

**National Institute of Standards and Technology
Manufacturing Extension Partnership
Advisory Board
Minutes of the March 7, 2017 Meeting**

Background

The Board met in an open session from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on March 7, 2017 at the Department of Commerce (DOC) Headquarters in the Herbert C. Hoover Building in Washington, D.C. Approximately 43 people attended the meeting including Board members, National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) participants, guest speakers, and observers.

Attendees

Board Members

Jose Anaya, Dean of Community Advancement & Business Training Center, El Camino College
LaDon Byars, President and CEO, Colonial Diversified Polymer Products, LLC
Carolyn Cason, Professor Emerita, The University of Texas at Arlington
Eileen Guarino, President and COO, Greno Industries
Bernadine Hawes, Senior Research Analyst, Community Marketing Concepts
Tommy Lee, President and CEO, Vulcan, Inc.
Kathay Rennels, Associate Vice President for Engagement, Colorado State University
Vickie Wessel, Chair, NIST MEP Advisory Board, and Founder and President, Spirit Electronics, Inc.
Jeff Wilcox, Vice Chair, NIST MEP Advisory Board, and Vice President for Engineering, Lockheed Martin
Ed Wolbert, President, Transco Products, Inc.

Guest Presenters

Earl Comstock, Director, Office of Policy and Strategic Planning, U.S. Department of Commerce
David Spence, Office of the General Counsel

NIST MEP Presenters

Dave Cranmer, Deputy Director, NIST MEP
Phil Singerman, NIST Associate Director for Innovation and Industry Services
Mary Ann Pacelli, Manager of Workforce Development, NIST MEP
Cheryl Gendron, Advisory Board Liaison, NIST MEP
Mike Simpson, NIST MEP
David Stieren, NIST MEP

Observers

Nicole Ausherman, NIST MEP
David Boulay, IMEC
Richard Brent, CMTCC California
Buckley Brinkman, WCMP
Zara Brunner, NIST MEP
Kelly Buchanan, ASMC
Tom Bugnitz, Manufacturer's Edge
Mike Coast, MMTCC
Erin Dyer, Accurate Dial & Nameplate

Karen Fite, GA MEP
Carrie Hines, ASMC
Joe Houldin, DVIRC
Mimi Hsu, Lockheed Martin
Ethan Karp, MAGNET
Chancy Lyford, NIST MEP
Mitch Magee, PPG
Anne-Louise Marquis, NIST MEP
Mike Nogle, Nebraska MEP
Dianne Poster, NIST
Ben Preis, Lewis-Burke Associates
Gregg Profozich, CMTC
Kari Reidy, NIST MEP
Rustyn Stoops, DE MEP
Kara Valz, TechSolve
Craig Van den Avont, GAM Enterprises, Inc.
Jim Watson, CMTC

Welcome, Introductions, and Opening Remarks

Speaker: Vickie Wessel, Chair, NIST MEP Advisory Board

Ms. Wessel called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. She introduced new Board member LaDon Byars, and asked other Board members and meeting participants to introduce themselves.

Presentations

MEP Director's Updates

Speaker: Phil Singerman, NIST Associate Director for Innovation and Industry Services; Dave Cranmer, Deputy Director, NIST MEP; Dave Stieren, NIST MEP

- Kent Rochford has assumed the title of Acting Under Secretary of Commerce for Standards and Technology and NIST Director. Tom Bugnitz gave a brief overview of Dr. Rochford's visit to Colorado.
- New MEP Advisory Board members that will be joining in the spring:
 - Jim Wright, Owner and President of J.V. Manufacturing, Inc.
 - Chris Weiser, Vice-President of Operations for Proof Research.
 - Mitch Magee's appointment is pending

Dr. Singerman provided updates on MEP's budget, legislative outlook, and ongoing activities.

NIST MEP FY2017 Projected Spend Plan

(in the current Continuing Resolution in effect through April 28, 2017)

House/Senate marks \$130.0M

Rescission in CR \$0.9M

Center Renewals \$105.9M

System Support \$7.7M

MEP Staff/Overhead \$15.5M

An additional \$15.7 million in FY16 carryover will support a second year of three rounds of embedding projects, a new rolling funding opportunity, and additional contracts.

