Request for Information:
Seeking "AI Challenge Project Submissions"
from Firms in Key Technology Sectors
through the Massachusetts Applied AI Prototyping Program

Massachusetts Technology Collaborative
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RFI No: 2027-JAII-02

Issued: November 23, 2026

Responses Due: December 31, 2026

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview and Vision

Massachusetts Technology Collaborative ("MassTech") and the Massachusetts Artificial Intelligence Hub ("MA AI Hub"), in partnership with Boston University's Faculty of Computing & Data Sciences ("BU CDS"), are launching the **Massachusetts Applied AI Prototyping Program,** an 11-week program that places technically advanced undergraduate and graduate students ("**MA AI Fellows**"), into a BU CDS faculty-led student cohort to work on AI projects sourced from industry. This Request for Information ("RFI") is seeking information from Massachusetts companies to provide insight into their specific AI needs, project ideas and AI challenges, by providing *AI Challenge Project Submissions* that could be addressed through this program engagement.

The Massachusetts Applied AI Prototyping Program is designed to advance innovative AI solutions that will improve the competitiveness of Massachusetts firms in key industry sectors. By providing an AI Challenge Project Submission, companies have an opportunity to translate their real-world business, operational, or technical AI needs into a focused AI proof of concept or prototyping effort supported by BU CDS faculty guidance and a cohort of technically advanced MA AI Fellows. Selected AI Challenge Project Submission can help participating firms test high-value AI use cases, explore enterprise AI readiness, improve existing products/services with AI, and generate practical insights that may inform future AI investment, adoption, and workforce planning.

Massachusetts universities are educating and training students who are on the cutting edge of AI technologies and are in positions to develop AI products of the future. While BU CDS already produces a deep graduate talent base in AI, machine learning, statistics and data sciences - the pace of industry demand is accelerating quickly. Supported and guided by BU CDS faculty, this program provides participating companies with an innovative approach to bring forward high-priority AI challenges. For participating companies, the value is twofold: gaining advanced insight into how AI can be applied to real operational, technical, or product challenges, while also building relationships with emerging AI talent who may be strong candidates for future employment opportunities.

This program is uniquely designed to bridge the gap between advanced academic talent pools, and the immediate AI needs of companies across Massachusetts. The BU CDS Clinic model, already piloted internally through Boston University's own Information Services & Technology and known as the AI Development Accelerator (AIDA) Clinic, has demonstrated success delivering deployable solutions across areas including AI tooling, robotics, and systems engineering. Participation in this program enables students to be coached and mentored by key faculty that will be assigned to each student team. We anticipate that participating companies will also assign their own project leads and mentors to the project.

2. REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

2.1 Program Overview and Parameters

MassTech invites interested Massachusetts companies to provide information and ideas (i.e. Project

Concepts) around AI needs and challenges that they would like to have considered/supported through the **Massachusetts Applied AI Prototyping Program**, beginning in the spring semester of 2027.

Key parameters include:

- **RFI Timeline**: Once posted the RFI will remain open for responses until December 31, 2026.
- **Prototyping Program Timeline**: Beginning in the spring semester of 2027, the project prototyping effort is anticipated to last a minimum of 11 weeks and can run longer as needed for project completion.
- **MA AI Fellows**: An advanced undergraduate and graduate student cohort of up to 10 students. Performance of work on projects will be managed by BU CDS.
- **Target Projects**: 3-6 individual participating company projects.
- **Prototyping Program Location**: Activities will be based at Boston University's Duan Family Center for Computing & Data Sciences (665 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA) and require partners to provide company testbeds or beta environments as needed.

Additional information to consider:

- **Participation**: Participating companies will be expected to provide, directly to BU CDS, project scopes, available match funding, data access, beta environments, and a pilot lead or team who makes themselves available during the engagement. Participating organizations will commit to bi-weekly check-ins ("client meetings"), demo days, and expos, ensuring meaningful interactions that lead to hiring conversations. Participating companies will contractually engage directly with BU CDS around any terms of the engagement associated with the proofs of concept and prototype development.
- **Intellectual property and data security expectations**: Participants will be required to address any IP and data security expectations directly with BU CDS.

