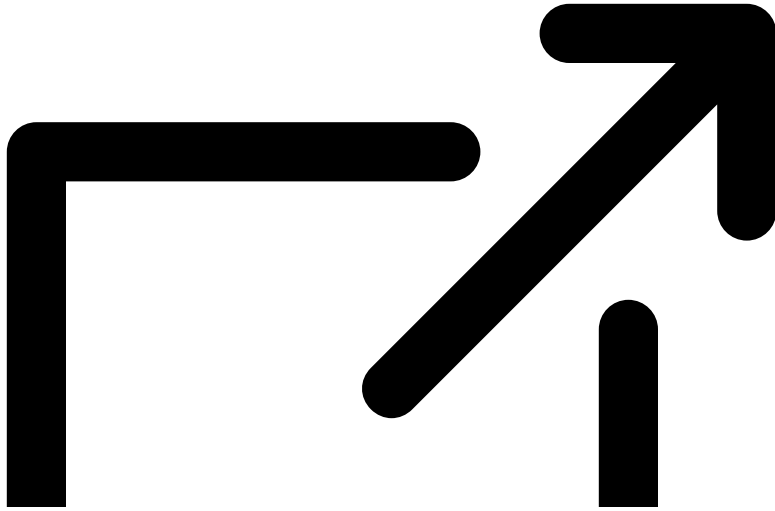# Tech Hubs Frequently Asked Questions – Phase 1 NOFO | U.S. Economic Development Administration

52–66 minutes

The below Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) are designed to help the public and applicants better understand the Tech Hubs Program. If you have any questions about the Tech Hubs Program that are not addressed in the FAQs below, please feel free to contact us at TechHubs@eda.gov. Please also be sure to carefully read the Tech Hubs Phase 1 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), which can be found here.

EDA will aim to update these FAQs every other Thursday, so please check them for new information. EDA also encourages you to subscribe

to our newsletter and to check the Tech Hubs [website](#) for updates on the program.

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Overview

1. **What is the Regional Technology and Innovation Hub (Tech**

Hubs) Program?

The Tech Hubs Program will make place-based economic development investments to drive technology- and innovation-centric growth by strengthening a region's capacity to commercialize, manufacture, and deploy critical technologies. This program aims to invest in regions with the assets, resources, capacity, and potential to become globally competitive, within approximately ten years, in the technologies and industries of the future. Cultivating the tech hubs of tomorrow will not only create good jobs for American workers at all skills levels, both equitably and inclusively, but also strengthen long-term U.S. national and economic security. The Tech Hubs Program seeks to ensure that the industries of the future—and their good jobs—start, grow, and remain in the United States.

2. **What are the phases of the Tech Hubs Program?**

EDA is running the program in two phases through two separate Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs). The Phase 1 NOFO was published on May 12, 2023 and can be found here. EDA expects to release the Phase 2 NOFO in Fall 2023.

The Phase 1 NOFO has two components: EDA will fund Strategy Development Grants and will Designate certain regions as Tech Hubs. Applicants can apply for (a) Designation only; (b) a Strategy Development Grant only; or (c) both Designation and a Strategy Development Grant.

- **Strategy Development Grants** provide funding to prepare a consortium to apply for an Implementation grant in Phase Two (if they also receive a Designation) or for Designation in a future competition (if EDA receives additional Tech Hubs appropriations).

As such, a Strategy Development Grant should help the consortium significantly increase local coordination and planning activities to be more competitive on the seven criteria for Designation that are described in section A.1.d. of the Phase 1 NOFO.

- **Designation** provides a strong signal from EDA about a region's assets, resources, and capabilities, including that the region is in a position where an investment over the next five years can catalyze their emergence over the next decade as a self-sustainable, globally competitive hub in a particular technological area(s). Only applicants Designated at the conclusion of Phase 1 will be permitted to apply for Implementation Grants under the Tech Hubs Phase 2 NOFO. There is no funding associated with Designation.

  In **Phase 2**, Designated Tech Hubs will compete for funding for Implementation projects to help propel the region into a self-sustaining, globally competitive Tech Hub.

3. **What constitutes a region for purposes of the Tech Hubs Program?**

   EDA defines a Hub's geography as a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) or a similar area (including Micropolitan Statistical Areas (μSAs) or tightly interconnected combinations of MSAs and/or μSAs)1 with a concentration of assets, capital, R&D, labor market, and infrastructure strongly relevant to the Hub's selected core technology area, the Hub's identified market opportunity, and its potential to become globally competitive in that area within a decade. Applicants should identify their chosen geography as part of their application. Applicants should consider their chosen geography as the nexus of the Tech Hub but may include

partnerships outside that geography as part of the hub. Consortia may include assets or members outside the chosen geography —e.g., in nonmetro rural areas or partnerships with geographically distant but tightly mission-aligned organizations—that support the consortia's strategy and benefit the Hub.

4. **What happens if the MSA maps are updated after I apply?**

   EDA will accept the use of an MSA current at the time of application.

5. **What technologies are considered key focus areas?**

   The list of ten critical technologies is drawn from the initial Key Technology Focus Areas (KTFAs) in the CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 (see 42 U.S.C. § 19107). The applying consortium may select a core technology area that falls within a single KTFA or crosses multiple KTFAs where the Hub has the potential to become within a reasonable time a self-sustaining, globally competitive leader in that selected core technology area's market. The statutorily defined ten KTFAs are:

1. Artificial intelligence, machine learning, autonomy, and related advances.

2. High performance computing, semiconductors, and advanced computer hardware and software.

3. Quantum information science and technology.

4. Robotics, automation, and advanced manufacturing.

5. Natural and anthropogenic disaster prevention or mitigation.

6. Advanced communications technology and immersive technology.

7. Biotechnology, medical technology, genomics, and synthetic

biology.

8. Data storage, data management, distributed ledger technologies, and cybersecurity, including biometrics.

9. Advanced energy and industrial efficiency technologies, such as batteries and advanced nuclear technologies, including but not limited to for the purposes of electric generation.

