



**MEP • MANUFACTURING
EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP**

NIST
National Institute of
Standards and Technology
U.S. Department of Commerce

Information Webinar Federal Funding Opportunity: 2015-NIST-MEP-01

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WELCOME

Informational Webinar – March 30, 2015
2 p.m. (EDT)

Federal Funding Opportunity: 2015-NIST-MEP-01

National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)
Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP)

Mark Troppe, Manager of Partnership & Program Development, NIST MEP
Tab Wilkins, Regional Manager for Strategic Transition, NIST MEP
Diane Henderson, Manager, Competitions NIST MEP



Information Webinar and Communication Protocols

- Webinar serves as a communication vehicle to provide an overview of the funding opportunity.
- During the webinar, proprietary technical discussions about specific project ideas will not be permitted.
- NIST/MEP staff will not critique or provide feedback on any project ideas during the webinar or at any time before submission of a proposal to MEP.
 - We will consider questions of a clarifying nature that are not specific to an individual proposal.
 - If you want to submit questions following the webinar, please email them to MEP at mepffo@nist.gov.

Information Webinar Agenda

- NIST MEP Program Overview
- Funding Opportunity Overview
- Evaluation Criteria
- Review and Selection Process
- Selection Factors
- Administration Requirements for Applications
- Reporting Requirements
- MEP Resources
- Agency Contacts
- FAQs
- Staying in touch

MISSION

“ To enhance the productivity and technological performance of U.S. Manufacturing. ”

ROLE

MEP's state and regional centers facilitate and accelerate the transfer of manufacturing technology in partnership with industry, universities and educational institutions, state governments, and NIST and other federal and research laboratories and agencies.

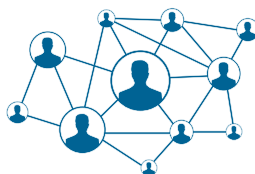


MEP Program in Short



Program Started in 1988

At least one center in all 50 states by 1996



National Network

60 Centers with over 550 Field Locations. System wide, Non-Federal Staff is over 1,200. Contracting over 3,200 third party service providers.



Partnership Model

Federal, State and Industry



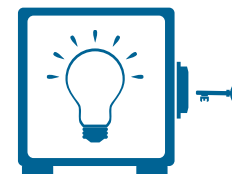
MEP System Budget

\$130 Million Federal Budget with Cost Share Requirements for Centers



Global Competitiveness

Program was created by the 1988 Omnibus Trade And Competitive Act



Evolving Role

Program continues to evolve in order to support manufacturers during changing economic situations.



MEP Strategic Plan (2014-2017)

Strategic Goals

ENHANCE COMPETITIVENESS

Enhance the competitiveness of U.S. manufacturers, with particular focus on small and medium-sized companies.

CHAMPION MANUFACTURING

Serve as a voice to and a voice for manufacturing and manufacturers in engaging policy makers, stakeholders, and clients.

SUPPORT PARTNERSHIPS

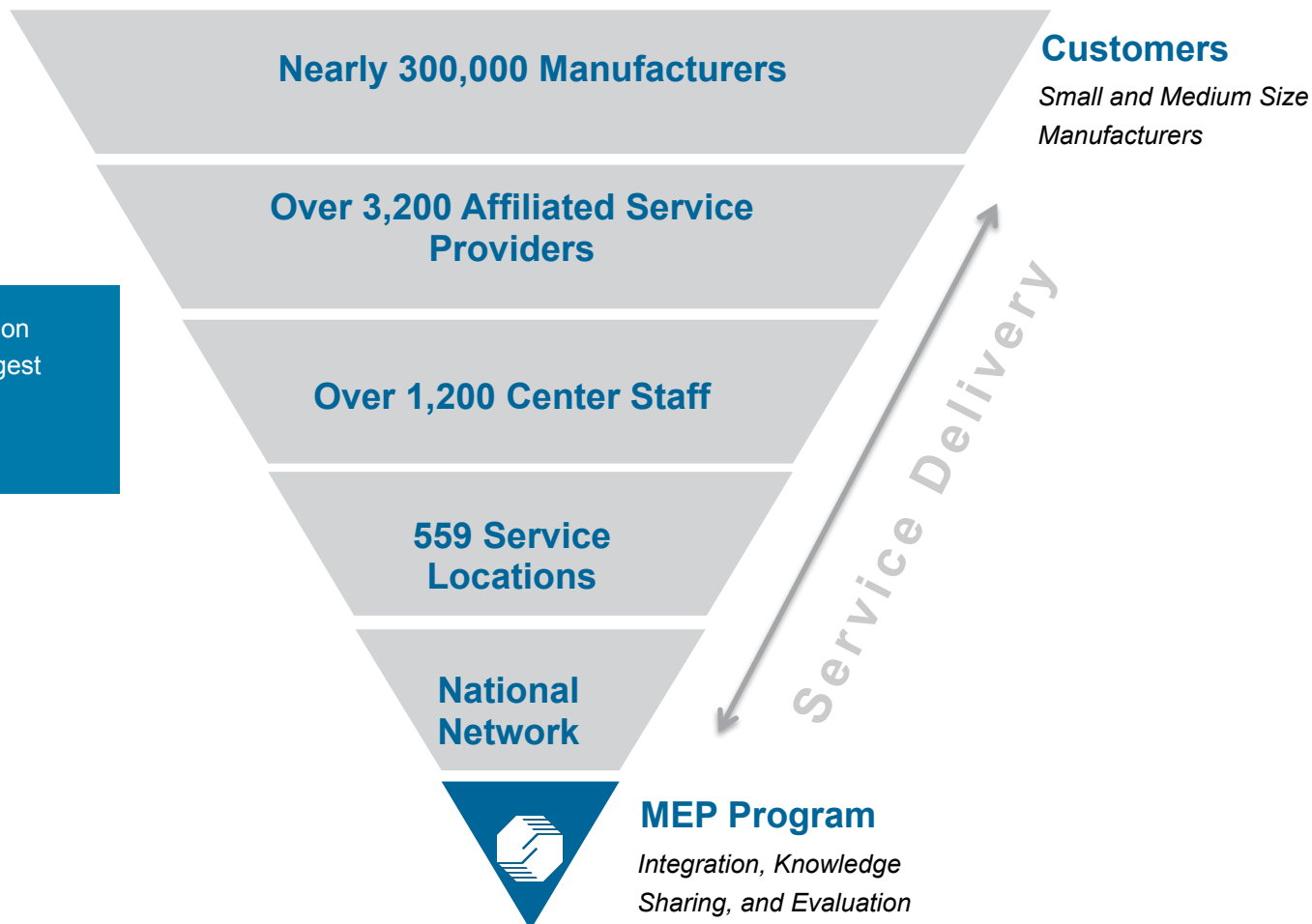
Support national, state, and regional manufacturing eco-systems and partnerships.

