

Competition #2 (2010-MEP-SDCC-01)

Competition #3 (2010-MEP-BGDP-01)

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)

Competition #2, Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01 Questions:

1. Should proposals include a one year budget or a three year budget?

Proposals should include at least a one-year proposed budget on SF-424A, Budget Information Non-Constructions. Applicants should indicate future year planned expenses for multiple year proposals. Applicants are encouraged to provide multiple year budget information on the SF-424A form.

Per Proposal Review Criteria 7, Financial Plan, of Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01, applicants should show the relevance and cost effectiveness of the financial plan for meeting the objectives of the project; the firmness and level of the applicant's total financial support for the project; and a plan to maintain the program after the cooperative agreement has expired. Factors that may be considered include: Reasonableness of the budget, both in income and expenses; strength of commitment and amount of the proposer's cost share, if any; effectiveness of management plans for control of budget; appropriateness of matching contributions; and plan for maintaining the program after the cooperative agreement has expired.

2. If multi-state MEP proposals are awarded, will separate cooperative agreements be issued to each MEP?

No, separate cooperative agreements will not be awarded. One cooperative agreement award will be made to a recipient. The recipient is the legal entity listed on the SF424 Application for Federal Assistance.

Each proposal selected and recommended for funding, upon successful negotiation, will receive a cooperative agreement award with NIST MEP. The cooperative agreement recipient will have a unique taxpayer identifying number in accordance with the provisions of the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996 (31 U.S.C. 7701).

3. Can a joint venture submit a proposal or only single entities with subcontractors submit proposals?

Yes, if the legal entity is an eligible applicant a joint venture single non-profit organization may submit a proposal for Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01.

The recipient of the cooperative agreement will be the legal entity listed on the SF424 Application for Federal Assistance and will have a unique taxpayer identifying number in accordance with the provisions of the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996 (31 U.S.C. 7701).

4. If a joint venture is allowed to submit a proposal – If one company does not receive federal funds for work performed does that effort count toward “cash” contributions or “In-kind” contribution?

A final determination will be made for each specific proposal application submitted but all contributions, including cash and third party in-kind must meet all of the criteria within Section 14.23, Cost Sharing or Matching, of 15 CFR Part 14: Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, Other Non-Profit, And Commercial Organizations [<http://oam.ocs.doc.gov/docs/GRANTS/15cfr14.pdf>].

5. Does the MEP provider need to be the holder of the MEP Cooperative Agreement?

No. Eligible applicants for Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01 may be nonprofit organizations including universities, community colleges, state governments, state technology programs and independent nonprofit organizations including existing MEP manufacturing extension centers. Organizations may submit multiple proposals under this solicitation for unique projects. A partnership with an existing MEP manufacturing extension center or centers is strongly encouraged.

6. Can match include company/client funds?

Yes, if these funds are in accordance with the applicable Federal cost principles or other terms and conditions contained in the cooperative agreement award.

Company or client funds are defined as program income. Per 15 CFR 24.25 (b), allowable cost share is defined as follows: (1) Dollar contributions from state, county, city, industrial, or other sources; (2) Revenue from licensing and royalties (Program Income); (3) Fees for services performed (Program Income); (4) [Third party] in-kind contributions of full-time personnel; (5) [Third party] in-kind contribution of part-time personnel, equipment, software, rental value of centrally located space (office and laboratory) and other related contributions up to a maximum of one-half of the host's annual share.

Cost share proposed must also meet the criteria within 15 CFR Part 14.23, Cost Sharing or Matching of the Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, Other Non-Profit, And Commercial Organizations [<http://oam.ocs.doc.gov/docs/GRANTS/15cfr14.pdf>].

7. Can a partner be a for-profit company (as a supporter, not receiving funds)?

Commercial organizations (for-profit companies) may be subcontractors to the recipient of the cooperative agreement for Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01.

8. If we have companies that can benefit from the grant proposal (if funded), can we ask them for money to help meet some of the matching requirements?

NIST MEP will award a cooperative agreement, not a grant, to accomplish the objectives of Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01.

All contributions, including cash and third party in-kind, shall be accepted as part of the recipient's cost sharing or matching when such contributions meet all of the criteria within 15 CFR Part 14.23, Cost Sharing or Matching of the Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, Other Non-Profit, And Commercial Organizations [<http://oam.ocs.doc.gov/docs/GRANTS/15cfr14.pdf>].

9. What about if the third party contribution is in form of cash?

All contributions, including cash and third party in-kind, shall be accepted as part of the recipient's cost sharing or matching when such contributions meet all of the criteria within 15 CFR Part 14.23, Cost Sharing or Matching of the Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, Other Non-Profit, And Commercial Organizations [<http://oam.ocs.doc.gov/docs/GRANTS/15cfr14.pdf>].

Per 15 CFR Part 14.2(g), "Cash contributions means the recipient's cash outlay, including the outlay of money contributed to the recipient by third parties."

10. From the RFP: "Funding Availability: MEP anticipates awarding up to \$12,000,000 in fiscal year 2010 through multiple solicitations. The total amount funded under this solicitation will vary depending on the proposals received by MEP. The total amount awarded will not exceed \$12,000,000. Projects initiated under this solicitation may be carried out over a period of up to three years. When a proposal for a multi-year award is approved, funding will generally be provided for only the first year of the program. Continuation of an award or extensions of the period of performance is at the total discretion of the DOC. If an application is selected for funding, DOC has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with that award. Funding for each subsequent year of a multi-year proposal will be contingent upon satisfactory progress and the availability of funds."

- a. Does this actually mean there will be multiple awards (as opposed to multiple solicitations)? Isn't this RFP a solicitation? Will there be other RFPs for these funds?