10. Advanced materials science, including composites 2D materials, other next-generation materials, and related manufacturing technologies.

6. **Can EDA staff clarify whether my selected core technology area is within or at the intersection of one or more of the Key Technology Focus Areas?** *(updated on 6/15/2023)*

   No, EDA staff cannot clarify whether your selected core technology area is within or at the intersection of one or more of the Key Technology Focus Areas. EDA expects applicants to clearly explain how their selected core technology area is within one, or at the intersection of more than one, of the Key Technology Focus Areas.

7. **What does it mean to be globally competitive in 10 years?**

   In their Phase 1 Designation application, applicants should present evidence that their chosen geography has the assets, resources, and capabilities to emerge as globally competitive in a particular technology area within 10 years. Applicants should clearly describe the nature and magnitude of the consortium's selected core technology area's economic opportunity, including, e.g., reasonable, data-based, and justified forecasts of the future size of the global market, the region's future share of that market, and the

number and earning potential of related jobs. On page 11, the NOFO has additional details on what applicants should address to meet the specific evaluation criteria for technology-based potential of the region for global competitiveness.

8. **How is the Tech Hubs Program different from the EDA Recompete Pilot Program?** *(updated on 5/25/2023)*

   The Tech Hubs Program will make investments in places that, with an infusion of funding, will be able to leverage their respective innovation and R&D assets to achieve global competitiveness in technology sectors that are critical to national and economic security within approximately the next ten years.

   The Recompete Pilot Program will provide grant funding to persistently distressed communities across the country to create and connect workers to good jobs. Recompete specifically does this by supporting long-term comprehensive economic development with the aim to reduce high, prime-age (25 to 54 years of age) employment gaps and increase wages. EDA anticipates releasing more information on the Recompete Pilot Program by Summer 2023.

9. **How is the competition different from other national Federal challenges like the EDA Build Back Better Regional Challenge, EDA Good Jobs Challenge, NSF Regional Engines, DOE Hydrogen Hubs, or DOT SMART Challenge?**

   The Tech Hubs Program is one of several recent or current administration place-based programs intended to strengthen U.S. supply chains, create good-paying jobs, and expand economic opportunity across America. Tech Hubs is distinguished by its focus on geographic concentration, the ten key technology areas,

and a ten-year time horizon for global competitiveness. Tech Hubs also focuses on rapidly scaling up and commercializing products and services in these key technology areas through demonstration, deployment, and delivery. Tech Hubs does not focus on research and development. For example, the Tech Hubs is complementary to the NSF Regional Innovation Engines, which has as one goal to galvanize use-inspired research and development. The NSF Engines announced their NSF Engine Development Awards on May 11. Learn more [here](#).

10. **Are previous or active EDA grantees eligible for this program?**

    Consortia—or consortia members—who have received funding through other recent national federal programs—including EDA programs—are eligible for Designation and Strategy Development grants under this NOFO. Existing funding from other sources should be included in application materials as a potential asset if complementary and not duplicative.

    Build Back Better Regional Challenge grantees are free to submit a Tech Hubs application with the same selected core technology area.

11. **What is the relationship between CHIPS and Tech Hubs?**

    The Tech Hubs Program is a complementary but separate program from CHIPS, focused on helping regions across the country build and evolve into technology industry hubs that support innovation ecosystems, including the semiconductor industry. Tech Hubs Program was authorized under the CHIPS and Science Act but is not exclusively focused on the semiconductor sector. The CHIPS for America program provides separate funding opportunities that aim to specifically strengthen the domestic

semiconductor industry, bolster supply chain resilience, and advance U.S. economic and national security. (For more information about the CHIPS for America program, visit CHIPS.gov and read the first CHIPS NOFO.)

Rather than focusing exclusively on one sector, the Tech Hubs Program focuses on 10 broad statutory key technology focus areas, one of which includes semiconductors and other computing-related technologies. A Hub's selected core technology area may either directly or indirectly impact any of the key technology focus areas, including the domestic semiconductor industry, and aims to strengthen associated supply chains, build ecosystems that enable regions to translate R&D into market-leading products and services, or advance technologies at the intersection of those technologies and another domain.

12. **What does equity mean in the context of the Tech Hubs program?**

The Tech Hubs Program aims to increase the diversity of the U.S. innovation economy and support equitable economic development. Economic research clearly shows that increasing the diversity of inventors, students, researchers, funders, and founders increases the pace of innovation, which in turn supports good jobs, stronger supply chains, and new technologies, like clean technology. Throughout both Phases of the Tech Hubs Program, successful applicants will pursue impactful diversity and inclusion strategies that accelerate innovation and growth and that increase the equity, accessibility, and diversity of the innovation economy, including through accessible good jobs.

Applicants are expected to describe how the consortium and other

stakeholders will actively engage underserved communities in planning and how benefits from the Tech Hub will be shared equitably.

Please note that "Equity & Diversity" is an evaluation criterion for Designation in the Phase 1 NOFO. You can find the NOFO here for more details.

Consortia Structure

13. **What entities are eligible to apply for Strategy Development Grants, Designation, and Implementation grants?**

    Only consortia are eligible to apply, and each consortium has certain required and optional entity types.

    Each consortium **must** include at least one of each of the following entity types (see NOFO section C.1. for statutory citations for some entity types):

    1. Institutions of higher education, which may include Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges or Universities, and Minority-Serving Institutions;

    2. State, territorial, local, or Tribal governments or other political subdivisions of a State, including State and local agencies, or a consortium thereof;

    3. Industry groups or firms in relevant technology, innovation, or manufacturing sectors;

    4. Economic development organizations or similar entities that are focused primarily on improving science, technology, innovation, entrepreneurship, or access to capital; and

    5. Labor organizations or workforce training organizations, which may

include State and local workforce development boards.