DEVELOP CAPABILITIES

Develop MEP's capabilities as a learning organization and high performance system.



Partnering to Drive a National Program



The MEP network focuses on solving manufacturers' biggest challenges and identifying opportunities for growth.



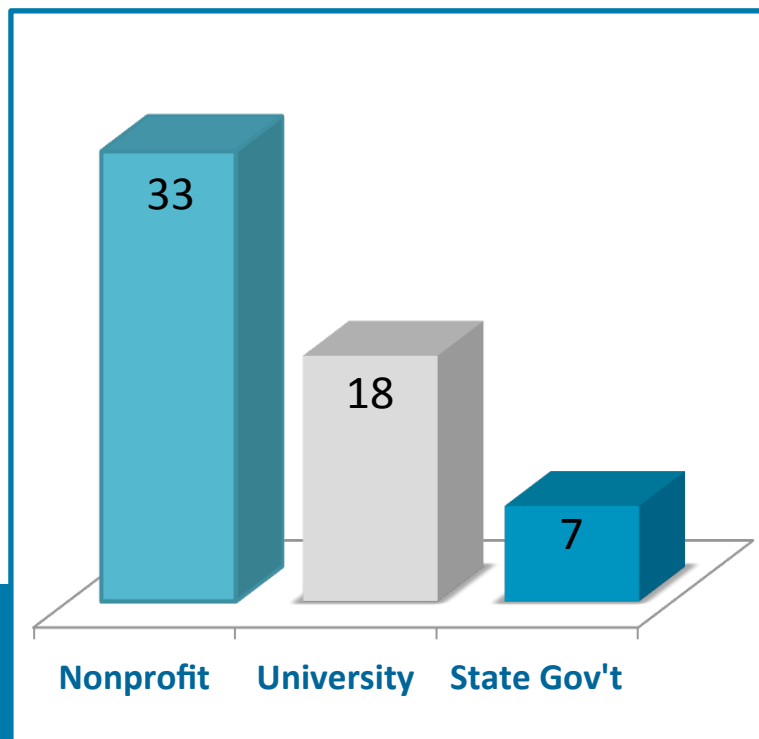
National Network



MANUFACTURING
EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP
National Network



Center Structure Diversity



Partnerships

Utilizes existing local resources to provide manufacturing extension services **relies heavily on partnerships**

Geography

Urban and Rural Areas.
Centers are never more than 2 hours away of a manufacturer.

Public & Private Sector

Staff are employees of the Center and its partners – **not** the Federal Government

Organization Type

Nonprofit
University
State Government

Organizational Structure

- Single location
- Principal organization with independent partner organizations
- Central office with regional offices
- Headquarters operation with multiple field offices



How Centers work with Manufacturers



1

Initial Contact

Group sessions, referral



2

Assessment

Informal walk-through,
detailed company
analysis



3

Identify

Find potential issues,
define proposed
project and approach
for solving it



4

Negotiate

Consult with company
and sign project
contract with fee paid
to center



5

Project Execution

Center staff, partner
organization, and/or third
party consultants



After completion, project follow-up by center to assure customer satisfaction and explore further project opportunities



Project impact data collected by contractor for NIST approximately 6 months after project completion

What MEP Does



- ✓ Work with small and medium size manufacturers to help them create and retain jobs, increase profits and save time and money
- ✓ Focus on meeting manufacturer's short term needs, but in context of overall company strategy.
- ✓ Reach over **30,000 manufacturing firms** and complete over **10,000 projects** per year.
- ✓ Provides companies with a consistent set of services including:



Supply Chain
Development



Technology
Acceleration



Workforce
Development



Lean
Process



Innovation
and Growth

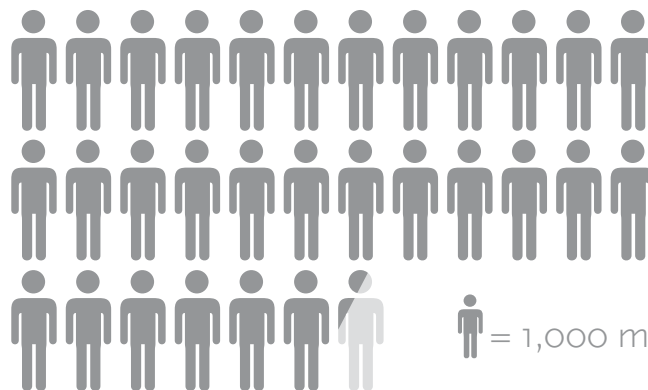


Sustainability



Client Impacts

30,056
Manufacturers
served in FY2014



 = 1,000 manufacturers



JOBS RETAINED

46,069



JOBS CREATED

17,883



NEW CLIENT
INVESTMENTS

\$2.7
Billion



COST SAVINGS

\$1.1
Billion



RETAINED SALES

\$4.2
Billion

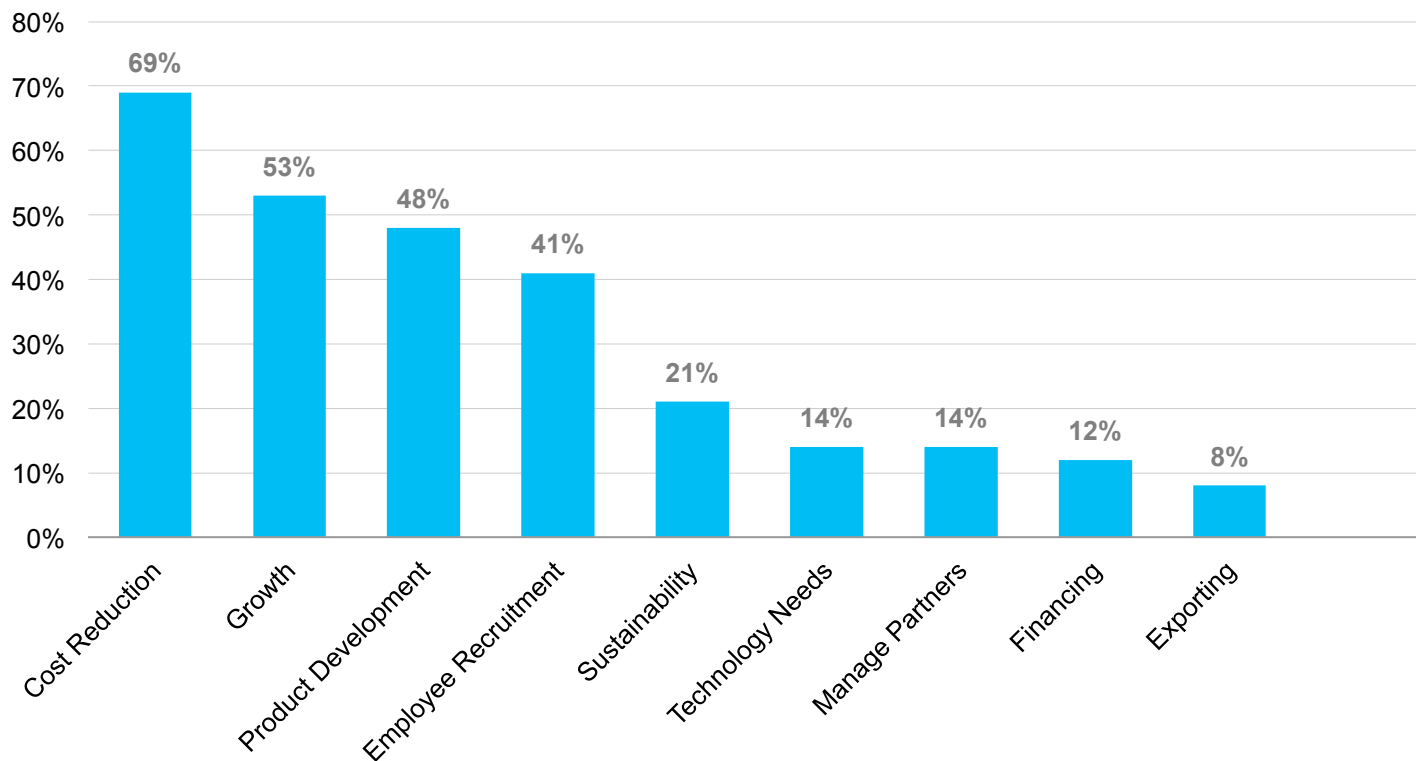


NEW SALES

\$2.5
Billion



Client Challenges



MEP Program Initiatives & Services



MEP's Program Initiatives & Services

are aimed to help manufacturers identify opportunities that will accelerate and strengthen their growth and competitiveness in the global marketplace



The MEP Organization



Carroll A. Thomas
Director, MEP

Effective April 2015

Center Operations



William Kinser, Chief

Oversees the use of federal funds awarded through MEP centers cooperative agreements

Partnerships and Program Development



Mark Troppe, Chief

Identifies new service offerings for implementation by MEP Center system. And works with MEP Centers to foster partnerships with federal, state, and local partners.

System Operations Office



Mike Simpson, Chief

Helps MEP Centers identify opportunities for serving manufacturers. Regional managers serve as primary points of contact with MEP Centers



The MEP Organization

Manufacturing Policy & Research



Ken Voytek, Acting Manager

Conducts performance evaluations for the MEP Center system and facilitates reporting of MEP performance data.

Communications



Kari Reidy, Acting Manager

Manages public outreach and internal and external communications.

Administration & Finance



Ron Gan, Chief of Staff and CFO

Develops and maintains information technology tools for NIST and the MEP center system. Manages financial and budgetary processes.



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Funding Opportunity Overview (1)

- **Funding Opportunity Title:** *Award Competitions for Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Centers in the States of Alaska, Idaho, Illinois, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Utah, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin*
- **Funding Opportunity Description:**
 - *NIST invites applications from eligible organizations in connection with NIST's funding up to twelve (12) separate MEP cooperative agreements for the operation of an MEP Center in the designated States' service areas and in the funding amounts identified in Section II.2. of the FFO. NIST anticipates awarding one (1) cooperative agreement for each of the identified States.*
 - *Objective of the MEP Center Program is to provide manufacturing extension services to primarily small and medium-sized manufacturers within the whole State designated in the applications.*

Funding Opportunity Overview (2)

- **Authority:** The statutory authority for this program is 15 U.S.C. §278k, as implemented in 15 C.F.R part 290
- **Funding Instrument:** Cooperative Agreement
 - The nature of NIST’s “substantial involvement” will generally be collaboration between MEP and the recipient organization(s).

Funding Opportunity Overview (3)

- **Funding Available:**
 - NIST anticipates funding twelve (12) MEP Center awards with an initial five-year period of performance in accordance with the multi-year funding policy described in Section II.3. of the FFO. Initial funding for the projects listed in this FFO is contingent upon the availability of appropriated funds.
 - **Below are the twelve (12) States identified for funding as part of this FFO:**

MEP Center Location and Assigned Geographical Service Area (by State)	Anticipated Annual Federal Funding for Each Year of the Award	Total Federal Funding for 5 Year Award Period
Alaska	\$500,000	\$2,500,000
Idaho	\$640,236	\$3,201,180
Illinois	\$5,029,910	\$25,149,550
Minnesota	\$2,653,649	\$13,268,245
New Jersey	\$2,814,432	\$14,072,160
New York	\$5,985,194	\$29,925,970
Ohio	\$5,246,822	\$26,234,110
Oklahoma	\$1,309,080	\$6,545,400
Utah	\$1,147,573	\$5,737,865
Washington	\$2,534,872	\$12,674,360
West Virginia	\$500,000	\$2,500,000
Wisconsin	\$3,250,792	\$16,253,960

Funding Opportunity Overview (4)

