



Missouri Technology Corporation Impact-Based Storytelling Project

January 2024 Request for Proposals

Missouri Technology Corporation (MTC) is seeking a skilled and experienced respondent who can effectively communicate the significant impact of financial support on high-growth potential companies and the organizations and ecosystems that support them.

RFP Timeline:

- RFP Released: Wednesday, January 3, 2024
- Written Questions Deadline: Tuesday, January 16, 2024
- Written Responses Published: Friday, January 19, 2024 (estimated)
- RFP Submission Deadline: Wednesday, January 31, 2024

1. Introduction and General Information

1.1. About the Missouri Technology Corporation

The Missouri Technology Corporation (the "MTC") is a public-private partnership created by the Missouri General Assembly to promote entrepreneurship and foster the growth of new and emerging high-tech companies. The MTC focuses on 21st-century industries that build on Missouri's rich history in agriculture and technology. The MTC is governed by a 15-member board of directors, which is appointed by Missouri's Governor, Speaker of the Missouri House, and President Pro Tem of the Missouri Senate. The President of the University of Missouri System and the Director of the Department of Economic Development are *ex officio* members of the board.

For more information on the MTC, visit www.missouritechnology.com.

1.2. Intent of the RFP

The intent of this RFP is to gather proposals related to identifying and selecting a respondent who can oversee various aspects of a storytelling project, which includes identifying impactful themes/narratives, conducting in-depth interviews, and compiling the interviews into a collection of well-written and comprehensive articles/stories.

1.3. The RFP Process

The MTC expects to use the following process to solicit respondent proposals: (i) Release of RFP; (ii) Questions and Answers; (iii) Submission of Proposals; (iv) Review and Evaluation of Proposals; and (v) Engagement. However, the MTC reserves the right to modify the RFP process in its sole discretion.

(i) Release of RFP

This RFP will be posted on the MTC's website (www.missouritechnology.com). The RFP will also be otherwise distributed, as determined by the MTC, to widely disseminate notice of the solicitation.

(ii) Questions and Answers

Potential respondents may submit questions regarding this RFP. Questions must be submitted in writing via email to MTCRFP@missouritechnology.com no later than **5:00 p.m. CT on Tuesday, January 16, 2024**.

(iii) Submission of Proposals

Proposals must be submitted no later than **11:59 p.m. CT on Wednesday, January 31, 2024**, to be considered. Late proposals will not be accepted. It is the responsibility of the respondent to ensure that the MTC receives all required materials by the deadline. Final respondent proposals should be emailed to MTCRFP@missouritechnology.com.

2. Impact-Based Storytelling Project

2.1. Introduction to Missouri Technology Corporation

The MTC has been an essential facilitator in driving economic development through entrepreneurship in Missouri. To achieve our mission and vision, MTC provides state and federal funding to support high-growth technology and innovation-focused entrepreneurs in the state. This funding aims to generate significant economic development as these early-stage companies grow. MTC is primarily funded through appropriations from the state's General Revenue, which is included in the Department of Economic Development's annual operating budget. Additionally, the state can allocate federal funding received by the state to MTC. MTC accomplishes its mission through two main programmatic activities: Ecosystem Building and a State Sponsored Venture Capital Program.

Historically, the MTC has catalyzed and supported entrepreneurship and innovation throughout Missouri in three main ways:

- Since 2008, MTC has provided nearly \$50 million in grant-based financial support to over 60 non-profit and university organizations across the state. Specifically, MTC has awarded over \$30 million in grants to enhance the entrepreneurial capacity of the state, which has greatly benefited numerous organizations that have successfully served thousands of small businesses. Additionally, MTC has awarded almost \$15 million in grants to establish centers in Missouri dedicated to advancing manufacturing capabilities in the fields of semiconductors and active pharmaceutical ingredients.
- Additionally, since 2011, MTC has provided direct and grant-based financial support to regionally focused entrepreneurial projects including support of physical infrastructures to ensure entrepreneurs throughout the state have access to the physical resources required to launch and grow their businesses. This includes the awarding of over \$27 million to the Innovation Centers and more recently through the Physical Infrastructure and Regional Node grant programs.

