

National Network for Microelectronics Education (NNME)

Regional Node Request for Proposals (RFP) Questions and Answers

November 3, 2025

Eligibility and Application Process

1. **I wanted to clarify if there is an institutional limitation for how many applications can be submitted.**

There is no institutional cap on the number of applications that can be submitted.

2. **Does the applicant have to be on the matchmaking list to apply? If not, is it preferred?**

No. The matchmaking list was provided as an optional tool to connect with partners who opted in to matchmaking. It is not tied to scoring, and applicants do not have to be on the matchmaking list to apply.

3. **Please confirm time on 12/22, initially saw 3pm ET**

The proposal submission deadline is December 22, 2025, by 11:59 PM ET.

4. **Do sub-awardees also need to demonstrate 30-day operational readiness, or is that requirement specific to the lead?**

Yes, if the work being performed by the sub-awardee is critical to early implementation. Otherwise, the requirement applies to the lead applicant.

5. **Can a for-profit training company be an operator of a regional node?**

For-profit entities may participate as consortium partners or subrecipients but are not eligible to serve as the lead applicant.

Geographic Scope and Consortium Composition

6. **Can two colleges/universities from different regional areas (FL and TX) work on same node?**

Yes, they can. We do not have a pre-defined list of geographical regions and encourage applicants to partner across state lines and across regions if there is alignment with shared labor markets or industry clusters, and if the partnership supports the Regional Node's strategy and workforce goals.

7. **Is the WFD focus purely on micro/ semi or does it include the entire supply chain to include equipment, materials manufacturing? Are we also expecting training of those in machinery manufacturing like AMAT?**

The NNME initiative focuses on microelectronics workforce development, particularly aligned to semiconductor-related investments. While the primary emphasis is on microelectronics, applicants are encouraged to define their regional scope based on industry presence and workforce needs, which may include equipment and materials manufacturing if relevant to the region's semiconductor ecosystem.

8. Are nodes defined on geographic location or can they be defined as technology of interest?

Regional Nodes are primarily defined by geographic region, aligned to regional labor markets and shared industry clusters. It is up to Regional Nodes to decide if they want to also align themselves with a technology of interest.

9. Regarding geographic scope, if there is overlap with other applications, how will NNME determine which best serves the area, and if necessary, will applicants be able to adjust node service area?

Geographic overlap among proposals is expected. Overlapping proposals will be assessed on their distinct regional strategies and strengths. Please review RFP Section 6 for full details on the scoring and evaluation.

10. Can a region span multiple states and labor markets if justified by industry footprint and commuting patterns?

Yes, we encourage multi-state regions supported by evidence of regional labor markets and shared industry clusters.

11. You mentioned that if a region has a lot of separate applications might imply a lack of collaboration. From the perspective of reviewers, does this point to a strong need for a regional node to bridge those gaps or are you preferring to fund an existing network?

We value both well-established and emerging networks that can demonstrate a strong plan to unify the regional efforts. Reviewers will not favor one over the other; instead, they will evaluate each proposal based on criteria outline in RFP Section 6.

12. Is there a minimum number/mix of partners beyond the “one or more” language (e.g., at least one employer, one IHE, one workforce board, etc.)?

There is no minimum required beyond what is outlined in RFP Section 3.3.

13. Can the same partner participate (as a funded or unfunded member) in multiple Regional Node proposals across different regions?

Yes.

14. Please define “funded performer.”

A funded performer is an entity receiving NNME funds to carry out specific project activities under a subaward or contract.

15. Please define “unfunded performer.”

An unfunded performer contributes resources or expertise but does not receive direct NNME funding.

16. Please explain the difference between “unfunded partners” and “participants.”

Participants may include any stakeholder engaged in NNME activities (funded or unfunded). “Unfunded partners” specifically contribute without direct funding.