- **Multi-Year Funding Policy.**
 - When an application for a multi-year award is approved, funding will usually be provided for only the first year of the project.
 - Recipients will be required to submit detailed budgets and budget narratives prior to the award of any continued funding.
 - Continued funding for the remaining years of the project will be awarded by NIST on a non-competitive basis, and may be adjusted higher or lower from year-to-year of the award, contingent upon satisfactory performance, continued relevance to the mission and priorities of the program, and the availability of funds.
 - Continuation of an award to extend the period of performance and/or to increase or decrease funding is at the sole discretion of NIST.
- **Potential for Additional 5 Years.**
 - Initial awards issued pursuant to this FFO are expected to be for up to five (5) years with the possibility for NIST to renew the award, on a non-competitive basis, for an additional 5 years at the end of the initial award period.
 - The review processes in 15 C.F.R. § 290.8 will be used as part of the overall assessment of the recipient, consistent with the potential long-term nature and purpose of the program.
 - In considering renewal for a second five-year, multi-year award term, NIST will evaluate the results of the annual reviews and the results of the 3rd Year peer-based Panel Review findings and recommendations as set forth in 15 C.F.R. § 290.8, as well as the Center's progress in addressing findings and recommendations made during the various reviews.
 - The full process is expected to include programmatic, policy, financial, administrative, and responsibility assessments, and the availability of funds, consistent with Department of Commerce and NIST policies and procedures in effect at that time.

Funding Opportunity Overview (5)

- Cost Share or Matching Requirements:**

Non-Federal cost sharing of at least 50 percent of the total project costs is required for each of the first through the third year of the award, with an increasing minimum non-federal cost share contribution beginning in year 4 of the award as follows:

Year of Center Operation	Maximum NIST Share	Minimum Non-Federal Share
1-3	1/2	1/2
4	2/5	3/5
5 and beyond	1/3	2/3

- Non-Federal cost sharing is that portion of the project costs not borne by the Federal Government. The applicant’s share of the MEP Center expenses may include cash, services, and third party in-kind contributions, as described at 2 C.F.R. § 200.306, as applicable, and in the MEP program regulations at 15 CFR § 290.4(c). **No more than 50% of the applicant’s total non-Federal cost share for any year of the award may be from third party in-kind contributions of part-time personnel, equipment, software, rental value of centrally located space, and related contributions, per 15 CFR § 290.4(c)(5).** The source and detailed rationale of the cost share, including cash, full- and part-time personnel, and in-kind donations, must be documented in the budget tables and budget narratives submitted with the application and will be considered as part of the review under the evaluation criterion found in Section V.1.c.ii. of this FFO.
- Recipients must meet the minimum non-federal cost share requirements for each year of the award as identified in the chart above.** For purposes of the MEP Program, “program income” (as defined in 2 C.F.R. § 200.80, as applicable) generated by an MEP Center may be used by a recipient towards the required non-federal cost share under an MEP award.

Funding Opportunity Overview (6)

- **Eligible Applicants.**
 - The eligibility requirements given in this section of the FFO will be used in lieu of those given in the MEP regulations found at 15 CFR part 290, specifically 15 CFR § 290.5(a)(1).
 - Each applicant for and recipient of an MEP award must be a U.S.-based nonprofit institution or organization. For the purpose of this FFO, nonprofit institutions include public or private nonprofit organizations, nonprofit or State colleges and universities, public or nonprofit community and technical colleges, and State, local or Tribal governments. Existing MEP awardees and new applicants who meet the eligibility criteria set forth in this section may apply.
 - An eligible organization may work individually or may include proposed subawards to eligible organizations or proposed contracts with any other organization as part of the applicant's proposal, effectively forming a team.
 - However, as discussed in Section III.3.a. of the FFO, NIST generally will not fund applications that propose an organizational or operational structure that, in whole or in part, delegates or transfers to another person, institution, or organization the applicant's responsibility for core MEP Center management and oversight functions. *See also* Section IV.6. of the FFO for funding restrictions under the MEP Program.

Funding Opportunity Overview (7)

Kick-Off Conferences

- **Each recipient will be required to attend a kick-off conference**, which will be held at the beginning of the project period, to help ensure that the MEP Center operator has a clear understanding of the program and its components.
- The kick-off conference will take place at NIST/MEP headquarters in Gaithersburg, MD, during which time NIST will:
 - (1) orient MEP Center key personnel to the MEP program;
 - (2) explain program and financial reporting requirements and procedures;
 - (3) identify available resources that can enhance the capabilities of the MEP Center; and
 - (4) negotiate and develop a detailed three-year operating plan with the recipient. NIST/MEP anticipates an additional set of site visits at the MEP Center and/or telephonic meetings with the recipient to finalize the three-year operating plan.
- The kick-off conference will take up to approximately 5 days and must be attended by the MEP Center Director, along with up to two additional MEP Center employees.
- Applicants **must** include travel and related costs for the kick-off conference as part of the budget for year one (1), and these costs should be reflected in the SF-424A covering the first four (4) years of the project. (See Section IV.2.a.(2). of this FFO.)
- These costs must also be reflected in the budget table and budget narrative for year 1, which is submitted as part of the budget tables and budget narratives section of the Technical Proposal. (See Section IV.2.a.(6).(e). of this FFO.)
- Representatives from key subrecipients and other key strategic partners may attend the kick-off conference with the prior written approval of the Grants Officer. Applicants proposing to have key subrecipients and/or other key strategic partners attend the kick-off conference should clearly indicate so as part of the budget narrative for year one of the project.

Funding Opportunity Overview (8)

MEP System-Wide Meetings

- NIST/MEP typically organizes system-wide meetings approximately four times a year in an effort to share best practices, new and emerging trends, and additional topics of interest.
- These meetings are rotated throughout the United States and typically involve 3-4 days of resource time and associated travel costs for each meeting.
- The MEP Center Director must attend these meetings, along with up to two additional MEP Center employees.
- Applicants **must** include travel and related costs for four quarterly MEP system-wide meetings in each of the five (5) project years (4 meetings per year; 20 total meetings over five-year award period).
- These costs must be reflected in the SF-424A covering the first four (4) years of the project (see Section IV.2.a.(2). of this FFO) and in the SF-424A covering year five (5) of the project (see Section IV.2.a.(10). of this FFO).
- These costs must also be reflected in the budget tables and budget narratives for each of the project's five (5) years, which are submitted in the budget tables and budget narratives section of the Technical Proposal. (See Section IV.2.a.(6).(e). of this FFO).