EDA encourages **two or more firms** directly relevant to the consortium's selected core technology area to participate as members of the consortium. EDA will be evaluating the quality of the firms' proposed participation in the consortium, rather than the quantity of firms participating in it. EDA also encourages the participation of labor organizations, including state labor federations, or other organizations representing workers as direct members of the consortium. EDA expects that all consortia members, including labor unions and federations, will be given equal opportunity to participate in consortia planning efforts.

Consortia **may** also include one or more of:

1. Economic development entities with relevant expertise, including a district organization;

2. Organizations that contribute to increasing the participation of underserved populations in science, technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship;

3. Venture development organizations;

4. Organizations that promote local economic stability, high-wage domestic jobs, and broad-based economic opportunities, such as employee ownership membership associations and State or local employee ownerships and cooperative development centers, financial institutions and investment funds, including community development financial institutions and minority depository institutions;

5. Elementary schools and secondary schools, including area career and technical education schools;

6. National Laboratories;

7. Federal laboratories;

8. Manufacturing extension centers;

9. Manufacturing USA Institutes;

10. Transportation planning organizations;

11. Cooperative extension services;

12. Organizations that represent the perspectives of underserved communities in economic development initiatives; and

13. Institutions receiving an award under the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Regional Innovation Engines program.

14. **Can EDA confirm whether my organization qualifies as one of the required or optional entity types?** *(updated on 6/15/2023)*

    No, EDA cannot provide individual guidance on an organization's eligibility. Please see NOFO section C.1 (page 19) for statutory citations for some entity types.

    Applicants should provide evidence that their consortia members meet the requirements of the required and optional entity types. Applicants are free to submit supplemental documentation for this purpose.

15. **What is a "political subdivision of a State"?** *(updated on 6/15/2023)*

    A "political subdivision of a state" is a unit of government created by and under the authority of a higher level of government. For example, counties, cities.

16. **Is there a minimum number of consortium members?** *(updated*

The minimum consortia size is five eligible entities. Consortia must include at least one of each of the 5 required entity types listed on page 6 of the NOFO. While some organizations may meet definitions of multiple entity types, a single entity cannot satisfy the requirements for more than one required type.

17. **Are consortia required to create a separate legal entity to apply for funding or designation?**

    No. EDA does not require that the consortium have a formal legal structure (i.e., a contractual arrangement or public-private partnership). EDA, however, does expect that consortium members are actively collaborating and aligned behind the content of their Phase 1 application.

18. **What is the role of a lead consortium member?**

    EDA requires that each consortium identify a lead consortium member, which commits to:

    - be the principal applicant for the Phase 1 Strategy Development Grant and/or Phase 1 Designation;

    - serve as EDA's main point of contact during the competition and implementation;

    - be the employer of the Regional Innovation Officer (RIO) or have an established relationship with that employer *(see below Question 19 for a description of the purpose of the RIO);*

    - serve as the central coordinator of the consortium by leading or otherwise having a significant role in the consortium's governance;

    - convene public, private, academic, labor, and civic leaders to

facilitate regional cohesiveness in maximizing the region's competitiveness;

- establish and maintain communication between the consortium and EDA to enable and accelerate collaboration and support; and

- ensure funding and other assistance provided by EDA and any other partners are absorbed effectively within communities.

  In the event the consortium is Designated in Phase 1 and wins a Phase 2 Implementation award, the lead member will have additional duties related to the ongoing governance structure of the collection of implementation projects funded to ensure they remain cohesive and coordinated. Governance in this context means ensuring that the consortium is communicating and coordinating activities and outcomes. The lead member may also receive funding for specific implementation project(s) in Phase 2. These details will be further addressed in the forthcoming Phase 2 NOFO.

19. **What is the purpose of the Regional Innovation Officer (RIO)?** *(updated on 5/25/2023)*

    The Regional Innovation Officer serves as the leader of the consortium and is accountable for continued coordination of its shared vision and strategy. In that capacity the RIO serves as EDA's lead point of contact and as the central coordinator of consortium governance.

    The purpose of the RIO is to encourage each region to have a single individual accountable for leading its overall innovation agenda. While some coalitions will not have their RIOs identified in Phase 1, EDA expects each applicant at a minimum to have

articulated a clear plan for identifying the individual and to have clearly described the profile of the future RIO. For those with an identified RIO, EDA requires applicants to provide their resume. Among their responsibilities, the RIO will be accountable for ensuring clear and effective governance and leadership of the consortium.

20. **Can a consortium have multiple leads?** *(updated on 6/15/2023)*

No. Each consortium must identify a single lead member organization.

21. **Does the lead consortium member need to be a required entity type?** *(updated on 6/29/2023)*

No. Any member of the consortium can serve as the lead consortium member.

However, EDA encourages the lead consortium member to be one of the five required entities.

22. **Can a business serve as the lead consortium member and receive a Strategy Development award?**

Yes. Any member of the consortium that is an eligible entity type (see question 13) can serve as the lead member for a consortium that receives a Strategy Development award.

23. **Can Tech Hubs funding be used to build a facility or invest in infrastructure for a business?**

Phase 1 Strategy Development funding can only be used for non-construction planning purposes. Implementation grants, which will be awarded through a separate, Phase 2 NOFO could be used to build a facility or invest in infrastructure for a business. Further guidance on allowable uses of funds will be available in the Phase

2 Notice of Funding Opportunity, which EDA expects to release in Fall 2023.

24. **How can community colleges participate in Tech Hubs consortia?**

Community colleges are institutions of higher education, and every eligible consortium must include at least one institution of higher education. One Designation criterion focuses on the composition and capacity of the regional workforce, including workers with relevant skills but without four-year degrees, and community colleges may be an instrumental partner in consortia meeting this criterion in many regions.

25. **Is an Alaska Native Village or Regional Corporation an eligible member of a consortium under the Tech Hubs Program?**

Yes. Alaska Native Villages or Regional Corporations (as defined in or established under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act) are eligible to serve as members of a Tech Hubs consortium as Tribal governments.

