

# Michigan Innovation Fund Program – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and Responses to Questions Regarding the MIF Application

Updated 7/10/25

1. In reviewing the requirements for our grant application, it is clear that the applicant must be a Michigan based non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation, however does the status of any collaborating businesses or groups also need to be 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation?

**Answer:** Correct, the lead applicant must be a Michigan-based non-profit and must meet the eligibility requirements as stated. Collaborators and subcontractors are allowed and not required to be Michigan non-profits, but the arrangement must be reasonable. The primary applicant is expected to lead the effort.

2. May I please know the award date for these programs: Startup Acceleration Tracks Proposal - Founder Development and E&I Ecosystem Convenings?

**Answer:** Per the Application Process & Proposal Instructions document, Round 1 awards are expected to be announced by end of August 2025, and Round 2 awards are expected to be announced by end of September 2025. Because the Michigan Strategic Fund Board serves as the ultimate approval authority, unforeseen delays beyond MEDC's reasonable control may be possible.

3. Do letters of support and appendices (e.g., nonprofit documentation, budget worksheets) count toward the 5-page limit?

**Answer:** Per the Application Process & Proposal Instructions document, the Appendix (detailed budget spreadsheet, match funding documentation if applicable, and optional letters of commitment by collaborating partners) is "optional; not counted toward page / slide limits." Letters of support are permitted in the appendix but are neither required nor expected. The focus should be on letters of commitment, only if the proposal includes collaboration partners.

4. If we don't submit for Round 1, could funding be gone for Round 2?

**Answer:** All proposals, whether submitted in Round 1 or Round 2, will be reviewed and evaluated before any funding decisions are finalized. Focus on submitting the best proposal possible! The reason for this 2-round structure is to accelerate the deployment of funds because of a long-required lead time for Michigan Strategic Fund Board approvals. Submitting application in Round 1 does not mean you will be more likely to receive funding.

5. What is the available window for setting a period of performance? When should all granted funds be expended?

**Answer:** All funds granted should ideally be expended within two years from the effective date of the agreement (to ensure a meaningful near-term deployment of useful services to the ecosystem) but MEDC is open to longer periods if applicants prefer and can describe why slower deployment would be advantageous to the ecosystem.

6. For the Statewide Startup Investment Competitions, is there a floor or ceiling as to how much can or should be directly granted to competition winners in total?

**Answer:** This falls under the same parameters as the Startup Support Services proposals, which allow for up to 25% program admin fees. MEDC prefers to see program admin fees minimized so that entrepreneurs and their startups are the primary beneficiaries of this funding. Prize amounts are expected to be spent across two cycles, completed by 12/31/26. All prizes must be awarded as equity investments.

**7. For the Statewide Startup Investment Competitions, is there a floor or ceiling for the amount granted to any individual winner?**

**Answer:** We're open to creative ideas! We encourage each competition to be centered around one significant grand prize that will draw an audience and an impactful outcome. Specific prize amounts and any secondary prize amounts (e.g., second / third place, crowd favorite, etc.) can be proposed by the applicant.

**8. Does the 25% administrative cost cap include both indirect and direct admin costs? Are program-specific personnel excluded from that cap?**

**Answer:** The 25% cap includes both direct and indirect costs. Program-specific personnel costs can be counted within that 25%. Please detail this in your proposed budget.

**9. What media types are considered acceptable visuals (e.g., photos, graphs, video, etc.)?**

**Answer:** Photos and graphs are fine. Please note: no material external to the submitted PDF or PowerPoints will be reviewed (e.g., we won't review linked videos). Refer to submission guidelines.

**10. Do you anticipate individual submissions or collaborative submissions being more competitive?**

**Answer:** Applications should be submitted by one lead applicant, MEDC encourages collaborative proposals with committed partners, especially where specifically called out in the Request for Applications. This is an opportunity to build ecosystem connective tissue and drive statewide collaboration.

**11. We want to submit proposals for both Startup Support Services and E&I Ecosystem Convenings. Should we submit one combined proposal or separate ones?**

**Answer:** Please submit a separate proposal for each subcategory. If the work is complementary, you're welcome to mention this tie-in in both proposals. Each subcategory is evaluated independently.

**12. Is there a criterion or rubric for scoring applications?**

**Answer:** Per the Application Process & Proposal Instructions, submitted proposals will be reviewed holistically by a leadership review team based on alignment with MIF priorities, funding availability, and portfolio balance. MEDC's priority is to strategically allocate limited public resources to maximize statewide impact.

**13. Are matching funds required for this program?**

**Answer:** While matching funds are not required, proposals that demonstrate additional resources or partnerships may be evaluated more favorably, depending on the specific category descriptions.

**14. Are there restrictions on out-of-state non-profits?**

**Answer:** All applicants must be Michigan-based non-profit entities. Please refer to the Request for Applications (RFA) language above.

**15. What are the reporting requirements for awarded applicants?**

**Answer:** Awardees must submit semi-annual reports for monitoring purposes. Also, the grantee will be required to submit annual reports, and these reports will be made publicly available.

**16. Will the MEDC provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants?**

**Answer:** No. While we greatly appreciate the time and effort applicants put into their proposals, due to staff capacity, resource limitations, and the volume of applications received, our team is unable to provide feedback to applicants whose proposals are not selected.

**17. Can we apply if we are a startup directly?**

**Answer:** Please refer to the Request for Applications (RFA) language above.

**18. Is there a template for submitting proposals?**

**Answer:** Please follow the instructions and structure outlined in the Request for Applications (RFA) language above. No separate template is provided.

**19. Are prizes from investment competitions required to be in the form of equity investment, or can they be grants?**

**Answer:** All prizes must be in the form of investment capital (e.g., equity, convertible notes). Given that the funding is being allocated from the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Jobs Trust Fund, there must be an expectation of a return for all prizes awarded.

**20. Can we request an extension on the application deadline?**

**Answer:** Pending availability of funding or other factors beyond our reasonable control, MEDC does not anticipate offering an application deadline extension. Please submit an application before the published Round 2 deadline.

**21. The Innovation Ecosystem Advocacy category uses the word “advocacy.” What exactly does that cover?**

**Answer:** In this program, “advocacy” is strictly limited to non-lobbying activities that strengthen and promote Michigan’s innovation ecosystem – things like ecosystem education, founder- and investor-facing outreach, statewide coordination and convening, marketing/storytelling, and evidence-based policy research. State grant dollars may not be used, directly or indirectly, for lobbying as defined in MCL 4.415, and the funded organization’s primary purpose cannot be lobbying.

**22. Who can we contact for questions during the application period?**

**Answer:** All inquiries should be sent to MEDC Michigan Innovation Fund: [mif@michigan.org](mailto:mif@michigan.org). We will be updating this FAQ document as questions come in.