Funding Opportunity Overview (9)

MEP CENTER OVERSIGHT BOARD

- Each Center shall establish and maintain an oversight board that is broadly representative of local stakeholders with a majority of board members drawn from local small- and medium-sized manufacturing firms.
- Members of a Center's oversight board **may not concurrently serve on more than one Center's oversight board.**
- If a Center's oversight board does not meet the requirements of this paragraph at any time during the term of an MEP award, the Center must disclose the deficiencies to the FPO and must submit a detailed plan to the FPO for bringing its oversight board into compliance with this term within 12 months.
- Additionally, each Center oversight board shall adopt bylaws governing the operation of the board, including a conflict of interest policy to ensure relevant relationships are disclosed and proper recusal procedures are in place.
- Upon request, a Center shall provide the FPO and/or NIST Grants Officer with copies of its organizational documents, including articles of incorporation or charters, ratified by-laws and conflict of interest policies.
- Please refer to Section 7 of the Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership General Terms and Conditions for further information <http://nist.gov/mep/ffo-state-competitions-02.cfm>

Funding Opportunity Overview (10)

Letters of Commitment or Support

- For non-profit applicants with a fiduciary board of directors, a resolution from such board authorizing submission of the MEP Center application to NIST and supporting the activities described therein **is required**.
- **Applicant Non-Federal Cost Sharing (Cash and In-kind):** A letter of commitment **is required** from an authorized representative of the applicant, stating the total amount of cost share to be contributed by the applicant towards the proposed MEP Center project separate and apart from the submission of the proposal.
 - This stand-alone letter **must cover all five (5) years** of the proposed MEP Center project and include a per year break-out of the applicant's contribution of non-federal cost share, as well as a per year break-out of cash cost share (including anticipated program income) and in-kind (non-cash) contributions.
- **Please make sure to review Section IV.2.a.7, Letters of Commitment or Support**

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Evaluation Review Criteria:

The applications will be evaluated based on the evaluation criteria described below.

- a. **Executive Summary and Project Narrative (40 – Sub-criteria I through iv will be weighted equally)**
 - i. Center Strategy
 - ii. Market Understanding
 1. Market Segmentation
 2. Needs Identification and Product/Service Offerings
 - iii. Business Model
 1. Outreach and Service Delivery to the Market
 2. Partnership Leverage and Linkages
 - iv. Performance Measurement and Management
- b. **Qualifications of the Applicant; Key Personnel and Organizational Structure (30 – Sub-criteria i and ii will be weighted equally)**
 - i. Key Personnel
 - ii. Organizational Structure
- c. **Budget and Financial Plan (30 – Sub-criteria will be weighted equally)**
 - i. Budget
 - ii. Quality of the Financial Plan for Meeting the Award's Non-Federal Cost Share Requirements over 5 years.

Review Criteria #1- Executive Summary and Project Narrative (Center Strategy, Market Understanding, Business Model and Performance Measurement and Management)

- a. **Executive Summary and Project Narrative.** (40 points; Sub-criteria i through iv will be weighted equally) NIST/MEP will evaluate the extent to which the applicant's Executive Summary and Project Narrative demonstrates how the applicant's methodology will efficiently and effectively establish an MEP Center and provide manufacturing extension services to primarily small and medium-sized manufacturers in the applicable State-wide geographical service area identified in Section II.2. of this FFO. Applicants should name the state to be covered in the first sentence of the Executive Summary and Project Narrative. Reviewers will consider the following topics when evaluating the Executive Summary and Project Narrative:
- i. **Center Strategy.** Reviewers will assess the applicant's strategy proposed for the Center to deliver services that support a strong manufacturing ecosystem, meet manufacturers' needs and generate impact. Reviewers will assess the quality with which the applicant:
- incorporates the market analysis described in the criterion V.1.a.ii.(1). below to inform strategies, products and services;
 - defines a strategy for delivering services that balances market penetration with impact and revenue generation, addressing the needs of manufacturers, with an emphasis on the small and medium-sized manufacturers;
 - Defines the Center's existing and/or proposed roles and relationships with other entities in the State's manufacturing ecosystem, including State, regional, and local agencies, economic development organizations and educational institutions such as universities and community or technical colleges, industry associations, and other appropriate entities;
 - plans to engage with other entities in Statewide and/or regional advanced manufacturing initiatives; and
 - supports achievements of the MEP mission and objectives while also satisfying the interests of other stakeholders, investors, and partners.

Review Criteria #1 – continued

- ii. **Market Understanding.** Reviewers will assess the strategy proposed for the Center to define the target market, understand the needs of manufacturers (especially Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs)), and to define appropriate services to meet identified needs. Reviewers will evaluate the proposed approach for regularly updating this understanding through the five years. The following sub-topics will be evaluated and given equal weight:
- 1) **Market Segmentation.** Reviewers will assess the quality and extent of the applicant's market segmentation including:
 - company size, geography, industry including a segmentation of rural, emerging, start-up and very small manufacturers as appropriate to the state;
 - alignment with state and/or regional initiatives; and
 - other important factors identified by the applicant.
 - 2) **Needs Identification and Product/Service Offerings.** Reviewers will assess the quality and extent of the applicant's proposed needs identification and proposed products and services for both sales growth and operational improvement in response to the applicant's market segmentation and understanding assessed by reviewers under the preceding Section V.1.a.ii.1. Of particular interest is how the applicant would leverage new manufacturing technologies, techniques and processes usable by small and medium-sized manufacturers. Reviewers will also consider how an applicant's proposed approach will support a job-driven training agenda with manufacturing clients.

Review Criteria #1 – continued

iii. **Business Model.** Reviewers will assess the applicant's proposed business model for the Center as the applicant provides in its Project Narrative, Qualifications of the Applicant; Key Personnel, Organizational Structure and Budget Tables and Budget Narratives sections of its Technical Proposal, submitted under section IV.2.a.(6) of this FFO, and the proposed business model's ability to execute the strategy evaluated under criterion V.1.a.i. above, based on the market understanding evaluated under criterion V.1.a.ii. above. The following sub-topics will be evaluated and given equal weight:

1) **Outreach and Service Delivery to the Market.** Reviewers will assess the extent to which the proposed Center is organized to:

- identify, reach and provide proposed services to key market segments and individual manufacturers described above;
- work with a manufacturer's leadership in strategic discussions related to new technologies, new products and new markets; and
- leverage the applicant's past experience in working with small and medium-sized manufacturers as a basis for future programmatic success.