NIST MEP anticipates awarding up to \$12,000,000 across multiple Federal Funding Opportunities (FFO) using FY2010 appropriations. Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01 and Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-BGPD-01 will be funded using FY2010 NIST MEP funds.

The total amount funded under this solicitation (Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01) will vary depending on the proposals received by MEP. The total amount awarded between the two solicitations will not exceed \$12,000,000.

- b. Does the \$12 million ceiling apply to the full duration (up to three years) of the successful projects, or will there be \$12 million provided for the first year of the selected projects, with subsequent year funding dependent upon future appropriations? In other words, could NIST choose to fund projects totaling, say, \$25 million over three years – with \$12 million provided in the first year and the remainder subject to future funding availability?**

The \$12,000,000 refers to available NIST MEP FY2010 funding. Future year funding for the MEP program is subject to Congressional appropriations but NIST MEP anticipates continuing to fund projects supportive of the five MEP Strategic Growth Areas: supply chain, sustainability, technology acceleration, workforce and continuous improvement.

Continuation of an award or extensions of the period of performance is at the total discretion of the US Department of Commerce (DOC). If an application is selected for funding, DOC has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with that award. Funding for each subsequent year of a multi-year proposal will be contingent upon satisfactory progress and the availability of funds.

- c. If \$12 million is awarded for just the first year of multiple-year projects, will recipients have to compete for subsequent-year funds with new proposals under another open solicitation?**

No. At the end of the initial performance period for the cooperative agreement, typically a 12-month period, the legal recipient will need to submit a continuation package for the subsequent year(s) contingent upon satisfactory progress and availability of funds.

- 11. Can fees charged for services delivered under this competitive award be used as cost share?**

Yes, program income generated under a cooperative agreement for Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01 can be used as cost share on this specific cooperative agreement. The funds must comply with the applicable Federal cost principles or other terms and conditions contained in the cooperative agreement award.

Per the Hollings MEP General Terms and Conditions, Version 3.8, dated November 2009, Section 19A. "Program income earned during the project period shall be retained by the recipient and shall be used as follows in the order provided: First, to finance the minimum non-federal share of the project. Second, all program income earned in excess of that required to meet the minimum non-federal share shall be added to the funds committed to the project by MEP and the Recipient and used to further eligible project objectives and activities if declared and explained within the Center's annual operating plan.

12. Can program income generated by an MEP center on the regular MEP award be used as cost share on these competitive awards?

No. Program income generated by an MEP center as a result of the MEP center operations cooperative agreement cannot be used as cost share on an award resulting from Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01 since they represent two different cooperative agreement awards, activities, and projects. Program income remains within the cooperative agreement award in which it is generated. 15 CFR 14.2(aa) states, "Program income means gross income earned by the recipient that is directly generated by a supported activity or earned as a result of the award."

13. If we propose a program which provides services to employers (manufacturers) with the grant paying a portion of their costs, can the remaining portion be used towards the cash match requirement?

Yes, if the proposed grant funds are in accordance with the applicable Federal cost principles or other terms and conditions contained in the cooperative agreement award. Further, the proposed program funds must not be paid by the Federal Government under another award. The proposed grant must be supportive of Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01 Funding Opportunity Description.

All contributions, including cash and third party in-kind, shall be accepted as part of the recipient's cost sharing or matching when such contributions meet all of the criteria within 15 CFR Part 14.23, Cost Sharing or Matching of the Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, Other Non-Profit, And Commercial Organizations [<http://oam.ocs.doc.gov/docs/GRANTS/15cfr14.pdf>].

14. Is the funding applicant required to be a MEP? If not, does a 501 c 6 qualify to be the grantee . . . specifically, a Chamber of Commerce?

No, cooperative agreements awards may be made to any eligible applicant of Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01, including universities, community colleges, state governments, state technology programs and independent nonprofit organizations (sometimes referred to as “501c3s” per Section 501c3 of the Internal Revenue Code) including existing MEP manufacturing extension centers. Organizations may submit multiple proposals under this solicitation for unique projects. A partnership with an existing MEP manufacturing extension center or centers is strongly encouraged.

Yes, a “501c6” organization per Section 501c6 of the Internal Revenue Code is nonprofit organization and is an eligible applicant to Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01.

15. Re: the cost share requirement; 25% is required to be cash; can the in-kind amount include salaries of the grant staff? What other expenses qualify for in-kind?

No, “grant staff” or members of organizations that provide institutional support or that would be typically included as an indirect cost should not be proposed as in-kind expenses.

Per 15 CFR 290.4, allowable cost share is defined as follows: (1) Dollar contributions from state, county, city, industrial, or other sources; (2) Revenue from licensing and royalties (Program Income); (3) Fees for services performed (Program Income); (4) [Third party] in-kind contributions of full-time personnel; (5) [Third party] in-kind contribution of part-time personnel, equipment, software, rental value of centrally located space (office and laboratory) and other related contributions up to a maximum of one-half of the host's annual share.

Cost share proposed must also meet the criteria within 15 CFR Part 14.23, Cost Sharing or Matching of the Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, Other Non-Profit, And Commercial Organizations [<http://oam.ocs.doc.gov/docs/GRANTS/15cfr14.pdf>].

Per 15 CFR Part 14.2(n), “Third party in-kind contributions mean the value of non-cash contributions provided by non-Federal third parties. Third party in-kind contributions may be in the form of real property, equipment, supplies and other expendable property, and the value of goods, services and personnel directly benefiting and specifically identifiable to the project or program.”

16. On slide 15 at the bottom the section that covered “Existing or Previous MEP Centers and/or Partners”. Can you further define this and what is expected?

A list of existing MEP centers is located at <http://patapsco.nist.gov/mep/centers-near-you/index.htm> or at <http://www.nist.gov/mep/> and click on the map of the United States.