- Direct Investments through a state-sponsored venture capital program - the IDEA (Innovation, Development, and Entrepreneurship Advancement) Fund Co-Investment Program, which has invested nearly \$46 million in over 140 early-stage Missouri-based high-growth technology-focused companies, which have raised over \$1.7 billion in additional private capital since 2018.

From 2017 to 2021, start-up businesses with fewer than 20 employees created 187,430 jobs, accounting for 81% of all new jobs in the State of Missouri.¹ The MTC has focused its efforts on new business ventures that leverage technology to grow their companies and products, due to the potential of such companies for an outsized return on investment through the creation of high-paying jobs.

In February of 2022, the Missouri Technology Corporation released a report from TEconomy Partners, LLC entitled [Catalyzing Innovation: Strategies for Missouri to Drive Innovation and Entrepreneurship](#). The report was informed by a robust six-month planning process with guidance from a 16-member statewide Steering Committee and input collected from over 500 individuals across the state through a digital survey and virtual regional and statewide engagement meetings. Based on a data-driven analysis of the insights collected, TEconomy Partners identified five bold and compelling strategies and recommended 16 action items to be undertaken to catalyze the state's innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems to drive economic development over the next decade.

Additionally, data analyzed by TEconomy demonstrated that over the last decade, MTC has been an essential asset in driving innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic development throughout Missouri. MTC's previous successes are a direct result of strategic planning and execution focused on the promotion of entrepreneurship and innovation within emerging high-growth and high-potential sectors which can provide outsized economic development impacts within the state.

By launching this impact-based storytelling project, the MTC aims to showcase the positive outcomes and benefits that have been achieved through the support of entrepreneurship and innovation in Missouri. Collectively, the articles/stories will serve as a public platform to share the success stories, advancements, and contributions made by entrepreneurs and innovators in driving economic growth within the state.

2.2. Project Description

The primary objective of this project is to effectively convey the story of the MTC and the individuals, companies and organizations that have benefited from MTC grants and direct

¹ MOSourceLink. "MOSourceLink Show Me Jobs Report." *MOSourceLink*, 11 Aug. 2022, www.mosourcelink.com/l/show-me-jobs.

investment programs. The project's written articles/stories serve to highlight the strong and symbiotic relationship between MTC and the state of Missouri entrepreneurial ecosystem, showcasing how strategic funding has acted as a catalyst for innovation.

By launching this impact-based storytelling project, the MTC aims to showcase the positive outcomes and benefits that have been achieved through the support of entrepreneurship and innovation in Missouri. Collectively, the articles/stories will be organized and synthesized on a public platform to share the success stories, advancements and contributions made by entrepreneurs and innovators in driving economic growth within the state.

The MTC is seeking a qualified respondent to oversee the various aspects of the project including responsibilities and objectives encompassing a range of tasks, including but may not be limited to:

- i. developing a reasonable timetable for the completion of the project;
- ii. collaborating with MTC staff and regional stakeholders to assess the state's entrepreneurial ecosystem, to identify themes/narratives for impactful narratives and stories;
 - a. Some potential themes/narratives include: the growth and economic development impact of the Biotech and AgTech sectors in Missouri, how a state-sponsored venture capital program has helped close the early-stage funding gap for Missouri-based entrepreneurs, how state support of physical infrastructures dedicated to innovation and entrepreneurship have supported the growth of entrepreneurship within the state, specifically high-growth entrepreneurship or more traditional entrepreneurship within rural regions of the state. The MTC will look favorably on respondents with additional innovative ideas for themes/narratives included in the proposals submitted.
- iii. presenting a selection of compelling themes/narratives for articles/stories to MTC staff and leadership for further development;
- iv. conducting in-depth interviews with various stakeholders, including those that received funding from the MTC, to capture firsthand experiences demonstrating the value of nurturing the ecosystem, including MTC's pivotal role; and
- v. compiling interviews into a collection of 8-12 well-written and comprehensive articles/stories, similar to well-researched magazine articles or digital news publications with a word count ranging from 1,000 – 2,500 words each, depending on breadth of detail required for each article/story.