2) **Partnership Leverage and Linkages.** Reviewers will assess the extent to which the proposed Center will make effective use of resources or partnerships with third parties such as industry, universities, community/technical colleges, nonprofit economic development organizations, and Federal, State and Local Government Agencies in the Center's business model.

- quality and extent of the applicant's stated goals, milestones and outcomes described by operating year (year 1, year 2, etc.);
- applicant's utilization of client-based business results important to stakeholders in understanding program impact; and
- depth of the proposed methodology for program management and internal evaluation likely to ensure effective operations and oversight for meeting program and service delivery objectives.

Review Criteria #1 continued:

- iv. **Performance Measurement and Management.** Reviewers will assess the extent to which the applicant will use a systematic approach to measuring and managing performance including the:
- quality and extent of the applicant's stated goals, milestones and outcomes described by operating year (year 1, year 2, etc.);
 - applicant's utilization of client-based business results important to stakeholders in understanding program impact; and
 - depth of the proposed methodology for program management and internal evaluation likely to ensure effective operations and oversight for meeting program and service delivery objectives.

Review Criteria #2 Qualifications of the Applicant; Key Personnel and Organizational Structure

- b. Qualifications of the Applicant; Key Personnel and Organizational Structure (30 points; Sub-criteria i and ii will be weighted equally).** Reviewers will assess the ability of the key personnel and the applicant's management structure to deliver the program and services envisioned for the Center. Reviewers will consider the following topics when evaluating the qualifications of the applicant and of program management:
- i. Key Personnel.** Reviewers will assess the extent to which the:
 - proposed key personnel have the appropriate experience and education in manufacturing, outreach and partnership development to support achievements of the MEP mission and objectives;
 - proposed key personnel have the appropriate experience and education to plan, direct, monitor, organize and control the monetary resources of the proposed Center to achieve its business objectives and maximize its value;
 - proposed staffing plan flows logically from the specified approach to the market and products and service offerings; and
 - proposed field staff structure sufficiently supports the geographic concentrations and industry targets for the region.

 - ii. Organizational Structure.** Reviewers will assess the extent to which the:
 - proposed management structure (leadership and governance) is aligned to support the execution of the strategy, products and services;
 - organizational roles and responsibilities of key personnel and staff are clearly delineated; and
 - degree to which the Center's proposed oversight board meets the requirements of Section III.3.b. of this FFO or, if such a structure is not currently in place or is not expected to continue meet these requirements at the time of the MEP award, a feasible plan is proposed for developing such an oversight board within 12 months of issuance of an MEP award (expected to be January 2016).

Review Criteria #3 – Budget and Financial Plan

c. **Budget and Financial Plan. (30 points; Sub-criterion i and ii will be weighted equally)** Reviewers will assess the suitability and focus of the applicant's five (5) year budget. The application will be assessed in the following areas:

i. **Budget. Reviewers will assess the extent to which:**

- the proposed financial plan is aligned to support the execution of the proposed Center's strategy and business model over the five (5) year project plan;
- the proposed projections for income and expenditures are appropriate for the scale of services that are to be delivered by the proposed Center and the service delivery model envisioned within the context of the overall financial model over the five (5) year project plan;
- a reasonable ramp-up or scale-up scope and budget that has the Center fully operational by the 4th year of the project; and
- the proposal's narrative for each of the budgeted items explains the rationale for each of the budgeted items, including assumptions the applicant used in budgeting for the Center.

ii. **Quality of the Financial Plan for Meeting the Award's Non-Federal Cost Share Requirements over 5 Years.** Reviewers will assess the quality of and extent to which the:

- applicant clearly describes the total level of cost share and detailed rationale of the cost share, including cash and in-kind, in their proposed budget.
- applicant's funding commitments for cost share are documented by letters of support from the applicant, proposed sub-recipients and any other partners identified and meet the basic matching requirements of the program;
- applicant's cost share meets basic requirements of allowability, allocability and reasonableness under applicable federal costs principles set for in 2 C.F.R. 200, Subpart E;
- applicant's underlying accounting system is established or will be established to meet applicable federal costs principles set for in 2 C.F.R. 200, Subpart E; and
- the overall proposed financial plan is sufficiently robust and diversified so as to support the long term sustainability of the Center throughout the five (5) years of the project plan.

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Review and Selection Process (1)

- **Initial Administrative Review of Applications.** An initial review of timely received applications will be conducted to determine eligibility, completeness, and responsiveness to this FFO and the scope of the stated program objectives. Applications determined to be ineligible, incomplete, and/or non-responsive may be eliminated from further review. However, NIST, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for an application that is missing non-substantive information that can easily be rectified or cured.
- **Full Review of Eligible, Complete, and Responsive Applications.** Applications that are determined to be eligible, complete, and responsive will proceed for full reviews in accordance with the review and selection processes below. Eligible, complete and responsive applications will be grouped by the State in which the proposed MEP Center is to be established. The applications in each group will be reviewed by the same reviewers and will be evaluated, reviewed, and selected as described below in separate groups.
- **Evaluation and Review.** Each application will be reviewed by at least three technically qualified individual reviewers who will evaluate each application based on the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1. of this FFO). Applicants may receive written follow-up questions in order for the reviewers to gain a better understanding of the applicant's proposal. Each reviewer will assign each application a numeric score, with a maximum score of 100. If a non-Federal reviewer is used, the reviewers may discuss the applications with each other, but scores will be determined on an individual basis, not as a consensus.
- Applicants whose applications receive an average score of 70 or higher out of 100 will be deemed finalists. If deemed necessary, all finalists will be invited to participate with reviewers in a conference call and/or all finalists will be invited to participate in a site visit that will be conducted by the same reviewers at the applicant's location. Finalists will be reviewed and evaluated, and reviewers may revise their assigned numeric scores based on the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1. of this FFO) as a result of the conference call and/or site visit.