The MEP center partners are the organizations already working with existing MEP centers to achieve the MEP mission. Many partner organizations can be found on the websites of the individual MEP centers or by contacting the MEP Center.

17. If there is a consortium of Centers will you be looking for information on each existing or previous MEP Center? Also, are you looking for information as detailed as MAIM metrics, etc.

Yes, NIST MEP is asking for information on each existing or previous MEP Center proposed as part of a consortium of Centers.

No, do not provide standard NIST MEP information such as Client Impact Metrics or other NIST MEP reports. For the Federal Funding Opportunity, NIST MEP requested specific information that addresses whether the applicant's past performance with the program is indicative of expected performance and capability under a possible new award. Further, applicants should describe how and why performance is expected to be the same or different.

18. Just for clarification: Are the five required forms in addition to or included in the 25 page count for the proposal?

Per the Federal Funding Opportunity for both competitions:

A completed Standard Form 424 (Rev. 10-2005), 424A (Rev. 7-97), and 424B (Rev. 7-97) prescribed by the applicable OMB circular, Form CD-511, Certification Regarding Lobbying, and Standard Form LLL (if applicable). **Note: The SF-424, 424A, 424B, SF-LLL, and Form CD-511 will not be considered part of the page count of the proposal.**

19. Just for clarification: Is the total funding amount of \$12M to fund proposals for just this year? If the proposal is a three year proposal, funding for the additional years will be from additional funds of money allocated? Should the project also be assumed that if it is a three year proposal it will be resubmitted for funding (if available) based on performance of the proposal or will separate applications have to be submitted annually?

The \$12,000,000 refers to available NIST MEP FY2010 funding. Future year funding for the MEP program is subject to Congressional appropriations but NIST MEP anticipates continuing to fund projects supportive of the five MEP Strategic Growth Areas: supply chain, sustainability, technology acceleration, workforce and continuous improvement.

As stated in the FFO, when a proposal for a multi-year award is approved, funding will generally be provided for only the first year of the program. Continuation of an award or extensions of the period of performance is at the total discretion of the US Department of Commerce (DOC). If an application is selected for funding, DOC has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with that award. Funding for each subsequent year of a multi-year proposal will be contingent upon satisfactory progress and the availability of funds.

20. On slide 15 at the bottom the section that covered “Existing or Previous MEP Centers and/or Partners”. Can you further define this and what is expected? If there is a consortium of Centers will you be looking for information on each existing or previous MEP Center? Also, are you looking for information as detailed as MAIM metrics, etc.

For an applicant that propose a project which includes a consortium of centers, information for all MEP centers that make up the consortium should be provided, existing and previous MEP centers.

Proposal applicants should provide information of MEP center past performance with the program that is indicative of expected performance and capability under a possible new award. Applicants should also describe how and why performance is expected to be the same or different. This should not include MEP program quarterly or annual reporting information that NIST MEP would already have regarding a MEP center, such as the client impact metrics.

21. Can the client be a local plant with less than 250 employees even though they may be part of a larger corporation nationally? For example, if the client manufacturer is interested in providing cost match to help develop a tool that can be used by their plant, their sister plants and other small and large manufacturers, is this considered an eligible client to collaborate with for this RFP?

Yes, the manufacturing clients receiving services under the cooperative agreement awarded as a result of Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01 may be a manufacturing establishment with less than 250 employees at a single location even if the establishment is part of a larger corporation.

The definition of an establishment can be found at www.census.gov. “Establishment: A business or industrial unit at a single location that distributes goods or performs

services. It is not necessarily identical with a company or enterprise, which may consist of one or more establishments.”

22. May unused cost share from a current center base award be utilized as match for this Supplemental Funding? Or, will only the costs for the new project period and the proposed new program be qualified for match and reimbursement?

No, unused cost share from a current center cooperative agreement **may not** used as cost share for this proposal.

Per 14 CFR 24.25 (b), allowable cost share is defined as follows: (1) Dollar contributions from state, county, city, industrial, or other sources; (2) Revenue from licensing and royalties (Program Income); (3) Fees for services performed (Program Income); (4) [Third party] in-kind contributions of full-time personnel; (5) [Third party] in-kind contribution of part-time personnel, equipment, software, rental value of centrally located space (office and laboratory) and other related contributions up to a maximum of one-half of the host's annual share.

Cost share proposed must also meet the criteria within 15 CFR Part 14.23, Cost Sharing or Matching of the Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, Other Non-Profit, And Commercial Organizations [<http://oam.ocs.doc.gov/docs/GRANTS/15cfr14.pdf>].

23. Am I clear that if we submit the application by paper, we are not required to preregister or do anything special prior to submitting our application?

If you submit a paper or hard copy of your proposal, you **do not** need to register on Grants.gov. Only if you are submitting your proposal electronically using Grants.gov, will you need to ensure that you have an account on this website.

24. If there is clients served and other MAIM metrics through this effort, we will want them to apply to our original CA, is that permitted? This is supposed to be a proposal to:

a. Enhance our existing center delivery so I assume this is okay.

No, to insure the integrity of the two separate cooperative agreement awards and to insure the award auditing requirements, the manufacturing clients, the level of effort, and the other activities performed as well as the related reports for each cooperative agreement must be maintained separately. The reporting system of the award recipient must be able to independently track the activities related to Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01 independent of any other Federal financial award or specifically, a NIST MEP center cooperative agreement. A manufacturing client may be the similar for each award but the project activities performed for the client will be unique to each award.

25. On the cash match, can we use cash match for the first year to cover all three years or do we need to have it for each year in the agreement?

