge/IP, IP Commercialization, corporate engagement, talent, public investment and other factors that your firm believes to be important.
- **Impacts:** Document the effectiveness of Maine’s startup ecosystem over the past 10 years in cultivating new ventures in Hard Tech and propelling those ventures to success.
- **Benchmarking:** Compare these resources and outcomes against peer hard-tech ecosystems to identify strengths, competitive gaps, and develop strategic implementation plans. Ideally benchmarked to a similar sized ecosystem, challenger ecosystem, and leading ecosystem.

Objectives: The primary objective of this RFP is to develop a clear understanding of the current "Hard Tech" ecosystem in Maine with a focus on innovation sectors where technology is fundamentally based on new material systems, manufacturing method, or manufactured products:

- Natural Resource Industries (inclusive of forest products, agriculture innovations, and ocean-based startups)
- Clean Tech & Clean Energy Industries
- Life Sciences Industries (inclusive of both human and animal health)
- Aerospace and Defense

Anticipated Timeline:

Proposals may suggest alternative timelines for project execution, reporting, and wrap-up. Due to federal funding requirements, all work must be completed no later than March 30, 2025.

- RFP Open: June 4, 2024
- RFP Close: June 24, 2024
- Start Date: July 15, 2024
- Project Execution: *To Be Proposed by Partner*
- Preliminary report due: October 15, 2024
- Final report due: *To Be Proposed by Partner*: No later than March 30, 2025
- Final Reporting and Wrap-up: *To Be Proposed by Partner*: No later than March 30, 2025

Budget: \$100,000 is allocated for this project. ***Internal Note to be finalized***

Submission Requirements: Proposals should include:

- **Technical Proposal:** Outline of the proposed methodology, data sources, and analytical tools.
- **Project Team:** Qualifications and experience of the team members.
- **Timeline:** Detailed schedule including milestones.
- **Budget:** Itemized budget aligning with project objectives and timeline.
- **References:** Include at least two references

Evaluation Criteria: Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- **Relevance and Feasibility:** Alignment with the project's objectives and feasibility of the methodology.
- **Experience:** Proven track record in similar projects.
- **Innovative Approach:** Creativity and innovation in proposed solutions.
- **Cost:** Overall cost-effectiveness of the proposal.

Proposal Submission

Proposals must be submitted to MTI by June 24, 2024 11:59PM Eastern, addressed to:

- **Contact Persons:** Brian Whitney & Chris Wolfel

- Email: bwhitney@mainetechnology.org & c.wolfel@northeastern.edu

Additional Information: For further information or clarification regarding this RFP, please contact Chris Wolfel (c.wolfel@northeastern.edu) and Brian Whitney (bwhitney@mainetechnology.org)