The administration will soon disclose the FY2018 budget. NIST's top priority is funding the Centers. NIST is optimistic that MEP will come through the Presidential transition in good shape.

American Innovation and Competitiveness Act (AICA)

January 6, 2017 – AICA became Public Law No. 114-329. The Act includes:

- Making 1:1 cost share permanent
- 3rd and 8th year panel reviews
- 5th year review to continue funding
- Recompensation after 10 years
- Community college representative on MEP Advisory Board
- Strengthened Center oversight boards
- Reports about cost share changes – some require input from Board

Dr. Singerman singled out contributions from Representative Lamar Smith and Senators Cory Gardner, Gary Peters, Chris Coons, and John Thune. The work of the Centers made their advocacy possible. Carrie Hines and ASMC leadership also helped getting the law passed.

Implementation of AICA:

- Centers that have undergone a recompetition in the last three years are operating under a 1:1 cost share. Starting to move through those Centers operating under a higher ratio.
- The number of Board members has been changed from a maximum of ten to a minimum of ten.

Board Member Changes

- New member - LaDon Byars
- Potential member - Mitch Magee
- In May, the terms of Eileen Guarino, Tommy Lee, Vickie Wessel, and Ed Wolbert end
- An additional six members are in process for April 30th meeting, including Mitch Magee, Jim Wright, and Chris Weiser
- New Chair in May - Jeff Wilcox
- New Vice Chair in May - Bernadine Hawes

Dr. Cranmer presented the FY2017 MEP organizational chart and discussed the MEP Centers and system development.

Status of MEP State Competitions:

- All four rounds of the MEP state competitions have completed. By April 1, the entire system refresh will be complete.
- MEP is determining how to include the seven legacy Centers in the competitive process. The current thinking is they will do a competition for those seven around 2021.

MEP/Institute Embedding Pilot:

- The first and second rounds of awards are complete; the third round is in progress. A notice of funding should be published later in March. About \$6 million are anticipated to be available for those awards. The expected start date is June/July 2017.
- Eight MEP Centers have received awards to work with and embed personnel within nine Institutes. Each award is about \$1.2 million.

Required Request for Information Prior to Performance-Based Rolling Notice of Funding Opportunities (NOFO):

Dr. Cranmer discussed what had previously been referred to as the rolling FFO. If funding is available, MEP can make awards to get capabilities into its system.

- Per 15 USC 278(k), MEP must consult with its Advisory Board, and small and medium-sized manufacturers when delivering
- The RFI that was issued closed January 13, 2017, and received 53 responses

- The most common theme among the responses was requesting assistance with Manufacturing 4.0, workforce, and technology. These will form the basis for the themes of the NOFO when it is released in March/April 2017.

Reporting Updates:

- Value delivered to manufacturers:
 - \$9.3B in sales
 - \$3.5B in total investment in U.S. manufacturing
 - \$1.4B in savings
 - 86,602 jobs created and retained
 - Interacted with 25,445 manufacturers
- Provide an option for Centers to report clients/projects served beyond the 1:1 match
- Survey response rate rose from about 71% in Q1 2016 to 81% in Q4 2016

Financial Reviews:

MEP has been more proactive in how they assess risk at Centers

- Franklin & Turner performed nine Center reviews in FY 2016, which found that the Centers are generally well-run, but that policies and procedures were not always as well-documented as they could be
 - The Centers that were reviewed have gone back and documented those processes so that they are in compliance with new risk assessment guidelines in OMB Circular A-133
 - The consolidated report was delivered to Congress in August 2016
- Completing reviews for the third and final year of the contract. An additional ten Centers will be reviewed starting in August/September 2017
- Next Steps
 - Finalize SOPs for Cooperative Agreement Management and Product Development Policies and Procedures and present to staff
 - Provide consolidated reports (2016 and 2017) to MEP System to share findings
 - Overview of findings at the MEP Summit (April 30)

Jim Watson, CMTC, provided an overview of his Center's audit.