No, per the Hollings MEP General Terms and Conditions, version 3.8, November 2009, Section 18. Cost Sharing and Matching, "there can be no carryover of excess cost share from one year to the next."

29. Do you know if a 501 c 6 is eligible? What is the preferred type of match? We know that there is a 50% match and that 50% of the match must be cash.

Yes, a "501c6" organization per Section 501c6 of the Internal Revenue Code is nonprofit organization and is an eligible applicant to Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01.

Per 14 CFR 24.25 (b), allowable cost share is defined as follows: (1) Dollar contributions from state, county, city, industrial, or other sources; (2) Revenue from licensing and royalties (Program Income); (3) Fees for services performed (Program Income); (4) [Third party] in-kind contributions of full-time personnel; (5) [Third party] in-kind contribution of part-time personnel, equipment, software, rental value of centrally located space (office and laboratory) and other related contributions up to a maximum of one-half of the host's annual share.

Cost share proposed must also meet the criteria within 15 CFR Part 14.23, Cost Sharing or Matching of the Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, Other Non-Profit, And Commercial Organizations [<http://oam.ocs.doc.gov/docs/GRANTS/15cfr14.pdf>].

30. Can a MEP Center use its cash to invest in this project – for the cash match? Would that be "other related contributions"? Or ".....other sources"?

Per 15 CFR Part 14.2(g), "Cash contributions means the recipient's cash outlay, including the outlay of money contributed to the recipient by third parties."

No. Program income generated by an MEP center as a result of the MEP center operations cooperative agreement cannot be used as cost share on an award resulting from Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01 since they represent two different cooperative agreement awards, activities, and projects. Program income remains within the cooperative agreement award in which it is generated. 15 CFR 14.2(aa) states, "Program income means gross income earned by the recipient that is directly generated by a supported activity or earned as a result of the award."

Competition #3, Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-BGPD-01 Questions:

- 1. The RFP states: “Funding Availability: The total amount awarded under this solicitation will not exceed \$3,500,000. Projects initiated under this category may be carried out over a period of up to three years. If NIST selects a proposal for a multi-year award, funding will generally be provided for only the first year of the program. Continuation of an award or extensions of the period of performance is at the total discretion of the NIST. If NIST selects an application for funding, NIST has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with that award.”**

- a. How many awards are expected to be made under this solicitation?**

Without reviewing the qualified proposals, it is difficult to predict the number of awards expected.

- b. Does the \$3.5 million ceiling apply to the full duration (up to three years) of the successful projects, or will there be \$3.5 million provided for the first year of the selected projects, with subsequent year funding dependent upon future appropriations? In other words, could NIST choose to fund projects totaling, say, \$10 million over three years – with \$3.5 million provided in the first year and the remainder subject to future funding availability? (Susan Tully, TMAC)**

The total amount awarded under this solicitation will not exceed \$3,500,000. NIST MEP anticipates making project-based awards under Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-BGPD-01. Once awarded, the projects may be carried out over a period of up to three years.

- c. If \$3.5 million is awarded for just the first year of multiple-year projects, will recipients have to compete for subsequent-year funds with new proposals under an open solicitation?**

No, the recipient will not have to compete for subsequent-year funding under an open solicitation.

Continuation of an award or extensions of the period of performance is at the total discretion of the NIST. If NIST selects an application for funding, NIST has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with that award. Funding for each subsequent year of a multi-year proposal will be contingent upon satisfactory progress and the availability of funds.

2. Can non-profits which are NOT MEP Centers be part of the project team for proposals submitted under this competition?

The legal entity awarded the cooperative agreement must be an existing MEP Center representing one MEP center or a Consortium of Centers for Federal Funding Opportunity Number 2010-MEP-BGPD-01. An MEP Center or a Consortium of Centers may develop partnerships with non-profit organizations and commercial entities that support the Funding Opportunity Description (page 1) of FFO.

3. Please define the "unrestricted access" on the Announcement of Federal Funding Opportunity, Section IV. Item 2 G. "Statement reflecting that unrestricted access to and use of all knowledge, tools, material, and training and share with MEP Program, Manufacturing Extension Centers, partners and manufacturers."

Unrestricted access refers to the US Department of Commerce's (DOC) royalty-free nonexclusive and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish or otherwise use the work or authorize others to do so for Government purposes for any work produced under a DOC Federal financial assistance award. The Department Of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms And Conditions provides further information pertaining to recipient inventions and copyrights.
[<http://oamweb.osec.doc.gov/docs/GRANTS/DOC%20STCsMAR08Rev.pdf>]

4. If costs need to be covered to maintain or upgrade curriculum for example, can those costs be recouped by licensing to the MEP Centers for use?

No, NIST MEP is interested in the development and deployment of tools, methodologies and approaches resulting in the improved service delivery effectiveness of the MEP network for Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-BGPD-01. The applicant proposal should include all relevant expenses to achieve this objective or a business model that would limit future year expenses.

5. Under the Section V.1. Criteria, item 1 state the need to demonstrate that the "...project will meet the training needs of technical assistance providers..." Who do you consider technical assistance providers? Is this MEP staff?

Technical assistance providers could include existing or new MEP center and MEP center partner organization staff.

Competition #2 AND #3 Questions:

1. Is there a page limit?

Per the Federal Funding Opportunity for both Competitions:

The proposal must not exceed 25 typewritten pages in length for the basic proposal document; it may be accompanied by additional appendices of relevant supplementary attachments and tabular material. The proposal must contain both technical and cost information. The proposal page count shall include every page including pages that contain words, table of contents, executive summary, management information and qualifications, resumes, figures, tables, and pictures. All hard copy proposals shall be printed such that pages are single-sided, with no more than fifty-five (55) lines per page. Use 21.6 x 27.9 cm (8 ½" x 11") paper or A4 metric paper. Use an easy to read font of not more than about 5 characters per cm (fixed pitch font of 12 or fewer characters per inch or proportional font of point size 10 or larger). Smaller type may be used in figures and tables but must be clearly legible. Margins on all sides (top, bottom, left and right) must be at least 2.5 cm (1"). The applicant may submit a separately bound document of appendices containing other supporting information. The proposal should be self-contained and not rely on the appendices for meeting criteria. Basic proposal documents exceeding the 25 page requirement will not be reviewed.