17. What is the difference between performers (asked above in question 2) and “participants”?

Performers carry out specific NNME project activities and contribute resources or expertise. Participants may include any stakeholders engaged in NNME activities.

18. Is a subgrantee a “funded performer”?

Yes, a subgrantee receiving funds for project execution is a funded performer.

19. Please clarify that all partners (funded & unfunded), performers, and all participants and proposers are all “consortium members”?

Yes, they are all consortium members.

20. Please clarify that all partners (funded & unfunded), performers, participants, and proposers = “consortium members” need to submit a 1 page letter of support?

Yes, all consortium members need to submit a 1-page letter describing their role and participation.

21. Will an application be scored down if the partners (unfunded & funded), performers, participants, proposers, and consortium members use a formalized template for the letter of support? The entity submitting the letter of support would explain their participation and/or efforts.

No.

22. Is it better to list all partners (universities, economic development orgs, government partners, etc.) as a “non funded performer”?

Please determine whether the specific partner is going to receive NNME funds to carry out specific project activities. A funded performer is an entity receiving NNME funds to carry out specific project activities under a subaward or contract. An unfunded performer contributes resources or expertise but does not receive direct NNME funding.

23. If universities can be a part of multiple nodes, what is the preferred way to refer to them in the application?

Please determine whether the specific partner is going to receive NNME funds to carry out specific project activities. A funded performer is an entity receiving NNME funds to carry out specific project activities under a subaward or contract. An unfunded performer contributes resources or expertise but does not receive direct NNME funding.

24. Please provide a definition for “communities of practice.”

Communities of practice are ongoing learning groups where Regional Nodes collaborate with each other to share best practices and resources to strengthen NNME impact.

Funding, Budget, and Allowable Costs

25. Is the up to \$5M amount still relevant for first 4 nodes?

Yes, an initial amount of up to \$5 million per Regional Node is available for Year 1, with follow-on year funding dependent on the availability of funds and evaluation of performance/collaboration.

26. Does “up to \$5M per Regional Node (Year 1)” indicate a hard ceiling or a typical/expected range?

It is a hard ceiling.

27. Is any cost share or match required, or merely encouraged?

Cost share is encouraged but not required.

28. May for-profit training providers/technology vendors receive funding as subrecipients, or must they be unfunded partners?

For-profit training providers and vendors may participate as funded subrecipients if their role is essential to the project's delivery. Their participation and funding must be clearly justified in the proposal.

29. Do you plan another cycle of RFPs, if so when?

The current RFP funds up to four Regional Nodes. Future funding cycles are anticipated but will depend on available resources, performance evaluations, and evolving industry needs. Specific timelines for subsequent RFPs have not yet been announced.

30. For clarity, first round up to 4 nodes, then 8?

Yes, the first round will fund up to 4 Regional Nodes. Future expansion to additional nodes is anticipated, but contingent on funding availability and program evaluation.

31. Do indirect costs follow the 10% de minimis cap for all funded entities (prime and sub-awardees)?

Indirect costs are capped at the federally recognized de minimis rate (15%) across all entities to ensure equitable use of program funds.

32. Universities who have their own federal negotiated indirect cost agreement (NICRA) need to utilize their NICRA rates consistently when funds originate from a federal source unless limited by a federal statute. Could you please confirm that this de minimis rate cap is only applicable to those who do not have a NICRA?

Under NNME's "Other Transaction Agreements" (OTA) structure, indirect costs are capped at the federally recognized de minimis rate (15%) across all entities to ensure equitable use of program funds. NICRA rates do not apply under this mechanism.

33. Even though the “Solutions Offering for the Hub Operator” document indicates IDC rate as the rate that is approved by a government audit or

cognizant agency, why was the IDC rate changed/capped at the federally recognized de minimis rate?

Indirect costs are capped at the federally recognized de minimis rate (15%) across all entities to ensure equitable use of program funds.

- 34. Under 4.2 Allowable & Unallowable Costs (page 20): Indirect costs are capped at the federally recognized de minimis rate. Please confirm that this is 15%.**

Yes.