Review and Selection Process (2)

- **Ranking and Selection.** The reviewers' final numeric scores for all finalists will be converted to ordinal rankings (i.e., a reviewer's highest score will be ranked "1", second highest score will be ranked "2", etc.). The ordinal rankings for an applicant will be summed and rank order will be established based on the lowest total for the ordinal rankings, and provided to the Selecting Official for further consideration.
- The Selecting Official is the NIST Associate Director of Innovation and Industry Services or designee. The Selecting Official makes the final recommendation to the NIST Grants Officer regarding the funding of applications under this FFO. NIST/MEP expects to recommend funding for the highest ranked applicant for each of the twelve (12) States being competed under this FFO. However, the Selecting Official may decide to select an applicant out of rank order based upon one or more of the Selection Factors identified in Section V. 3. of this FFO. The Selecting Official may also decide not to recommend funding for a particular State to any of the applicants.
- NIST reserves the right to negotiate the budget costs with any applicant selected to receive an award, which may include requesting that the applicant remove certain costs. Additionally, NIST may request that the successful applicant modify objectives or work plans and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to award. NIST also reserves the right to reject an application where information is uncovered that raises a reasonable doubt as to the responsibility of the applicant. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NIST Grants Officer. The award decisions of the NIST Grants Officer are final..

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Selection Factors

Selection Factors. The Selection Factors for this FFO are as follows:

- a. The availability of Federal funds;
- b. Relevance of the proposed project to MEP program goals and policy objectives;
- c. Reviewers' evaluations, including technical comments;
- d. The need to assure appropriate distribution of MEP services within the designated State;
- e. Whether the project duplicates other projects funded by DoC or by other Federal agencies; and
- f. Whether the application complements or supports other Administration priorities, or projects supported by DoC or other Federal agencies, such as but not limited to the National Network for Manufacturing Innovation and the Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership.

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Administrative Requirements of Application (1)

- Complete applications/proposals must, at a minimum, include the following forms and documents and meet the following requirements identified in the FFO which are:
- **Required Forms*:**
 - SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance
 - SF-424A's Budget Information Non-Constructions (Years 1-4) and separate SF424a for Year 5
 - SF-424B Assurances Non-construction
 - CD-511 Certification Regarding Lobbying
 - SF-LLL Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable)
 - Technical Proposal (please be sure to read Section IV.2.a.6 of FFO)

***Forms are available as part of the Grants.gov application kit**

Administrative Requirements of Application (2)

Proposal Requirements (Section IV.2(a)(6)):

- **Technical Proposal.** The five (5) year Technical Proposal is a word-processed document not exceeding 40 pages responsive to the program description (see Section I. of this FFO) and the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1. of this FFO). The following is a suggested format that applicants may use for the technical proposal.
 - **Table of Contents** (Does not count towards page limit)
 - **Executive Summary** - The executive summary should briefly (usually no longer than two pages) describe the proposed project, consistent with the evaluation sub-criteria (see Section V.1.a. of this FFO). ***Applicants should name the State in which they are seeking to establish an MEP Center in the first sentence of the Executive Summary.***

Please note, if an applicant's proposal is selected for funding, NIST may use all or a portion of the Executive Summary as part of a press release issued by NIST, or for other public information and outreach purposes. Applicants are advised not to incorporate information that concerns business trade secrets or other confidential commercial or financial information as part of the Executive Summary. See also 15 C.F.R. § 4.9(c) concerning the designation of business information by the applicant. (Does not count towards page limit).
 - **Project Narrative**
 - **Qualifications of the Applicant and Program Management**
 - **Budget Tables and Budget Narratives**
 - A suggested format is provided on the MEP website - <http://nist.gov/mep/ffo-state-competitions-02.cfm>
- **Letters of Commitment or Support – DOES NOT COUNT TOWARDS PAGE LIMIT**
 - For non-profit applicants with a fiduciary board of directors, a resolution from such board authorizing submission of the MEP Center application to NIST and supporting the activities described therein is required.
 - Applicant Non-Federal Cost Sharing (Cash and In-Kind) is required from an authorized representative

Administrative Requirements of Application (3)

- **Indirect Cost Rate Agreement**
 - If indirect costs are included in the proposed budget, provide a copy of the approved negotiated agreement if this rate was negotiated with a cognizant Federal audit agency.
 - If the rate was not established by a cognizant Federal audit agency, provide a statement to this effect. If the successful applicant includes indirect costs in the budget and has not established an indirect cost rate with a cognizant Federal audit agency, the applicant will be required to obtain such a rate in accordance with the DoC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions.
- **Resumes**
 - One-page resumes of no more than five key personnel may be included; these do not count toward the page limit.
 - Any information beyond one page for each resume and any additional resumes submitted will not be considered.
- **SF-424A, Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs for year five (5)**

Administrative Requirements of Application (4)

- **Application Format (Section IV 2(b)):**
 - Page Limit. **The Technical Proposals are limited to forty (40) pages.** Information on pages beyond the page limit will not be considered.
 - Page limit **includes:** Cover page, Technical Proposal (with the exception of the Executive Summary), figures, graphs, tables, images, pictures, and all other pages of an application, with the exception of the page limit exclusions listed below.
 - Page limit **excludes:** Table of Contents, Executive Summary, SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance; both copies of the SF-424A, Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs form; SF-424B, Assurances – Non-Construction Programs; SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities; CD-511, Certification Regarding Lobbying; Table of Contents, budget tables and budget narratives; Letters of Commitment and/or Support; Indirect Cost Rate Agreement, and Resumes.

Administrative Requirements of Application (5)

- **Dates:**
 - Electronic applications must be received no later than 11:59 p.m via www.Grants.gov. Eastern Time on Monday, June 1, 2015. Paper applications will not be accepted. Applications received after the deadline will not be reviewed or considered. The approximate start date for awards under this FFO is expected to be January 1, 2016.
 - *NIST will not accept applications submitted by mail, facsimile, or by email.*
 - *Applications received after the respective deadline will not be reviewed or considered.*

Administrative Requirements of Application (6)

- **Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM).**
 - Pursuant to 2 C.F.R. part 25, applicants and recipients (as the case may be) are required to:
 - (i) be registered in SAM before submitting its application;
 - (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier in its application; and
 - (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency, unless otherwise excepted from these requirements pursuant to 2 C.F.R. § 25.110.
 - *When developing your submission timeline, keep in mind that (1) a free annual registration process in the electronic System for Award Management (SAM) (see Section IV.3) may take between three and five business days or as long as more than two weeks, and (2) applicants using Grants.gov will receive a series of receipts over a period of up to two business days before learning via a validation or rejection whether a Federal agency's electronic system has received its application. **Please note that a federal assistance award cannot be issued if the designated recipient's registration in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) is not current at the time of the award.***