2. Just to confirm, the required forms, 424, 424A, 424B, CD-511, and the SF-LLL are NOT included in the 25 page limit for the proposal?

Per the Federal Funding Opportunity for both competitions:

A completed Standard Form 424 (Rev. 10-2005), 424A (Rev. 7-97), and 424B (Rev. 7-97) prescribed by the applicable OMB circular, Form CD-511, Certification Regarding Lobbying, and Standard Form LLL (if applicable). **Note: The SF-424, 424A, 424B, SF-LLL, and Form CD-511 will not be considered part of the page count of the proposal.**

3. May we submit the same proposal under both RFP's with minor changes and a modified budget?

While proposal concepts may be appropriate and responsive to the requirements of both Federal Funding Opportunities, each applicant proposal submitted should be fully responsive to the specific Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO). FFO 2101-MEP-BGPD-01 and FFO 2101-MEP-SDCC-01 each have unique and specific requirements, applicant eligibility, evaluation criteria, and selection factors.

4. Is there a cap on indirect cost?

Further guidance regarding Indirect Costs is available at the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms And Conditions, Section A.05 Financial Requirements, Indirect Costs (pages 3-5) available at:
<http://oamweb.osec.doc.gov/docs/GRANTS/DOC%20STCsMAR08Rev.pdf>.

Indirect costs will not be allowable charges against the award unless specifically included as a cost item in the approved budget incorporated into the award. Each award recipient must have established or establish an indirect cost rate with a Federal agency subject to the procedures in the applicable cost principles.

The NIST MEP proposal evaluation team for each Federal Funding Opportunity will compare the project activities and all costs, including indirect costs, proposed by the applicants assessing whether the cost and activities are reasonable to achieve the federal funding opportunity description and objectives. Applicants are encouraged to fully describe and explain the expenses included in the indirect costs proposed as well as the rationale for calculating the indirect costs.

5. Is there a preferred submission? Paper v/s electronic?

No, either hard copy or in electronic format proposals will be accepted per the Federal Funding Opportunity (FFO). Proposals must comply with the directions provided in each specific FFO for submitting either paper or electronic proposals insuring applications are complete. Applicants must comply with all instructions, including the submission dates and times, for submitting hard copy or electronic proposal applications.

Please review the reminder contained in the FFO regarding proposal applications. **Important:** All applicants, of both electronic and paper applications, should be aware that adequate time must be factored into applicant schedules for delivery of the application. Applicants submitting electronic proposals are advised that volume on Grants.gov is currently heavy, and if Grants.gov is unable to accept applications electronically in a timely fashion, applicants are encouraged to exercise their option to submit applications in paper format.

6. My question is whether or not the eventual award winners of this proposal will have to transfer copyright ownership to the NIST MEP, or whether they would continue to be able to keep their copyright rights. We would certainly comply with providing ready access to these on-line tools to MEP Centers such that other Centers can market/sell and have their clients use these online tools.

No, the US Department of Commerce will not require entities that are awarded cooperatives agreements resulting from Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-BGPD-01 to “transfer copyright ownership” of “copyright materials” to the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) or the Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) program.

The Department Of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms And Conditions [<http://oamweb.osec.doc.gov/docs/GRANTS/DOC%20STCsMAR08Rev.pdf>] provides further information pertaining to recipient inventions and copyrights. With respect to copyrights, pages 24-25 of this document states that “The recipient may copyright any work produced under a DOC Federal financial assistance award **subject to DOC’s royalty-free nonexclusive and irrevocable right to reproduce, publish or otherwise use the work or authorize others to do so for Government purposes.**”

7. Are these grants new competitions or is there an incumbent? If so who is the incumbent?

Federal Funding Opportunities 2010-MEP-BGDP-01 and 2010-MEP-SDCC-01 are new competitions and there are no incumbents.

8. Do I have to include a partnership with my local MEP Center or will a partnership with a center more interested in cooperative endeavors be acceptable even if not in the same center region?

NIST MEP strongly encourages partnerships with existing MEP centers but does not require an applicant's proposal with a specific MEP center. Applicants are reminded that proposals will be evaluated against every element of the review criteria for Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-BGDP-01 or Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01, including those elements that encourage integration with MEP centers or the description of delivery and implementation mechanisms including MEP centers.

9. Can I include partnerships with other MEP Centers but not the one in my area?

Yes, applicants may propose partnerships with any existing MEP centers.

Applicants are reminded that proposals will be evaluated against every element of the review criteria for Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-BGDP-01 or Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01, including those elements that encourage integration with MEP centers or the description of delivery and implementation mechanisms including MEP centers.

10. If I propose multiple year delivery, is the funding in the outer years part of the grant award? or conditional on funding availability and appropriations?

The \$12,000,000 refers to available NIST MEP FY2010 funding. Future year funding for the MEP program is subject to Congressional appropriations but NIST MEP anticipates continuing to fund projects supportive of the five MEP Strategic Growth Areas: supply chain, sustainability, technology acceleration, workforce and continuous improvement.

As stated in the FFO, when a proposal for a multi-year award is approved, funding will generally be provided for only the first year of the program. Continuation of an award or extensions of the period of performance is at the total discretion of the US Department of Commerce (DOC). If an application is selected for funding, DOC has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with that award. Funding for each subsequent year of a multi-year proposal will be contingent upon satisfactory progress and the availability of funds.