26. **Are there guardrails on the types of firms that can join a consortium?**

Each applicant selected for federal funding under this notice must demonstrate, prior to the signing of the grant agreement, concrete measures to consider and address physical, cyber security, and foreign ownership risks relevant to the type and scale of the project and up to or exceeding current standards. Projects that have not appropriately considered and addressed physical and cyber security and resilience in their planning, design, and project oversight, as determined by EDA and the Department of Homeland Security, will be required to do so before receiving funds.

EDA may include significant additional diligence into any consortia members including private firms in Phase 2 to ensure compliance with these requirements.

27. **Does a firm or any other member need a physical presence in the chosen region to be part of a consortium?**

No, but any firm or other member of the consortium—e.g., in nonmetro rural areas or geographically distant but tightly mission aligned geographies—that lacks a physical presence within the boundaries of the chosen geography should have a clear connection to that region and be essential to the Tech Hub strategy being pursued by that consortium. This can be demonstrated, for example, by evidence of strong existing relationships, fruitful prior collaborations, or concrete agreements establishing or strengthening meaningful, relevant collaboration. Applicants should explain how this firm, or any other member, is essential and how it will coherently work with other consortium members and interlink with other regional assets to result in self-sustaining growth.

Consortia may include assets or members outside the chosen geography—e.g., in nonmetro rural areas or partnerships with geographically distant but tightly mission-aligned organizations—that support the consortia's strategy and benefit the Hub.

28. **Can an organization join multiple Tech Hubs applications?**

Yes, consortia members are allowed to join multiple applications. However, as stated in the NOFO, an application's competitiveness is based in part on "regional coordination and partnerships," and a consortia member's capacity to serve in multiple consortia will be a germane consideration. Please see NOFO section A.1.d.(3) (page 12) for more detail.

Eligibility

29. **Where can I find a list of Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) and Micropolitan Statistical Areas (µSAs)?**

The United States Office of Management and Budget (OMB) delineates MSAs and µSAs according to published [standards](#). A list of MSAs and µSAs and associated data can be found [here](#) on the United States Census Bureau website. The Census Bureau also provides an interactive map of the nation's MSA and uSAs, which can be found [here](#). Note that OMB expects to update these delineations in the coming months.

EDA defines a Hub's geography as a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) or a similar area (including Micropolitan Statistical Areas (µSAs) or tightly interconnected combinations of MSAs and/or µSAs) with a concentration of assets, capital, R&D, labor markets, and infrastructure strongly relevant to the Hub's selected core technology area, the Hub's identified market opportunity, and its potential to become globally competitive in that area within a decade. Applicants should identify their chosen geography as part of their application.

30. **Can a consortium include multiple Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) or Micropolitan Statistical Areas (µSAs) as their chosen geography?**

Yes, applicants should identify their chosen geography as part of their application. The chosen geography may include multiple Metropolitan or Micropolitan Statistical Areas that are proximate in geography, technological capacity, or other relevant dimensions. Applicants should consider their chosen geography as the nexus

of the Tech Hub but may include partnerships outside that geography as part of the hub.

31. **What does geographic diversity mean in the context of the Tech Hubs program?** *(updated on 6/29/2023)*

The Tech Hubs program seeks to foster geographic diversity in innovation and create quality jobs in communities that have the potential to be globally competitive in key technology focus areas in the next ten years.

Specifically, the Tech Hubs Program, as required by the CHIPS and Science Act, has key requirements that ensure geographic diversity in EDA's Designation of at least 20 Tech Hubs. The statutory authorization requires EDA Designate at least 3 in each EDA region; no fewer than one-third that benefit small and rural communities; no fewer than one-third that include as a member of the consortium a State or territory that is eligible to receive funds from the National Science Foundation's (NSF) Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR); at least one Tech Hub with its headquarters in a low population state that is eligible to receive funding from the EPSCoR; and at least two Tech Hubs that benefit underserved communities in metropolitan areas. (*Learn more about small and rural communities in Questions 32, 33, and 34 below, and EPSCoR and low population states in Questions 35, 36, and 37 below.*)

In awarding Strategy Development grants, EDA also seeks to fund no fewer than one-third that benefit small and rural communities and no fewer than one-third that include as a member of the consortium a State or territory that is eligible to receive funds from EPSCoR.

32. **How is the Tech Hubs Program inclusive of small and rural communities?**

EDA is committed to expanding the geography of innovation to include small and rural communities. EDA expects to designate at least 20 Tech Hubs under the Phase 1 NOFO, with at least one-third significantly benefiting small and rural communities. Additionally, no fewer than one-third of Strategy Development grants awarded under this NOFO will significantly benefit small and rural communities.

33. **What is the definition of a small and rural community?**

A "small and rural community" is a noncore area, a micropolitan area, or a small metropolitan statistical area with a population of no more than 250,000. 15 U.S.C. § 3722a(a)(8).

34. **How does EDA determine whether consortia "significantly benefit a small and rural community"?** *(updated on 6/15/2023)*

EDA expects applicants to make a clear and measurable case that the economic benefits attributable to the growth of their selected core technology will be directed towards at least one small and rural community in their chosen geography.

The total population of an applicant's chosen geography does not need to be below 250,000 in order to meet the criteria of small and rural. Rather, the chosen geography must include at least one small and rural community, and the applicant must provide substantial evidence that this small and rural community will significantly benefit from technology-based growth.

35. **Which states are eligible to receive funding from the Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research**

(EPSCoR) of the National Science Foundation?

The Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) of the National Science Foundation has set states and territories through FY 2027. They include Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Delaware, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Vermont, U.S. Virgin Islands, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

36. **Which states that are eligible to receive funding from the Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR) of the National Science Foundation meet the low population definition found in the statute?**

    The term "low population State" means a state without an urbanized area with a population greater than 250,000 as reported in the decennial census. States eligible for EPSCoR funding that meet this definition include Alaska, Maine, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

37. **According to the statute, no fewer than one-third of the Tech Hubs that receive a Strategy Development Grants and one-third of the Tech Hubs that receive Designation must include as a member of the consortium a State or territory that is eligible to receive funds from EPSCoR. Is it sufficient for a member of my coalition to be from an EPSCoR state, regardless of entity type?** *(updated on 6/15/2023)*

    No. To qualify as meeting this requirement, the consortium must include a member that is a "State, territorial, local, or Tribal

governments or other political subdivisions of a State, including State and local agencies, or a consortium thereof" from an EPSCoR state.