- 35. Confirm federally recognized de minimis rate is 15%.**

Yes.

- 36. Under 4.2 Allowable & Unallowable Costs (page 21): Capital equipment (>\$25,000 per unit) without prior written approval. Who approves this cost? Is it the Regional Node Manager, the consortium, etc?**

Approval must be obtained from the NNME Hub Operator (SEMI Foundation) prior to purchase.

- 37. May administrative/consortium-coordination labor be charged as direct costs?**

Yes, administrative and coordination labor may be charged as direct costs, assuming those costs are directly allocable to the project.

- 38. Will milestone invoices require cost backup or performance validation only?**

Milestone payments will require evidence of completion which may include performance validation. Cost backup would only be requested for audit purposes. This reflects our current understanding and is subject to modification based on federal funding requirements.

- 39. Are advance or mobilization payments permitted for start-up costs, or is reimbursement strictly after milestone acceptance?**

Advance payments will not be permitted. Milestone payments will require evidence of completion.

- 40. In order to spin up fast (within 30 days) requires having appropriate staff on payroll. Would any pre-award expenses be allowable? Those costs incurred (at risk) by proposing institutions?**

No.

- 41. Can indirect costs be recovered within milestone payments, or only as separately budgeted indirects up to the cap?**

Indirect costs should be included within milestone budgets, up to the cap. They are not submitted or paid separately from milestone payments.

- 42. Will milestones be set by applicant in application, or will NNME determine the milestones that need to be reached in order to receive and continue future year funding?**

Applicants should propose milestones in the application. NNME may provide feedback and/or revisions upon award.

- 43. For the milestone payment schedule, are milestones required to be strictly quantitative, or can qualitative, evidence-based deliverables also qualify?**

Both quantitative and qualitative deliverables qualify if supported by evidence.

- 44. Section III of the budget webform does not allow for entry of Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC). It is instead calculating Indirect Costs based off of total project costs. Can this be fixed?**

The webform has been updated to correct this issue. Please manually enter your Modified Total Direct Costs (MTDC). Indirect costs will automatically calculate at 15%. If you encounter any issues, please contact us at nnme@semi.org

- 45. Should the quarterly budget template begin with CY2026 Q2, based on the RFP anticipated award announcement of March 2026?**

Based on the anticipated timeline, the first reporting quarter should begin with CY2026 Q2 (April-June 2026). The template has removed calendar year references to clarify applicants must submit a one-year (4 quarters) project budget.

Program Design and Implementation

- 46. The RFP states – Regional Nodes are expected to be implementation, delivery partners of NNME. Does it mean Nodes will deliver contents already developed by the Hub operator. Also, RFP mentions Nodes will design/develop new content that reflects the local context. So, which of two takes precedence in the first year?**

We expect Regional Nodes to do both in Year 1 - implement NNME Hub-developed content where relevant and design new programs/content to address local needs.

- 47. Under 3.1 What is a Regional Node (page 14 & 15): It states that not all activities will be pursued at the onset of the Regional Nodes and the performers and participants, but they must be established within one year from the start of the award. Please provide examples to better illustrate the required time.**

The timeline allows Nodes to phase in activities. Examples include: a) Establishing governance structures within the first three months; b) Launching pilot workforce or education programs within the first year; and c) Completing initial data reporting setup and participant onboarding within the first 6 months.

- 48. Page 23 of RFP asks for long-term sustainability strategies starting Year 2. Is it required that our project can operate fully independently after first year?**

No, but applicants must demonstrate a strong strategy for sustainability through partnerships and industry investment.

49. **Is it expected for the Regional Nodes to show resource commitment or sustainability funds from industry and others starting from second year?**

Regional Nodes must demonstrate a strong strategy for sustainability beyond Year 1 through partnerships and industry investment.