11. Can / will the government consider adding additional funding to projects that are successful?

Proposals should include at least a one-year proposed budget on SF-424A, Budget Information Non-Constructions. Applicants should indicate future year planned

expenses for multiple year proposals. Applicants are encouraged to provide multiple year budget information on the SF-424A form.

Per Proposal Review Criteria 7, Financial Plan, of Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01, applicants should show the relevance and cost effectiveness of the financial plan for meeting the objectives of the project; the firmness and level of the applicant's total financial support for the project; and a plan to maintain the program after the cooperative agreement has expired. Factors that may be considered include: Reasonableness of the budget, both in income and expenses; strength of commitment and amount of the proposer's cost share, if any; effectiveness of management plans for control of budget; appropriateness of matching contributions; and plan for maintaining the program after the cooperative agreement has expired.

12. When and where will questions and answers be posted?

Frequently asked questions will be posted on the MEP public web-site, www.nist.gov/mep.

13. Since we are not an MEP Center, we would like to request a 30 day extension since we feel the existing Centers have an unfair advantage in responding.

NIST MEP is conducting a competitive process to award Federal Funding Opportunity 2101-MEP-BGPD-01 and Federal Funding Opportunity 2101-MEP-SDCC-01 where the same information is available to all potential applicants. NIST MEP is planning to make the awards no later than September 30, 2010 and because the review, selection, and negotiation process may be lengthy, NIST MEP cannot permit an extension. All applications must be received or postmarked no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on July 15, 2010.

14. Will the new funding be through a separate new award, or addendum to our base award which is being renewed?

Each proposal selected and recommended for funding, upon successful negotiation, will receive a new cooperative agreement award with NIST MEP; not a grant.

15. Will our CCR registration be a problem if it is brought current by July 15?

Yes, waiting until July 15, 2010, the date which applications are due for Federal Funding Opportunity 2101-MEP-BGPD-01 and Federal Funding Opportunity 2101-MEP-SDCC-01 may cause a problem for a potential applicant.

All applications must be received or postmarked no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on July 15, 2010. Any proposals not received or postmarked by the due date will not be considered and will be returned to the applicant without review.

If you plan to submit your application package electronically through Grants.gov, your organizations and individuals must first complete the CCR registration process after requesting a DUNS number from D&B. For more information, please refer to

the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) customer support line: Federal Service Desk (8am - 8pm Eastern Time), 866-606-8220 or 334-206-7828.

As instructed in the FFO, you may submit your application via paper submission to:

National Institute of Standards and Technology
Manufacturing Extension Partnership
C/o Diane Henderson
100 Bureau Drive, Stop 4800
Gaithersburg, MD 20899-4800

Plainly mark on the outside of the package that it contains a Manufacturing Extension Partnership Center proposal. For paper submissions, NIST requires an original and two (2) copies.

16. Will a 3-year proposal be approved, subject only to annual authorization review for:

- a. Satisfactory project performance results, and**
- b. Availability of NIST/MEP funds**

The \$12,000,000 refers to available NIST MEP FY2010 funding. Future year funding for the MEP program is subject to Congressional appropriations but NIST MEP anticipates continuing to fund projects supportive of the five MEP Strategic Growth Areas: supply chain, sustainability, technology acceleration, workforce and continuous improvement.

As stated in the FFO, when a proposal for a multi-year award is approved, funding will generally be provided for only the first year of the program. Continuation of an award or extensions of the period of performance is at the total discretion of the US Department of Commerce (DOC). If an application is selected for funding, DOC has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with that award. Funding for each subsequent year of a multi-year proposal will be contingent upon satisfactory progress and the availability of funds.

17. Who approves the 2nd and 3rd year funding?

As stated in the FFO, when a proposal for a multi-year award is approved, funding will generally be provided for only the first year of the program. Continuation of an award or extensions of the period of performance is at the total discretion of the US Department of Commerce (DOC). If an application is selected for funding, DOC has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with that award. Funding for each subsequent year of a multi-year proposal will be contingent upon satisfactory progress and the availability of funds.

18. May a proposal be qualified for funding which is:

- a. An existing project under our base award:**
 - (1) For which continued funding has expired**
 - (2) In which outstanding results/measurements have been achieved**

- b. **An existing program of Continuous Improvement/Lean Training:**
(1) To serve the under-served manufacturers
(2) In which outstanding results/measurements have been achieved

The projects and programs referred to in question 18a, and 18b above may qualify. As the Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01 states, "Proposals should include a project plan, a client engagement or business model and deployment strategy for the project, and an approach for **leveraging existing tools, resources and partnerships.**" and as stated in Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-BGDP-01 Competitive projects will use innovative or collaborative approaches to develop and **demonstrate integrated tools, training and methodologies for growth transformation** that meet the Strategic Growth Area needs and to share those approaches with the MEP National System.

Applicants are reminded that proposals will be evaluated against every element of the review criteria for Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-BGDP-01 or Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01.

19. Will any sub-contracts be handled and subject to the current sub-recipient contracts rules and monitoring?

Yes, per the MEP General Terms & Conditions, Section 11. Approvals; applies to all NIST MEP Cooperative Agreements. Please refer to the MEP public web-site to fully view this document. (www.nist.gov/mep)

20. Will the impacts the companies report as a result of this grant apply toward our MAIM scores or are they totally separate?

To insure the integrity of the two separate cooperative agreement awards and to insure the award auditing requirements, the manufacturing clients, the level of effort, and the other activities performed as well as the related reports for each cooperative agreement must be maintained separately. The reporting system of the award recipient must be able to track the activities related to Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01 independent of any other Federal financial award or specifically, a NIST MEP center cooperative agreement. A manufacturing client may be the similar for each award but the project activities performed for the client will be unique to each award.