38. **Will EDA accept more than one application from a given geographic area?**

Yes. EDA will accept more than one application from a given region, but potential applicants are encouraged to coordinate with relevant regional partners during the application development process.

39. **Will EDA provide a Strategy Development Grant or Designate more than one applicant from a given region?**

Multiple applications from a single geographic area may be competitive for either Strategy Development awards, Designation, or both – particularly in a case where two consortia are organized around separate selected core technology areas. However, EDA seeks to award a geographically diverse portfolio of consortia; geographic diversity is a selection factor in both the Strategy Development Grant and Designation review processes.

Where there is overlap in focus, EDA encourages applicants from the same region to coordinate their efforts.

Application

40. **What is the Phase 1 application deadline?**

The deadline for Phase 1 applications is 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on August 15, 2023. Applications received after this deadline will not be reviewed or considered.

41. **How does an applicant determine whether to apply for**

Strategy Development, Designation, or both?

The chart below may help applicants determine what to apply for.

Designation **Only**	"Our region is ready to apply for Implementation funding and does not need a Strategy Development Grant to further organize."
Both Designation **and** a Strategy Development Grant	"Our region is close to ready to apply for Implementation funding, and additional resources would strengthen our coordination, planning, and Phase 2 application development."
A Strategy Development Grant **Only**	"Our region has relevant assets, resources, capacity, and/or potential, but we need to do significantly more coordination and planning to be ready for Implementation funding. We do not wish to apply for Implementation funding this year."

Whether a region chooses to apply for a Strategy Development Grant won't affect EDA's Designation decisions—each will be evaluated separately. See NOFO sections D.2., E.1.a., and E.1.b.

42. **Does the selection process for Designation impact the selection process for Strategy Development Grants?**

Applications for Strategy Development Grants and for Designation are separate submissions to EDA and will be evaluated separately. Strategy Development Grants and Designation each have their

own review, evaluation, and selection processes.

43. **What level of technical detail should applicants provide in a Phase 1 application in making the case for global competitiveness?** *(updated on 6/29/2023)*

The Phase 1 application for designation is intended for applicants to make a concise case for their potential to become a tech hub as it relates to the seven evaluation criteria. Applicants invited to apply to Phase 2 will have an opportunity to provide significantly more detail about their potential as well as their specific investment proposals. In the five pages allotted for their Phase 1 case for designation, applicants should demonstrate the potential for their respective regions to become globally competitive in their respective selected core technology areas – as well as how they will address the other six evaluation criteria. Based on that technology area and the region's strategic approach to catalyzing self-sustaining growth and global competitiveness, applicants should calibrate the level of technical detail in their applications to allow EDA to validate the region's claimed potential and capacity, as well as understand the region's ideas that map to the other six evaluation criteria.

Please note that in Phase 1, EDA will assess the existing assets, resources, and capabilities of the region, along with the likely impacts of remedying any existing gaps in commercialization capacity through an Implementation award. EDA will not be validating the path of advancement of individual technologies.

The forthcoming Phase 2 NOFO will detail any additional technical information required from Designated Tech Hubs that are applying for Implementation funds.

44. **How will EDA ensure qualified individuals review Strategy Development Grants and Designation applications?** *(updated on 6/15/2023)*

EDA will select experienced, independent federal and non-federal reviewers, including generalists, experts in relevant technological fields, and experts in other areas relevant to the evaluation criteria set forth in the NOFO.

45. **By designating Tech Hubs and awarding grant funding through the Tech Hubs program, is EDA "picking winners" or otherwise guiding how technologies and industries should advance?** *(updated on 6/15/2023)*

The Tech Hubs program seeks to identify market failures in specific regions that, if overcome, can unlock the region's existing technological strengths. EDA is not forecasting the future developments of specific technologies. However, EDA seeks to designate a portfolio of Tech Hubs that together will advance U.S. economic and national security, and EDA will consider each applicant's case regarding the extent to which growth of their regional economy related to their selected core technology area will do so. The Tech Hubs program's theory of the case is to identify places (i.e., regions) that have significant strengths in specific technology areas, validate whether a given region has identified genuine market failures and remedies for those failures, and evaluate the feasibility and likelihood of the region becoming significantly more globally competitive in that technology area with Tech Hubs funding, and how the region's greater global competitiveness in that technology area will advance economic and national security. However, the region itself—and, with

respect to the Tech Hubs program, the region's consortium and its members—is responsible for choosing the approach that will best influence technological change—and for executing against that approach.

46. **If our consortium is applying for both a Strategy Development Grant and Designation, should we repeat information in both applications?** (updated on 6/15/2023)

Yes. Applicants should not assume that reviewers will see both application packages for those who are submitting applications for both Strategy Development Grants and Designation.

47. **Can Phase 1 or Phase 2 funding go to consortium partners outside of the Hub's selected geography?** (updated on 5/12/2023)

Yes, but EDA expects that the implementation of that funding will support the development of the Tech Hub in its chosen geography even if the partner administering a grant is physically located elsewhere.

48. **Can the benefits of the Tech Hub be measured outside the selected geography?**

While EDA expects to elaborate further on metrics in the Phase 2 NOFO, applicants are free to identify benefits of a Tech Hub that go beyond the selected geographic area(s) in Phase 1. In particular, EDA expects applicants to clearly describe how the benefits from the Tech Hub will be shared equitably. This can include benefits that extend to underserved populations in geographies outside the selected geography.