State of MEP

2017 MEP National Summit:

- Next Advisory Board Meeting – Tentative - Board dinner - April 29/ Board meeting – April 30
- Networking event and launch of brand
- Summit: May 1-3; about 60 breakout sessions
- Anticipate 400-500 attendees
- Confirmed keynote speakers: Jay Rogers, CEO, Local Motors; Thom Singer, Author/Consultant on Business Connections; Matt Tyler, President and CEO, Vickers Engineering; and Cindi Marsiglio, VP of U.S. Manufacturing, Walmart

MEP-Assisted Technology and Technical Resource (MATTR):

- Currently in the process of piloting
- Being developed to provide bidirectional value - SMMs receiving assistance from NIST labs and NIST labs receiving valuable intelligence on manufacturing needs from SMMs

Partnerships with Department of Energy and APTAC:

- MOU with Department of Energy

- Similar to MOU with DoD that provides a framework for MEP working with Manufacturing USA Institutes
- Signed February 28
- MOU with Association for the Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (APTAC) to promote collaboration, to be signed on April 12 in San Diego

New Administration

U.S. Department of Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross was confirmed February 27.

MEP's involvement in Presidential Memoranda:

- Regulations and permitting
- Dakota/XL Pipeline

The new administration's key priorities include manufacturing, jobs, and infrastructure. A one-pager was issued outlining MEP's efforts over nearly 30 years.

Delivering Impacts for Clients:

- 25,445 Manufacturers served in FY2016
- 66,922 jobs retained
- 19,680 jobs created
- \$3.5B new client investments
- \$1.4B in cost savings
- \$5.7B in retained sales
- \$2.3B in new sales

Integrated Vision of MEP:

- MEP needs to ensure they are focusing their efforts and making it easier for SMMs and other stakeholders to understand what MEP does
- Near-term future focus and the MEP brand

Near Term Focus

- To be able to use Manufacturing 4.0 as a platform to enable more rapid change
- Emphasis on MEP being a Go-To Trusted Advisor for U.S. manufacturers
- Focus on infusing technology, interconnectedness, and disrupted perspectives into production, business strategy, and manufacturing infrastructure connections

MEP's mission is to enhance the productivity and technological performance of U.S. manufacturing.

MEP Vision:

- Strategic: goals and plan
- Future is Now: forward-focused network
- Brand: America's Go-To Trusted Advisor for manufacturing

Discussion

- MEP seeks to get buy-in from the Centers on its branding efforts by having the FIN group present the value of an integrated network. MEP does not intend to replace the local identity of the Centers, but to provide a consistent messaging and imaging.
- MEP is trying to co-create the branding with the Centers and needs to demonstrate its value through the pilot.
- The branding is optional for Centers, but some members felt it should be mandatory.
- The seven sponsors for the upcoming National Summit were recognized, particularly platinum sponsor Lockheed Martin.

MEP Strategic Plan 2017-2022

Speaker: Mike Simpson, NIST MEP

Mr. Simpson provided some background on MEP's Strategic Plan and discussed the 2017 Update.

- Started last March
- Conducted feedback sessions with several groups of stakeholders (CD, Center Boards, practitioners, NIST MEP staff, and RFI responses)
- On track for a revised implementation plan by end of March
- The plan will be reviewed and updated every two years prior to the MEP Summit

The structure of the current Strategic Plan is great for a high-level, outward-facing document but not for implementation. Stakeholder feedback sessions have focused on:

- Audience – Who is this plan for?
- Detail – Definition below the strategic objectives?
- Measures – What are the measures of success?
- Prioritization – What's needed, when, and by whom?
- Workload – How does my work fit into the plan?
- Resourcing – Not enough resources to do it all
- Alignment – With FIN, brand, Working Groups, Summit, MEP Centers, NIST MEP

Structure of the Proposed Plan:

- Executive Summary
- Detailed Plan, including:
 - 5-year milestones
 - Continued use of pillars

The purpose of the Strategic Plan is to provide long-term program direction for the MEP network and to unite and align stakeholders, partners, management, and staff with this direction.

Current Mission Statement: Enhance the productivity and technology performance of US Manufacturing.

Proposed Mission Statement: Act as the catalyst for strategically transforming US manufacturing industries and supply chains to continually position US manufacturing for growth in the global marketplace.