21. In talking with prospective partners, we understand the MEP's incumbent provider of growth services is the Eureka! Ranch. It appears the intent of MEP is to fund their existing programs and efforts rather than solicit proposals from new partners or service providers. Is it the intent of this solicitation to provide funding only for existing programs and projects rather than new partners, programs and services?

There are no incumbents on Federal Funding Opportunities 2010-MEP-BGDP-01 and 2010-MEP-SDCC-01. As Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01 states, NIST MEP intends to fund projects to develop client engagement or business models and deployment strategies that integrate two or more of the MEP Strategic Growth Areas. With Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-BGDP-01, NIST MEP intends to fund proposals from qualified organizations for projects that address new and emerging competitive needs of manufacturers in areas consistent with the NIST MEP Program's

five Strategic Growth Areas (Supply Chain, Sustainability, Technology Acceleration, Workforce and Continuous Improvement).

The projects should further demonstrate in its proposed client engagement or business model, the benefit of this integration and how the approach can expand service capability and capacity of the MEP system. The five MEP Strategic Growth Areas are: supply chain, sustainability, technology acceleration, workforce and continuous improvement. Proposals should include a project plan, a client engagement or business model and deployment strategy for the project, and an approach for leveraging existing tools, resources and partnerships.

Applicants are reminded that proposals will be evaluated against every element of the review criteria for Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-BGDP-01 or Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01.

22. I have a few questions regarding in which NGM/SGA bucket certain items belong:

Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-BGDP-01 and Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01 both state that all qualified proposals will be evaluated based on the applicant's ability to align and integrate the program criteria to NIST MEP's Next Generation Strategy: Continuous Improvement, Technology Acceleration, Supplier Development, Sustainability and Workforce. The NIST MEP Next Generation Strategy can be found at www.nist.gov/mep.

Applicants are reminded that proposals will be evaluated against every element of the review criteria for Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-BGDP-01 or Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01.

a. Is matchmaking (finding new suppliers) in Supply Chain?

If matchmaking is defined as connecting technology with companies within an existing supply chain, then both technology acceleration and supplier development are two next generation strategies which are utilized in this service.

b. Is Supplier Scouting -- arguably a lot like matchmaking -- in Tech Acceleration or Supply Chain?

If Supplier Scouting is defined as connecting technology with companies within an existing supply chain, then either technology acceleration and/or supplier development are two next generation strategies which could be utilized in this service.

c. Is exporting (e.g., ExporTech) in Supply Chain or Tech Acceleration?

Yes, as stated in; The NIST MEP Next Generation Strategy, (see www.nist.gov/mep), "To be successful manufacturers must have access to a wide range of resources that will enable them to sell to new customers, compete in new markets, and develop new products, thus creating new, more profitable revenue streams. Export should be considered in any of the 5 strategies.

d. Is helping SMMs find new customers in CI, Supply Chain, or Workforce (since it requires new marketing and sales knowledge)?

Yes, as stated in; The NIST MEP Next Generation Strategy, (see www.nist.gov/mep), “To be successful manufacturers must have access to a wide range of resources that will enable them to sell to new customers, compete in new markets, and develop new products, thus creating new, more profitable revenue streams.

23. Can you tell us the anticipated number of awards?

No, without reviewing the qualified proposals, it is difficult to predict the number of awards expected.

24. Is a cover letter desired, and if so, does it count in the 25 page count maximum permitted?

A cover letter is not required in response to Federal Funding Opportunity Number 2010-MEP-SDCC-01 or Federal Funding Opportunity Number 2010-MEP- BGPD-01. A cover letter would not be included as part of the 25 page count of the official proposal package.

25. Keeping in mind our “special relationship” with KTEC, can MAMTC apply as the MEP center or does any grant application have to flow up through KTEC?

MANAGEMENT – We will have to reword this by using a generic reference for Ctr name.

Proposed Question –

If the current legal entity (recipient) of the NIST MEP center cooperative agreement award represents a host or other organization (for example a state government agency or a university) can the legal recipient of the cooperative agreement for Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-BGDP-01 or Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01 be a subordinate organization? Or must it be the same legal entity (recipient) as the existing MEP center?

Answer –

No, the recipient does not have to be the same legal entity since NIST MEP plans to award a new and separate cooperative agreement. The recipient will be the legal entity listed on the SF424 Application for Federal Assistance which must be an eligible applicant per the specific Federal Funding Opportunity. The cooperative agreement recipient must have a unique taxpayer identifying number In accordance with the provisions of the Debt Collection Improvement Act of 1996 (31 U.S.C. 7701).

An eligible applicant for Federal Funding Opportunity Number 2010-MEP-SDCC-01 includes universities, community colleges, state governments, state technology programs and independent nonprofit organizations including existing MEP manufacturing extension centers. For purposes of this federal funding opportunity, NIST MEP will accept applicant proposals from existing MEP center recipients or subrecipients.

An eligible applicant for Federal Funding Opportunity Number 2010-MEP- BGPD-01 is an existing MEP extension center and a consortium of centers. For purposes of

this federal funding opportunity, NIST MEP will accept applicant proposals from existing MEP center recipients or subrecipients.

26. Could you explain further what this statement means?

From - Funding Opportunity Number: 2010-MEP-SDCC-01 bottom of page 5.

5. Funding Limitations

Fees and/or Profits: Fees and/or profits are not allowable costs in any financial assistance awards that may be issued pursuant to this announcement.

Fees or profits are not allowable costs for Federal Funding Opportunity Number 2010-MEP-SDCC-01 or Federal Funding Opportunity Number 2010-MEP- BGPD-01.

