

Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development

2024 Request for Information on Innovation Clusters

June 3, 2024

Released by Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development

INTRODUCTION

Governor Lamont and the Department of Economic and Community Development announce up to \$100 million to support the growth of innovation clusters established in the State of Connecticut, formed for the catalytic advancement of key economic sectors, including but not limited to biotechnology, financial services and technology, advanced manufacturing, renewable energy, insurance services and technology, software development, artificial intelligence, quantum technology and advanced computing.

This program will leverage private and public investment to create or augment physical spaces engaged in the application of next-generation technologies to accelerate innovation in these high-growth end markets, expanding upon Connecticut's traditional sectors of economic strength and seeding new ones.

These transformational place-making projects will leverage the state's transit-oriented investments and infrastructure to create an optimal combination of workforce training, economic development, physical placemaking, skillset networking and regional stakeholder collaboration. The projects will accelerate the creation of jobs and new facilities in support of high-growth industries.

PROGRAM GOALS

- Building infrastructure to facilitate the application of emerging technologies--such as artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and others--to industries in which Connecticut has an established comparative advantage, including but not limited to: biotechnology, financial technology and advanced manufacturing;
- Leveraging partnerships with local businesses, universities, and not-for-profit institutions to maximize multi-institutional collaboration on innovation, as well as supporting investment;
- Attracting and developing talent in major urban centers or regional job hubs;

- Facilitating transit-oriented development;
- Supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts; and
- Incorporating public benefit components into the project design, such as infrastructure, housing, public space or other community amenities;

FINANCIAL LEVERAGE

DECD will issue up to \$100 million in grants to support development of selected project(s) through capital investment, with all grant awards subject to a minimum non-state funding match of 1:1. This does not discount other sources of state funding as part of a project capital stack, but other state sources of funding will not count as leveraged funding towards the grant award.

SCHEDULE

MAY 29, 2024	Announcement
JUNE 3, 2024	RFI Issued; DECD Available for 1:1 Meetings to Answer Questions
NOVEMBER 1, 2024	Written Responses Submitted to DECD
TBD	Final Project Teams designated by DECD and invited to submit formal funding applications.

RFI CONTACT INFORMATION

[Website](#)

All written responses should be submitted to innovation.clusters@ct.gov.

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until November 1, 2024.

REQUIREMENTS FOR FINAL GRANT AWARDS AND ELIGIBILITY

Grants will not be awarded in response to initial RFI submissions, but only in response to final project proposals submitted upon DECD's request, by DECD-designated multi-partner

teams. This RFI seeks initial expressions of interest from entities that either wish to form such teams or would be open to joining one.

For planning purposes, final grant award(s) may be made in available amounts totaling up to \$100 million. DECD in its discretion may make awards in any amount towards submitted projects. Successful projects will leverage the contributions of diverse and multi-disciplinary consortia, including but not limited to private businesses, real estate developers, post-secondary educational institutions, municipalities and/or philanthropic or other not-for-profit entities.

There is no maximum grant request; however all grant dollars will need to be leveraged at a minimum of 1:1 with non-state funds. These non-state funds include municipal, federal, philanthropic, private debt/equity. Additional state funds can be part of the contemplated project capital stack, however, these will not be considered for the purpose of the minimum 1:1 leverage ratio.

CHARACTERISTICS OF IDEAL FINAL PROJECTS

Project teams and team members must be prepared to invest significant time, labor effort and financial resources into projects which:

- Create campus-like settings whose attributes support the development and commercialization of novel technologies, the formation of related startup businesses, and on-site research and development, education and job training, together with skills-based training, career placement, and an ongoing hiring pipeline;
- Demonstrate deep collaborations of mutual benefit amongst project partners, such as private businesses, real estate developers, post-secondary educational institutions, municipalities and/or philanthropic or other not-for-profit entities;
- Facilitate both the near-term and long-term creation of a significant number of new, permanent jobs in high-growth industries;
- Support equitable development in the proposed impact area through public benefit components, such as infrastructure, housing, and community amenities;
- Demonstrate partners' commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion; and
- Do not propose to utilize state funds for programmatic or operational expenses.

OTHER FINAL PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

All capital project policy requirements will be included in the assistance agreement for project components, including:

- *Prevailing Wage* may be required on any DECD-funded construction projects of \$1,000,000 or more per C.G.S. 31-53c;
- *Affordable Housing Requirements* for any project with at least 10 net new units, which must be deed-restricted for 30 years at either 20% of units at 80% AMI or 10% of units at 60% AMI; and
- Include non-recourse mortgage, use restriction, and negative pledge.

GUIDANCE FOR RESPONDENTS

DECD may use information obtained from responses to this RFI in its implementation of the program. Neither DECD nor the State of Connecticut will be liable for any costs incurred by any respondent pertaining to the preparation and submittal of any written responses, or for participation in a demonstration in response to this RFI.

This RFI is intentionally broad to encourage innovative, creative concepts.

INFORMATION REQUESTED IN INITIAL RFI RESPONSES

1. Identify yourself, any organization(s) you represent, and any co-respondent organizations. For each, please provide:
 - a. Name
 - b. Organization and Affiliation
 - c. Address
 - d. Phone Number
 - e. Email
2. If applicable, name any and all partner entities and their role(s) as envisioned in your proposed team. Please provide a point of contact for each partner entity and a main point of contact for the team as a whole.
3. Please provide a capacity statement and examples of completed past projects or other relevant work for each partner.
4. Please provide bios for your organization(s) and key members of your project team.
5. Please describe the core concept(s) that your team is interested in exploring.
 - a. What opportunity does it create for the state of Connecticut?
 - b. How does it align with the stated program goals?
 - c. What industry verticals would benefit?

6. Please describe the technologies your team would seek to develop, commercialize and/or apply to industry, and any relevant academic or other research & development partnerships.
7. Please describe any specific considerations or barriers you believe might impact your ability to meet the characteristics DECD has outlined for your concept.
8. Please describe any challenges or requirements needed to execute the project within five years
9. Please describe how you would approach ensuring that a campus-like setting would support emerging technologies and their application to one or more key industrial/economic sectors.
10. Please describe how your team would approach supporting diversity, equity and inclusion and what type of impact-focused community benefits could be prioritized as part of your concept.
11. Please describe how you would engage with institutions of higher education in your project.
12. Please describe how your concept might support workforce development or training.
13. Please share with us any thoughts or questions this opportunity created for your team that you would like to share with DECD.