49. **Could EDA award a Strategy Development Grant or Designate**

more than one Tech Hub in a given state? *(updated on 5/25/2023)*

Yes, this is a possibility. However, as stated in the NOFO, EDA will run this program with a focus on geographic diversity, and geographic balance is a selection factor that can be applied by the Grants Officer.
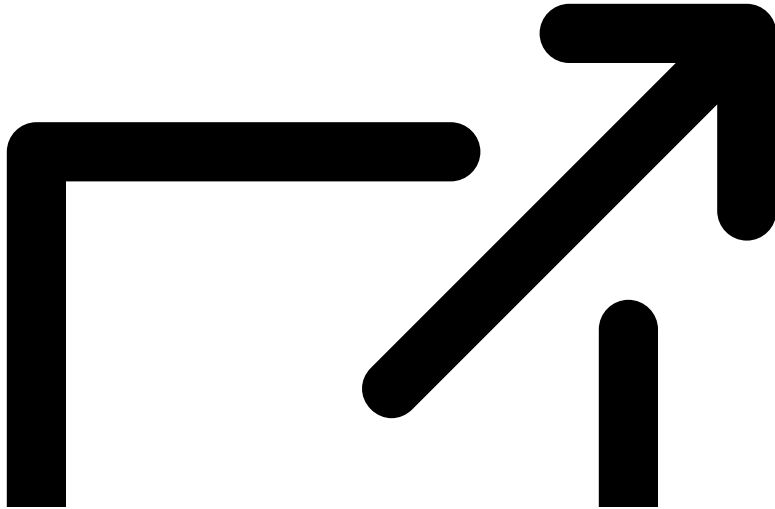
50. **Who will receive Strategy Development Grant funding and Strategy Implementation Grant funding?** *(updated on 6/29/2023)*

    The lead consortium member will be the recipient of the Strategy Development Grant award and will be expected to administer the award, including any proposed sub-awards.

    For Strategy Implementation Grant funding, each consortium will propose approximately 3-8 projects in their Phase 2 application. In that application, the consortium will identify the consortium member that will administer each project. The lead consortium member may or may not directly administer a funded Implementation project. EDA will work with the consortium to shape the budget and ensure that the appropriate consortium member is administering each component project. More information on this will be available in the forthcoming Phase 2 NOFO.

51. **When will the Phase 2 NOFO be released?**

    EDA expects to release the Phase 2 NOFO by Fall 2023. Please subscribe

to our newsletter and regularly check our [website](#) for program updates.

52. **Can an EDA staff member provide technical assistance as I develop my application?**

EDA staff cannot offer technical assistance that would have an impact on the competitiveness of your application. EDA staff members are available to provide applicants with technical assistance regarding application requirements. Additionally, EDA may contact the applicant to clarify application materials after submission.

Strategy Development Grants

53. **What is the maximum amount of funding a consortium could receive from a Strategy Development award? What is the expected period of performance for Strategy Development awards?**

Strategy development grants will be awarded between approximately $400,000 and $500,000 in Federal funds each depending on the level of local match for which they qualify.

The period of performance for a given Strategy Development project may vary depending on the scope of work. EDA expects that most projects will range from 18 to 36 months. EDA expects that all projects will proceed efficiently and expeditiously.

54. **Is there a match requirement for Strategy Development awards?**

Yes, though some applications may qualify for reduced match or have no match requirement at all.

In general, Phase 1 Strategy Development grants may be awarded with a maximum 80% federal grant rate. With $500,000 in total funding this means the federal amount is $400,000 and the local match requirement is $100,000.

If the consortium represents all or part of a small and rural or other underserved community, the federal share may be awarded at a maximum 90% rate (e.g., $450,000 federal share, $50,000 local match).

If the eligible consortium lead is a Tribal government or the Tech Hub primarily benefits Tribal areas, the federal share may be awarded at a maximum 100% rate.

55. **Does applying for a Strategy Development Grant have any impact on competitiveness for Phase 2 Implementation funding? Are applicants who win Strategy Development Grants required to complete those awards before applying for Phase 2 Implementation funding?** *(updated on 6/15/2023)*

Applying for a Strategy Development Grant has no impact on competitiveness or eligibility for Phase 2 funding. Those who receive both a Strategy Development Grant and Designation (or

who receive only Designation) from EDA will be eligible to apply for Phase 2 Implementation funding when EDA releases the Phase 2 NOFO, expected in Fall 2023.

Those who win Strategy Development Grants will not be required to complete those awards before applying for Phase 2 Implementation funding.

Designation

56. **How many Tech Hubs will be Designated?**

Under this NOFO, EDA expects to Designate at least 20 Tech Hubs across the country.

57. **What is the benefit of Designation other than the opportunity to apply for Phase 2 implementation funding?**

Subject to future appropriations, Designated Tech Hubs under this NOFO may be eligible to apply for future rounds of implementation funding without reapplying for Designation.

EDA will also coordinate internally and with our federal partners to seek to support Designated Tech Hubs in other ways.

58. **How do multi-state chosen geographies determine which state they are "headquartered in"?**

As required by statute, EDA seeks to ensure that at least one Designated eligible consortium is headquartered in a low population State that is eligible to receive funding from the EPSCoR of the NSF. States that meet the statutory definition are Alaska, Maine, Montana, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

A consortium that merely includes one of these states in its chosen

geography is not sufficient to meet this requirement.

Whether or not a consortium includes multiple states in their chosen geography, a consortium that intends to be headquartered in a low population state should demonstrate that the lead consortium member is itself headquartered in the low population state and has a substantial physical presence in that state, and consortium member institutions and potential sites or locations of implementation investments are predominantly located in that state.

59. **Will there be future opportunities to apply for Designation?**

Subject to future appropriations, EDA may conduct additional Tech Hubs Designation and Strategy Development Grant competitions.

If a region believes they have the potential, over the next decade, to become a globally competitive Tech Hub in one or more of the ten key technology focus areas, they should prepare to apply for Designation under the Phase 1 NOFO.