2.2 Program Components and Questions for Respondents

MassTech is seeking scoped AI Challenge Project Submissions from companies that will be assigned to MA AI Fellows through the Massachusetts Applied AI Prototyping Program. The prompts below are provided to guide responses; respondents may introduce additional ideas as appropriate.

Challenge Project Submissions & Deliverables

- **Project or Product Title**
- **Problem or Product Definition -** Describe the problem or opportunity being addressed or what questions are sought to be answered.
- **Technology -** As these deliverables are fully intended to improve the product process and performance of participating companies, please describe any preference for technical platforms, applications or components used for implementation, e.g. cloud infrastructure, client or web applications, web sites, etc.
- **Developers –** Please indicate the role of any independent vendors, start-ups, and/or entrepreneurs who may be contributing to the development of this new and novel solution.
- **Dataset Description -** Describe any data that is targeted for use in this project. Describe the

nature of the data (e.g. tabular, structured, unstructured) whether there are ground truth labels, and what intellectual property rights are involved as well as privacy requirements.
- **Draft Deliverables** - Describe expected deliverables, e.g. proof of concept, feasibility study, technical report, demonstration, etc.
- **Company engagement -** Title of clients/collaborators and their expected availability and role during the program. We prefer a minimum of biweekly meetings during the program as well as availability for planning meetings beforehand.
- **Funding availability –** Please indicate whether or not there is match funding available to support this effort if the submitted AI Challenge Project is selected by BU CDS.

Program Support & Participation

- Participating companies will engage directly with BU CDS to define necessary contractual elements, match funding, and/or any IP considerations required in connection with the work to be completed by BU CDS and the MA AI Fellows.

3. PROCESS FOR SUBMITTING A RESPONSE TO THIS RFI

3.1 Submission Instructions

a. Interested respondents are invited to submit a concept paper of up to **four pages** responding to the components and questions listed above. Please do not exceed the four - page maximum.
b. **Responses to this RFI are requested no later than 5PM EST on December 31, 2026**. and should be submitted via email to Sabrina Mansur and the general mailbox (email: mansur@masstech.org and cc maihub@masstech.org). Please include "AI Challenge Project Submissions" in the email subject line. Please feel free to reach out for additional information to both of these email addresses.
c. Any and all responses, data, materials, information and documentation submitted to MassTech in response to this RFI shall become MassTech's property and shall be subject to public disclosure. As a public entity, MassTech 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 MassTech treat certain information or documentation as confidential, please reach out to MassTech's General Counsel, Jennifer Saubermann, at saubermann@masstech.org before submitting any materials considered confidential or proprietary. The General Counsel will issue a written determination before the response to the RFI is due.

3.2 Other

By executing the Authorized Respondent's Signature and Acceptance Form and submitting a response to this RFI, respondent certifies that it (1) acknowledges and understands the procedures for handling materials submitted to MassTech, as set forth in Section 3.1.c; (2) agrees to be bound by those procedures; and (3) agrees that MassTech shall not be liable under any circumstances for the disclosure of any materials submitted to it pursuant to this RFI.

This RFI does not commit the MassTech to select any firm(s), award any work order, pay any costs incurred in preparing a response, award any grants, or procure or contract for any services or supplies. MassTech reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to accept or reject any or all submittals received, discuss the contents of a response (or a proposed response prior to submission) with any or all qualified respondents (or potential respondents), and request modifications to responses in accordance with such discussions; request supplemental or clarifying information from respondents; or cancel, amend or modify the RFI in part or in its entirety.

MassTech 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. MassTech reserves the right to grant or reject any request for accommodations.

Attachment A
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 RFI (No. TBD). The Respondent specifically acknowledges the application of the procedures regarding submission and disclosure of sensitive information as set forth in Section 3.1.c of the RFI and specifically agrees that it shall be bound by those procedures.

I certify that the information provided in response to the RFI is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Name: _____ (Printed Name of Respondent)

Signature: _____ (Signature of Authorized Representative)

Title: _____

Date: _____