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Reporting Requirements (1)

- In lieu of the reporting requirements described in Sections A.01 Performance (Technical) Reports and B.02 Financial Reports of the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions (December 26, 2014), the following reporting requirements shall apply:
 - **Financial Reports.** The Recipient shall submit an SF-425, Federal Financial Report, into the MEP's Enterprise Information System (MEIS) **on a semi-annual basis after the sixth and twelfth month of each operating year**, unless other reporting intervals and/or due dates are identified by the NIST Grants Officer pursuant to a Special Award Condition. Reports will be due within 30 days after the end of each semi-annual reporting period. The Recipient shall submit a final SF-425 within 90 days after the expiration date of the award.
 - **Performance (Technical) Reports.** The Recipient shall submit a Technical Report (completing all required MEIS fields) **on a semi-annual basis after the sixth and twelfth month of each operating year**, unless other reporting intervals and/or due dates are identified by the NIST Grants Officer pursuant to a Special Award Condition. Reports are due in MEIS no later than 30 days following the end of each reporting period. The Recipient shall submit a final Technical/Quarterly report within 90 days after the expiration date of the award. Technical/Quarterly Report details are accessible on the MEIS website (<https://meis.nist.gov/>). Technical progress reports shall contain information as prescribed in the NIST MEP Reporting Guidelines (OMB Control Number 0693-0032). For further information regarding the NIST MEP Reporting Process, you may download a copy of the NIST MEP Reporting Guidelines at <http://nist.gov/mep/ffo-state-competitions-02.cfm>.
 - **Post Client Project Follow-Up.** The **recipient will be required** to provide client and project data on a quarterly basis (unless otherwise directed by the NIST Grants Officer) and in a specified format to the organization identified by NIST/MEP in order for post-project follow-up data to be obtained (OMB Control Number 0693-0021). For further information regarding the NIST MEP Reporting Process, you may download a copy of the NIST MEP Reporting Guidelines at <http://nist.gov/mep/ffo-state-competitions-02.cfm>.

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MEP Resources

The following resources outlined in the FFO are currently available on the MEP website at:

<http://www.nist.gov/mep/ffo-state-competitions-02.cfm>:

- NIST MEP System Strategic Plan;
- Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership Operating Plan Guidelines (February 2015);
- Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership General Terms and Conditions (February 2015);
- 2013 Annual Report; (2014 coming in April)
- Sample Budget Table (for all 5 years) and Budget Chart and Narrative (for Year 1); and
- NIST MEP Reporting Guidelines

MEP Resources continued...

- **Manufacturing Technology Acceleration Center (M-TAC) Pilot Projects – Report on Initial Progress and Learning (February 2015)**
http://www.nist.gov/mep/services/supplychain/upload/MTAC_Report-print.pdf
- **Promising Practices in Overall Performance – Featuring MEP Centers of Indiana, Ohio, and Oklahoma (January 2013) This document appears to be available on MEIS only!**
<https://meis.nist.gov/layouts/MEIS/GetMeisDocument.ashx?AttachmentID=7165&MeisDocType=SubmissionAttachment>
- **National Governors Association – “Making” Our Future – What States Are Doing to Encourage Growth in Manufacturing through Innovation, Entrepreneurship, and Investment (January 2013)**
<http://www.nga.org/cms/home/nga-center-for-best-practices/center-publications/page-ehsw-publications/col2-content/main-content-list/making-our-future.html>
- **Re-examining the MEP Business Model: Alternatives for Increasing the Program’s Impact on US Manufacturing Sector Performance (October 2010)**
http://www.nist.gov/mep/upload/MEP_Bus_Model_Report_Summary_July2010.pdf
http://stone-assoc.com/uploads/MEP_Bus_Model_Rpt_.pdf
- **Hollings MEP Advisory Board Innovation and Product Development in the 21st Century (February 2010)**
http://nist.gov/mep/upload/MEP_advisory_report_4_24l.pdf
- **National Academy of Public Administration – The NIST MEP Program – Report 2: Alternative Business Models (May 2004)**
<http://www.napawash.org/2004/1541-manufacturing-extension-partnership-program-report-2-alternative-business-models.html>
- **National Academy of Public Administration – The NIST MEP Program – Report 1: Re-examining the Core Premise of the MEP Program (September 2003)**
http://patapasco.nist.gov/mep/documents/pdf/about-mep/reports-studies/napa_1.pdf

MEP Resources continued...

- **National Academies. 21st Century Manufacturing: The role of the Manufacturing-Extension-Partnership**
<http://www.nap.edu/catalog/18448/21st-century-manufacturing-the-role-of-the-manufacturing-extension-partnership>
- **Manufacturing Extension Partnership: Most Federal Spending Directly Supports Work with Manufacturers, but Distribution Could Be Improved**
<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-14-317>
- **Factors for Evaluating the Cost Share of Manufacturing Extension Partnership Program to Assist Small and Medium-Sized Manufacturers**
<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-11-437R>
- **MPI and ASMC. 2013. Next Generation Manufacturing Study**
<http://www.wmep.org/sites/default/files/NGM-StudySummaryReport.pdf>

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Agency Contacts

Subject Area	Point of Contact
Administrative, budget, cost-sharing, eligibility questions and other programmatic questions.	Diane Henderson Manufacturing Extension Partnership NIST Phone: 301-975-5105 Fax: 301-963-6556 E-mail: mepffo@nist.gov
Technical Assistance with Grants.gov Submissions	Christopher Hunton Administrative Support & Document Control Office NIST Phone: 301-975-5718 Fax: 301-975-8884 E-mail: christopher.hunton@nist.gov
Grant Rules and Regulations	Jannet Cancino Grants Management Division NIST Phone: 301-975-6544 Fax: 301-975-6368 E-mail: jannet.cancino@nist.gov

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Have additional questions.....

Please submit all questions in writing to NIST MEP, mepffo@nist.gov

Questions and Answers will be posted regularly on the NIST MEP Public Site, <http://www.nist.gov/mep/ffo-state-competitions-02.cfm>

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