EDA expects to designate at least the statutory minimum of 20 Tech Hubs under the Phase 1 NOFO.

60. **How much detail does a Designation application need about use of potential implementation dollars?**

In Phase 2 of this program, EDA expects to award approximately $50-75 million ($65 million on average) to each Phase 2 Implementation Grant awardee.

While EDA does not expect consortia to include specific project details or budget proposals for Implementation Grants in their Designation application, applicants should include, at a high level, the uses to which the consortium will put the Implementation Grant

funding if awarded. Designation applications should demonstrate how the available levels of funding in Phase 2 would help catalyze their region into being globally competitive.

61. **Does Tech Hub Designation apply to a place, a selected core technology area, or both?**

The combination of both. Designation is a strong signal from EDA about a region's potential to become globally competitive in their selected core technology area based on the region's assets, resources, and capabilities. Each applicant must identify both the geography of its region and its selected core technology area in Designation applications.

Procurement and Pre-Award Costs

62. **Are there any restrictions on using consultants, such as for preliminary engineering or environmental reports, for Phase 2 implementation activities?**

Yes. The Procurement Standards of the Uniform Guidance at 2 C.F.R. 200.317 – 200.327 govern all procurements under Tech Hubs. The "Competition" regulation at 2 C.F.R. 200.319 sets out the general rule for federal financial assistance that contractors that develop or draft specifications, requirements, statements of work, or invitations for bids or requests for proposals **must be excluded** from competing for such procurements. In the context of Tech Hubs, this means that a professional engineer or architect that undertakes preliminary design activities for the project, including a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) for an EDA application, must be excluded from bidding on the same work under an EDA award.

In accordance with 2 C.F.R 200.317, only state recipients are expressly exempt from this procurement restriction. Local governments and Indian Tribes may also take advantage of the procurement exemption in certain narrow circumstances.

Practically speaking this means that if a recipient has a selection process that will involve two separate competitions - one solicitation and contract for undertaking preliminary design for a project and then a separate solicitation and contract to select a contractor for final design activities, the successful contractor that undertakes preliminary design (including developing the PER) would be excluded from competing for final design under a Phase 2 award.

There are options to help avoid unintentionally excluding contractors by helping to make sure all competing contractors are on equal footing from the beginning:

- In designing the solicitation for design and engineering services, make sure to include a broad array of such services that will be required under Tech Hubs, including preliminary and final design. The consortium may also wish to specify that if the preliminary design is successful and the consortium is selected for an award, final design work is anticipated. The solicitation should also cover the expected funding level and performance period that will be required under Tech Hubs.

- If a consortium already has a contractor on an existing general or broad services contract that would cover all anticipated tasks required to develop an application and to implement an award under Phase 2 of Tech Hubs and that was competed consistent with the Procurement Standards of the Uniform Guidance (2 C.F.R.

200.317 – 200.327), the contractor exclusion requirement may not be an issue. Please note that in this situation the contract must be competed regularly – in general the performance period should extend no longer than five years. In addition, the services must be within the scope of the existing contract, as interpreted by EDA. Please reach out to your regional POC if you have questions about an existing contract.

Please reach out to TechHubs@eda.gov further questions. You can find your local EDR on EDA's Contact page.

63. **Can an applicant go out to bid for proposed implementation projects, before being selected for Phase 2 implementation?**

In general, an applicant can start necessary solicitation processes before a Phase 2 implementation award, but the applicant **must** understand **it is proceeding at its own risk and there is no guarantee of a federal award**. The applicant should take this risk into account in the contracting process as appropriate (e.g., the contract is contingent upon successfully obtaining a federal award, options, etc.). If an applicant does receive a federal award, please note that a procurement must be compliant with the procurement standards set out at 2 CFR 200.317 – 200.327 to be eligible for reimbursement.

64. **Can we use the Phase 1 Strategy Development award to solicit consulting services for multiple projects under a single solicitation?**

Yes. The applicant may advertise for services needed for multiple projects, so long as the procurement is compliant with the procurement standards of 2 CFR 200.317 - 200.327, including 2 CFR 200.319 (e.g., the solicitation incorporates a clear and
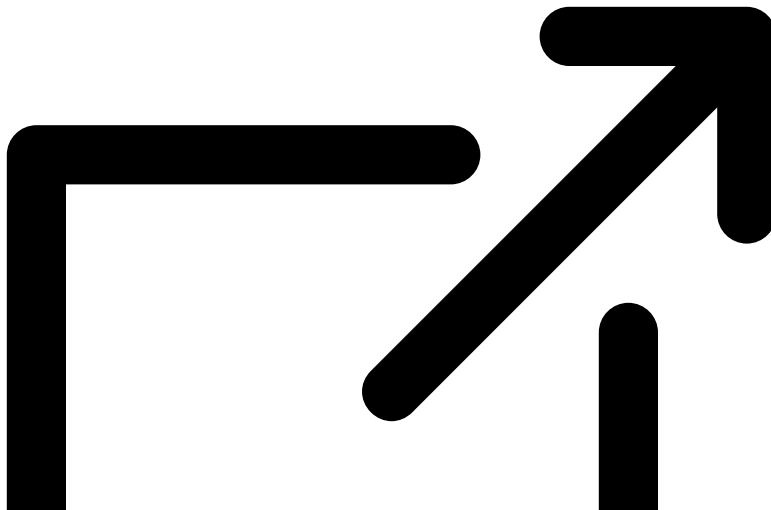
accurate description of the technical requirements and does not contain features that unduly restrict competition).

Please see *Question 58* in this section for important information about the competitive procurement restrictions for contractors that develop a PER for a project and then compete for design, and for important considerations to avoid unintentionally excluding contractors. Also, see *Question 59* in this section for important considerations about advertising before receiving a federal award.