50. **Under 2.2 NNME Activities (page 8): What is the expected time period for the NNME (led by the Hub) to become sustainable beyond the funding period?**

The NNME aims to establish a self-sustaining national network by the conclusion of the NNME contract term, contingent upon the availability and duration of federal funding.

51. **If industry has a partnership with the SEMI Foundation that targets the NNME's strategic pillars, what is the best way to demonstrate this partnership? What guidance can be provided to highlight this partnership and elevating consideration on the application's scoring rubric?**

Applicants should clearly describe how these partnerships advance the goals of the NNME strategic pillars and provide evidence such as outcomes from prior joint initiatives, letters of commitment, and data-sharing agreements.

52. **How is industry "investment" defined?**

It includes vocational training, hiring projections, apprenticeships, financial or in-kind support, and participation in training design. These should tie directly to the Regional Node's strategy and goals and be documented via letters of commitment or MOUs.

Review and Selection Process

53. **Who will be reviewing? Companies, Academic, Govt?**

The review panelists are expected to include experts from academia, industry, workforce organizations, and government.

54. **How will organizations be selected/invited for oral presentations (score threshold, rank-order, or discretionary)?**

Invitations will be based on the results of a multi-stage merit review process consisting of panel scoring and consensus recommendations.

55. **Can materials be updated between written submission and oral presentation?**

No.

56. **Will responses during the oral session affect final scoring beyond clarifications?**

Oral presentations will be scored per criteria outlined in RFP Section 7. The same set of questions will be shared in advance with each proposing team invited to participate in oral presentations.

57. Will employer commitments be scored quantitatively (e.g., hires, WBL slots, dollar value) or qualitatively (strength of letters/fit)?

Reviewers will consider the scale and specificity of commitments, and how the commitments align with the Regional Node's strategy and goals.

58. Beyond the rubric, is additional consideration given to novel/innovative regional models or unique assets?

Innovative models may positively influence consensus panel discussions and final recommendations.

59. How are ties or near-ties handled across categories with similar scores?

The NNME uses a multi-stage review process that extends beyond raw scores. Proposals with similar quantitative ratings advance to consensus deliberation panels, where panelists discuss proposal strengths and areas for improvement before making final recommendations.

Legal, Compliance, and Reporting

60. Section #9 (Pgs 34-36) details the Legal, Compliance & Intellectual Property Provisions. Is it all the terms and conditions expected in the award agreement? If there are more legal and compliance requirements, is possible to get access to that all provisions or award agreement so that lead and partner institutions can review them now. This will speed up project start up (within 30 days) and for sub agreements to be executed rapidly (in matter of days).

Final OTA agreements and templates will be shared prior to award notifications to allow for early planning.

61. Is there a hard deadline regarding start date, will we receive any proposed OTA documents so that we can start working on Subawards, if any?

Yes, the start date is within 30 days of award notification. We will provide OTA templates in advance of award notification to allow for early planning.

62. Where can we access the agreement templates referenced in the RFP? We understand that this page RFP Forms has certain budget and timeline/milestone forms, but the RFP referenced (e.g., on page 11) "Templates for contracts, Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) and charters". Where would we be able to access these templates? Are there any templates for subaward agreements?

Final agreements and templates will be shared prior to award notifications to allow for early planning.

63. **In order to ensure compliance with readiness as outlined in the RFP, could you provide the mentioned templates or a link to the templates: Templates for contracts, Memorandums of Understanding (MOU) and charters, facilitation guides, and quarterly “consortium clinics” to support effective and broad regional governance with an emphasis on deep regional representation that ensures all relevant employers, educators, and workforce actors contribute to Node governance.**

Final agreements and templates will be shared prior to award notifications to allow for early planning.