To accomplish the project, the respondent selected will conduct in-depth interviews with stakeholders in the ecosystem. These interviews will aim to capture the firsthand

experiences of entrepreneurs and innovators, illustrating how financial assistance has played a pivotal role in their success.

Additionally, it is crucial for these articles/stories to encompass a historical perspective, showcasing the evolution of the state's support for entrepreneurs. This historical context will emphasize the importance of MTC's support of the growth and development of these individuals and organizations. The narratives should also draw creative connections between the founder's background or the organization's journey and the competitive advantages offered by Missouri.

While the format of the final articles/stories is yet to be determined and will be developed with the selected respondent, it is essential to ensure an abundance of details and a comprehensive portrayal of the stories. These articles/stories will serve as the foundation for future MTC external communications, playing a crucial role in identifying successes in the state's historical approach and contextualizing that impact on the entrepreneurial and innovative landscape in Missouri. The primary audience for these stories will be entrepreneurs either currently residing in or contemplating a move to Missouri, entrepreneurial support organizations and elected officials.

The final articles/stories will inform, educate, and engage with the focus solely on the story itself rather than individual behind the writing. The byline of the stories will be negotiable, rather than mandatory.

2.3. Ideal Respondent

Qualified respondents should possess the following qualifications:

- residents of Missouri (preferred by not required);
- expertise in crafting compelling articles/stories focused on identifying/describing the economic development impact of innovation and entrepreneurship;
- prior experience in creating impactful narratives/articles/stories to be used for storytelling and marketing campaigns;
- ability to identify key topics from each stakeholder interview to compose intricate and imaginative articles/stories;
- excellent communication skills, outstanding organizational and interview skills, able to work with numerous stakeholders; and
- strong ability to collaborate and work as part of a team.

2.4. Term of the Project

The project is expected to span a period of approximately four to six months, culminating in the completion of a comprehensive narrative deliverable in June 2024.

The allocated budget for the Project must not surpass the amount of \$7,500. MTC reserves the right to terminate the Project at any given point, exercising its discretion and prerogative.

2.5. Available Resources

In preparation for the Project, the MTC and the selected respondent will discuss potentially captivating themes/narratives and individuals/stakeholders of interest to engage as part of the research effort for generating the individual articles/stories. When possible, the MTC will facilitate introductions to individuals/stakeholders to assist the selected respondent's research efforts. Additionally, the MTC will consider providing the selected respondent access to unpublished research compiled during the strategic initiative that resulted in the publication of the Catalyzing Innovation Report which would assist in the research and drafting efforts for the individual articles/stories.

3. Proposal Submission Requirements

3.1. General Proposal Requirements

- Each respondent must submit a single, digital PDF file of their proposal. Hard copy submissions or submissions received after the established deadline will not be considered.
- All proposals must include the subject matter outlined below in Section 4.2 and be organized in accordance with such outline.
- Any information included in the proposal that a respondent wishes to request be treated as confidential during the evaluation process should be clearly marked as confidential. All proposals submitted will become public records once the award process is completed.
- All proposals must be accompanied by a certification that (a) to the best of the respondent's knowledge and belief, the information contained in the proposal is complete, true and correct, (b) if any information requires alteration or supplementation, the respondent must agree to provide that information in writing to the MTC as soon as practical, and (c) the respondent acknowledges that submitting false or misleading information in connection with the proposal may be punishable by law. That certification can be contained within the cover letter or as a separate document in the proposal that does not count in the page limits for the answers to the direct questions (Section 3.2.ii) or the budget proposal (Section 3.2.ii).