Please refer to OMB Circular A-21 for the list of unallowable costs.

27. I am having trouble determining if letters of support are expected for this proposal and, if so, would they be part of the 30 page limit?

Letters of support are not a requirement of the proposal. They may be incorporated into the Appendices. Please note the page count is 25 pages not 30 as stated in the question above. Please refer to the language below that can also be found in the Federal Funding Opportunity.

Per the Federal Funding Opportunity for both Competitions:

The proposal must not exceed 25 typewritten pages in length for the basic proposal document; it may be accompanied by additional appendices of relevant supplementary attachments and tabular material. The proposal must contain both technical and cost information. The proposal page count shall include every page including pages that contain words, table of contents, executive summary, management information and qualifications, resumes, figures, tables, and pictures. All hard copy proposals shall be printed such that pages are single-sided, with no more than fifty-five (55) lines per page. Use 21.6 x 27.9 cm (8 ½" x 11") paper or A4 metric paper. Use an easy to read font of not more than about 5 characters per cm (fixed pitch font of 12 or fewer characters per inch or proportional font of point size 10 or larger). Smaller type may be used in figures and tables but must be clearly legible. Margins on all sides (top, bottom, left and right) must be at least 2.5 cm (1"). The applicant may submit a separately bound document of appendices containing other supporting information. The proposal should be self-contained and not rely on the appendices for meeting criteria. Basic proposal documents exceeding the 25 page requirement will not be reviewed.

28. Financial and Technical Reporting Schedule: Detailed Financial and Technical reports shall be submitted in the format and on a scheduled basis as specified in the most current version of the NIST MEP Management Information Reporting Procedure (This document can be downloaded as a resource for development of the application at www.nist.gov/mep).

I have been unable to locate any reference to this Procedure on the web site given. I have searched and read related documents and even googled the term.

This document has been posted to the MEP web-site, www.nist.gov/mep. These are the requirements we currently follow for our current cooperative agreements.

- 30. Is each applicant required to provide a completely filled in SF-LLL (Disclosure of Lobbying Form)? Or is it required only if you do lobbying? I saw the form was required and started to complete it, but then was unsure how much of it needed filled in as we don't do any lobbying. (I don't see any place on the form though to indicate we're submitting the form, but don't do lobbying— Or do we fill in the top only & sign the bottom?)**

Per the Federal Funding Opportunity for both announcements, this form must be filled out **only if it is applicable**. Please follow the instructions on the form.

Complete this form to disclose lobbying activities pursuant to Federal Lobbying Regulations, 31 USC, Section 1352, Lobbying Disclosure Act, P. L. 104-65. The regulation requires that a recipient of federal funds who uses non-federal funds for lobbying purposes report those activities to the awarding agency.

- 31. Both RPPs state that funded projects may be carried out over a period of 3 years. If we are proposing a project that will be carried out over 3 years, do we submit a budget only for the first year of the project or a budget that covers all 3 years of the project?**

Proposals should include at least a one-year proposed budget on SF-424A, Budget Information Non-Constructions. Applicants should indicate future year planned expenses for multiple year proposals. Applicants are encouraged to provide multiple year budget information on the SF-424A form.

Per Proposal Review Criteria 7, Financial Plan, of **Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP-SDCC-01**, applicants should show the relevance and cost effectiveness of the financial plan for meeting the objectives of the project; the firmness and level of the applicant's total financial support for the project; and a plan to maintain the program after the cooperative agreement has expired. Factors that may be considered include: Reasonableness of the budget, both in income and expenses; strength of commitment and amount of the proposer's cost share, if any; effectiveness of management plans for control of budget; appropriateness of matching contributions; and plan for maintaining the program after the cooperative agreement has expired.

Per Proposal Review Criteria 7, Financial Plan, of **Federal Funding Opportunity 2010-MEP- BGPD-01**, applicants should show the relevance and cost effectiveness of the financial plan for meeting the objectives of the project and the firmness and level of the applicant's total financial capacity for the project. Factors that may be considered include: Reasonableness of the budget; strength of commitment; effectiveness of management plans for control of budget; and demonstration of past successful experience on similar projects.

- 32. Are both competitions intended to be funded for multiple years, or is one more likely to be funded for multiple years than the other?**
There appears to be language in both that indicates multiple year funding is possible, but please clarify the intention.

The \$12,000,000 refers to available NIST MEP FY2010 funding. Future year funding for the MEP program is subject to Congressional appropriations but NIST MEP anticipates continuing to fund projects supportive of the five MEP Strategic Growth Areas: supply chain, sustainability, technology acceleration, workforce and continuous improvement.

Continuation of an award or extensions of the period of performance is at the total discretion of the US Department of Commerce (DOC). If an application is selected for funding, DOC has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with that award. Funding for each subsequent year of a multi-year proposal will be contingent upon satisfactory progress and the availability of funds.

33. What's the url for the website?

The URL for the MEP web-site is www.nist.gov/mep.

34. Do we need to file a CD-346 and, if so, is the person we submit it for just President/CEO?

The CD-346 form is not required with your proposal application. Once a proposal has been selected for award; you may be required to submit this form for the NIST Grants Office for the key personnel.

35. Do we need to file a SF LLL, DISCLOSURE OF LOBBYING ACTIVITIES?

The SF-LLL must be submitted if applicable to the organization. Please refer to the instructions on the second page of the SF-LLL.

Complete this form to disclose lobbying activities pursuant to Federal Lobbying Regulations, 31 USC, Section 1352, Lobbying Disclosure Act, P. L. 104-65. The regulation requires that a recipient of federal funds who uses non-federal funds for lobbying purposes report those activities to the awarding agency.