64. **Will the Awardee be receiving any CUI in order to perform this project? If not, please consider removal of the Disclosure of Information term as it creates a publication restriction which is difficult for public universities to accept and manage. Or will NNME be seeking fundamental research determinations from NSF in order to allow the public release the results of this project? The intent seems to be the creation of curricula that will be made public, but this provision will require NSF approval for each release.**

No awardee will be receiving Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI) from the Hub Operator or otherwise via the NNME. Included clauses *are* required, but the curriculum and training materials developed via the NNME are not government information and are not expected to need review by NSF.

65. **Are there specific cybersecurity/compliance requirements (e.g., handling of CUI, FedRAMP-equivalent controls) for systems used to store/transfer learner/employer data?**

There are no specific cybersecurity/compliance requirements passed-through regarding learner/employer data. Additionally, NNME activities will not involve CUI-data (learner/employer or otherwise) that would require FedRAMP controls.

66. **Must the Regional Node Program Manager be hired/assigned pre-award, or can selection be contingent on funding with a defined start window?**

Applicants should identify a lead individual who can commit to early-stage coordination and communication during the proposal phase. Any post-award hiring can be contingent on funding, but we ask that applicants describe the anticipated hiring plan and timeline in their proposals. This position must be filled promptly post-award to ensure 30-day operational readiness.

67. **Can you clarify if the Regional Node Program Manager defined on page 15 is the same as the full-time node manager mentioned on page 18?**

Yes.

68. **Is it allowable for a project to name a full-time Regional Node Program Manager in addition to the Lead PI/Faculty member on the project, or are they expected to be one and the same?**

The full-time Regional Node Program Manager and the Lead PI may be separate individuals if needed. Applicants should clearly define roles and responsibilities in the proposal.

69. **Will the Hub provide a standardized KPI data schema/template and submission cadence prior to award execution?**

Yes.

70. **Should subawardee performance/financial data be submitted directly to the Hub or consolidated by the lead into a single report?**

The Regional Node Lead is responsible for reviewing and consolidating sub-awardee data before submitting it to the Hub Operator.

71. **May Nodes integrate their existing data systems with the NNME CRM/KPI portal (APIs/exports), or must they fully adopt Hub systems?**

Integration may be allowed where feasible and compliant with security requirements.

72. **What are the expected frequencies and formats for financial reporting vs. invoicing (monthly, quarterly)?**

Financial reporting and invoicing will occur quarterly, aligned with milestone completion.

73. **Are annual independent audits required for the prime and/or subawardees?**

Annual audits are not required unless otherwise specified in the agreement between SEMI/NNME and the awardee.

74. **Under 2.2 NNME Activities: It states that the NNME will develop data sharing methods with the semiconductor industry and other Government funded investments. What information/data will industry be expected to provide? What information will industry be expected to collect?**

Industry partners will be asked to provide information on workforce needs, skills gaps, and hiring projections, as well as feedback on training relevance and program outcomes. They may also collect and share data on learner participation, placement, and retention.

75. **What documentation will suffice to demonstrate “operational readiness within 30 days” (e.g., executed MOUs, hiring plan/offer letters, workplan, subaward templates)?**

Examples include signed MOUs, staff offer letters, workplans, and subaward templates.

76. **Does “openly-licensed” imply a specific license (e.g., CC BY, CC BY-SA), or will multiple open licenses be acceptable?**

Multiple open licenses are acceptable as long as they meet the federal definition of open licensing. Materials must be freely accessible and reusable, with attribution permitted. Examples include Creative Commons licenses such as CC

BY, CC BY-SA, or equivalent. Applicants should specify the license selected in their proposal.

77. May proposers use pre-existing proprietary curricula if portions cannot be fully open-sourced (e.g., submit abstracts/modules while retaining proprietary content)?

Any curriculum or materials developed with NNME funds must be openly licensed.

78. Is there a formal review/approval workflow for curriculum uploads to the NNME clearinghouse?

All curriculum uploads will undergo a review process managed by the Hub Operator to ensure alignment with NNME quality standards, compliance with open licensing, and relevance to workforce and education objectives.