3.2. Proposal Form and Content

(i) Cover Letter

The cover letter should include the name and contact information of the respondent, a brief summary of why the respondent is interested in the opportunity, and the respondent's qualifications.

The cover letter may not exceed one page in length.

(ii) Direct Questions

Each proposal should include a section that clearly and concisely addresses the subjects below:

- an introduction to the respondent, presenting a detailed overview of the individuals who will be involved in the Project and their relevant expertise;

- outline of a minimum of three comparable projects that the respondent has recently completed, accompanied by direct links to the written deliverables, metrics and achievements of those projects;
- how the respondent envisions collaborating with the MTC and its regional partners to develop and refine the Project's scope;
- an overview and work plan detailing the execution of the Project, including the research and drafting process for the individual themes/narratives and how they will be integrated into a larger comprehensive article/story;
- specific milestones of achievement with a project timeline;
- any requirements of the MTC that are necessary for the successful execution of the Project, as well as any material assumptions incorporated in the proposal's development that may impact the methodology, approach, projected timeline, and projected budget; and
- a minimum of three and a maximum of five references with full contact information (full name, organization, title, email address, and phone number) from different projects.

(iii) Budget

The proposal should include a high-level budget and supporting budget narrative, including hourly rates or flat fee structure, payment structure, retainers (if any), and any other fee or payment-related information that would be relevant to the selection of a Respondent. All budgets should include a proposed schedule for disbursement of funds based on the Respondent achieving key milestones and include projected dates for the milestones and disbursements.

Project funds may not be used to reimburse the respondent for any costs expended prior to the award date. For the avoidance of doubt, MTC reserves the right to negotiate payment terms to align with MTC's standard procedures.

Proposals should include all aspects of the Direct Questions section and the Budget section and may not exceed 10-12 pages in length, not including the cover letter and certifications.

4. Award Process and Post-Award Monitoring

4.1. Proposal Review Process

After the submission deadline, the MTC will review all proposals received to determine whether each proposal meets the eligibility criteria and complies with the requirements of this RFP. All proposals determined to comply will be reviewed by the Executive Director. The MTC reserves the right to solicit the review and advice of external evaluators. The MTC may also request additional information to assist in their evaluation of proposals. The MTC Executive Committee will approve the respondent selected as well as the engagement agreement.

4.2. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be scored using the five criteria outlined below:

(i) Respondent's Qualifications and Experience (50%)

Respondent's proposal must exhibit a strong track record of executing similar projects and have a qualified team with relevant experience. Respondents must have completed at least three similar projects. Respondent should highlight experience working on projects with state agencies.

(ii) Proposed Approach and Work Plan (20%)

Respondent's proposal must include a satisfactory approach and work plan.

(iii) Appropriateness of Budget & Timeline (20%)

Respondent's proposal must include a thorough budget and timeline for implementing the Project.

(iv) Overall Quality of Proposal (10%)

Respondent's proposal should reflect a level of detail orientation and quality of deliverables expected of the final Project deliverables.

4.3. Engagement

Upon review and approval by the MTC Executive Committee, the successful respondent will be notified by the MTC staff. The MTC staff will provide an engagement agreement reflective of the selected vendor's expertise and experience. The engagement agreement will include customary confidentiality obligations with respect to all MTC information. No funds will be distributed until such an agreement is approved by the MTC Executive Committee and executed by the Executive Director.

4.4. Contract Requirements

4.4.1 Reporting Requirements

The engagement agreement will require the successful respondent to submit (a) monthly reports during the project timeline, and (b) additional reporting as requested by the MTC from time to time at the MTC's sole discretion.

4.4.2 Public Disclosure, Media, and Publications

The engagement agreement will require the successful respondent to obtain the written consent of the MTC prior to making any press release or public statement which refers to the terms and conditions of the Project or the engagement agreement with appropriate attribution to the MTC in any public statement.