Using the EDA Economic Development Grant Experience (EDGE) Portal

65. **What is the EDA Economic Development Grant Experience (EDGE) portal?**

The [EDA EDGE portal](#)

is a system that was designed so that the entire Grant lifecycle will be in one place for an Applicant (i.e., the Lead Consortium Member) or an Applicant's partner (e.g., consortium members). The system provides visibility to Users from Application intake through final close out, ensuring access to all data,

communications, and documents are in one electronic file for review and collaboration with EDA on the path to Award. To access the EDGE Portal, use an internet connection and a recommended browser such as Firefox or Google Chrome to ensure the best User experience. Using Internet Explorer is not recommended. Allow pop-ups in your browser to view and access auto-created forms, reminders, and important information in the EDGE portal.

66. **Do I need to create an account in EDGE to apply?** *(updated on 8/10/2023)*

Only the Lead Consortium Member (referred to as the Lead Applicant in EDGE) needs an account in EDGE to apply. All application materials must be submitted by the Lead Applicant. To create an account for the Lead Applicant, you will need the organization's UEI and basic contact information. Please note, an active CAGE code in SAM.gov is required at the time of award (see NOFO section E.3). See section D.2.f in the NOFO for more information on obtaining a UEI for your organization.

67. **Who can submit an application on behalf of the applying consortium?**

While many team members can access and edit the application, only a person designated within the EDGE system as an "Authorized Representative" for the Lead Applicant organization can submit the application on behalf of the Lead Applicant/consortium. Within the EDGE system, you will need to assign roles to your team members for your application.

68. **Do I need to create a consortium within the EDGE system?** *(Added on 8/10/2023)*

Yes. Before you can begin to fill out the application in EDGE, you will need to create a "consortium" in the "My Associations" tab of EDGE. While you have the ability to add members of your consortium in EDGE, this is no longer required.

69. **When creating a new Association, should we apply as a "consortium" or a "coalition"?**

Tech Hubs applicants MUST apply as a "consortium" in EDGE. It is up to the Lead Applicant to ensure that the application is submitted using the "**consortium**" option within EDGE. This model is **required** for the Tech Hubs NOFO.

70. **Are my consortium members required to have organizational identification numbers (UEI, CAGE, Tax ID/EIN) to be part of the application?** *(updated on 8/10/2023)*

As of 8/10/2023, Tech Hubs applicants are not required to add consortium members in EDGE. However, if you choose to add a consortium member as an applicant in EDGE they will need to fill out an organization profile, which will ask for the consortium member's Tax ID/EIN and other basic information (e.g., the organization's address).

Lead Applicants on a Tech Hubs application ARE required to have a UEI number to apply and an active CAGE code in SAM.gov at the time of award (see NOFO section E.3); other consortium members are NOT required to have active CAGE codes.

71. **Do my consortium members need to create an account in EDGE?** *(updated on 8/10/2023)*

No. Given the high volume of applications, EDA is now only requiring the Lead Organization to register in EDGE. To submit a

Tech Hubs application, one individual from the Lead Organization must create an EDGE account. As we approach the August 15th deadline, please focus on getting your application materials prepared and having the Lead Organization submit them in EDGE. Application acceptance will not be affected if consortium members are not registered in EDGE. If you have already submitted an application or if your application already includes consortium members, no further action is needed.

Please ensure that your consortium members are clearly outlined in your Letter(s) of Consortium Commitment so that it is easy for reviewers to identify the organizations committed as members of your consortium and which type of entity they represent.

72. **If I am applying for both a Strategy Development Grant and Designation, how do I signal that in the EDGE system?**

If you are applying for both the Strategy Development Grant and a Designation, you will need to submit two separate applications. When you apply to the NOFO, you will be prompted to select which program you will be applying for. Each application has slightly different required documents and evaluation criteria, please see section D.2.a in the NOFO for full details.

73. **My application covers multiple Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) and Micropolitan Statistical Areas (µSA), how do I denote that in EDGE?**

Within the EDGE application there will be a section titled "Applicant Selected Geography". In that section the Lead Applicant can upload a comprehensive list of MSAs and µSAs that covers the entire consortium. A full list of MSAs and µSAs may be found: https://www.census.gov/geographies/reference-maps/2020

/demo/state-maps.html

An optional template for upload can be found here.

74. **I have completed the application in EDGE but the submission button is "greyed out", what do I do?** *(updated on 6/15/2023)*

First, make sure each section that is marked "required" is complete. Second, it is most likely that you are not assigned as the "Authorized Representative" in EDGE. **Only the Authorized Representative can submit the application.** To check your application roles, click on the "Application Team" tab, click the "add team member" button, and follow the prompts to assign your Authorized Representative. To make yourself the Authorized Representative, you follow the same process and add yourself as a team member with the same email, which will assign you two roles in EDGE.

75. **How can I view my submitted documents in EDGE?** *(updated on 6/15/2023)*

When you log into your home screen in EDGE (as you've shown below), you should be able to click on the title of your funding request application. From there you can see your entire submitted application. By scrolling over the 4th sub tab titled "application documents", you should be able to download everything you've submitted.

76. **What do I do if my organization shares an EIN/TIN number with an entity that is already registered in EDGE?** (Added on 8/10/2023)

EDA acknowledges that some organizations have units that serve different roles in supporting a consortium and that those units may

share the same Employer Identification Number/Taxpayer Identification Number (EIN/TIN). The EDGE system does not allow for registering multiple organizations with the same EIN/TIN numbers. If this presents issues for a Lead Organization attempting to register in EDGE, please email TechHubs@eda.gov and GrantHDSupport@eda.gov for support.

Please note, only one user from the Lead Organization needs to create an EDGE account. Other consortium members no longer need to create EDGE accounts to successfully submit a Tech Hubs application.

77. **What do I do if I tried to register in EDGE, but I got the message that I'm awaiting security approval?** (Added on 8/10/2023)

Please note, only one user from the Lead Organization needs to create an EDGE account. Other consortium members no longer need to create EDGE accounts to successfully submit a Tech Hubs application.

Contact Us

78. **How do I get in touch with EDA?**

Email TechHubs@eda.gov with questions.