MEP achieves its core purpose by enabling U.S. manufacturers to be the recognized world leaders in efficiency, technology, and growth where technology enables process innovation and new product development, leading to enhanced productivity and profitability.

Dr. Cranmer discussed the work of the Future is Now (FIN) Subcommittee, which considers what a fully integrated network would look like, what it would do that is different from what an individual Center does, and how it would add value by connecting with other Centers.

MEP is currently developing a vision statement that includes:

- Core values
- Driving force
- Significant long-term goal
- Five-year vivid description

The four major themes of the Strategic Plan are:

- Transform Manufacturing
 - Global competition
 - Transformational services
 - Trusted Advisor for transformation
 - Growth services
 - Manufacturing 4.0 and beyond
 - Supplier development
- Image and Identity
 - Manufacturing Day
 - Go-To organization
 - Branding
 - Image of manufacturing
 - MEP Advisory Board and Center Board engagement
- Process Innovation and New Products
 - Process innovation through technology
 - New product development
 - Technology awareness
 - Technology deployment
 - Manufacturing USA
 - Embedding staff in NNMI's
- Infrastructure
 - Manufacturing ecosystem
 - Center versus Network versus System
 - Learning Organization
 - MEP University
 - Communities of Practice
 - Summit
 - Market knowledge
 - Market intelligence

Next steps:

- April 9 - Obtain full MEP Advisory Board concurrence and prepare final draft for NIST Leadership Review and Comments
- April 19 - Finalize implementation plan and submit for final approvals
- 2017-2022 - Execute implementation plan, review and update every two years

Discussion

- The routinization for determining when a goal is achieved has not been established for many of the objectives. A demonstration of what metrics are being requested and how they align with the goals of the Strategic Plan would be beneficial.
- Dr. Singerman provided historical perspective on the Strategic Plan.
- MEP should be respectful of the autonomy of the Centers.
- Members of the FIN Subcommittee were available for additional questions.

Connecting User Facilities and Labs with SMMs

Speaker: David Stieren, NIST MEP

- AICA calls for the Director of NIST to develop and implement a comprehensive strategic plan for laboratory programs that expands
 - (1) interactions with academia, international researchers, and industry; and
 - (2) commercial and industrial applications
- The objective of the program shall be to enhance competitiveness, productivity, and technological performance in the United States through
 - (1) the transfer of manufacturing technology and techniques to manufacturing companies throughout the United States;

- (2) the participation of individuals from industry, institutions of higher education, State governments, other Federal agencies, and, when appropriate, the Institute in cooperative technology transfer activities;
- (3) efforts to make new manufacturing technology processes usable by U.S.-based small and medium-sized companies;
- (4) the active dissemination of scientific, engineering, technical, and management information about manufacturing to industrial firms

This aligns well with the work being conducted by the Subcommittee from their charge in the MEP Technology Acceleration Implementation Plan of May 2015.

Since the September Advisory Board meeting

- NIST MEP has re-examined its plans for connecting SMMs with NIST Labs
 - Resulting in preliminary design and initial pilot testing of MATTR to connect SMMs with NIST Labs through MEP Centers
 - Dr. Marlon Walker, a research chemist from the NIST Materials Measurement Lab, is serving a staff detail to NIST MEP and leading this effort
 - Clara Asmail has left NIST and is now working with DOE
- MEP has kicked off nine pilot projects to embed personnel at Manufacturing USA Institutes, and plans to announce five additional awards by the end of March
- NIST MEP is planning an additional NOFO to embed MEP personnel at the five Manufacturing USA Institutes where MEP personnel are not currently embedded

MEP-Assisted Technology and Technical Resource (MATTR):

- The vehicle by which technical expertise and resources of NIST Laboratories can be utilized by small and medium-sized manufacturers
- A bi-directional conduit in which NIST staff can share manufacturing technology with MEP Center clients and learn needs of a manufacturing area
- The key to the MATTR mechanism is dedicated NIST MEP personnel conducting triage to field, document, and respond to requests in either direction
- NIST MEP triage is based upon understanding of and connections to NIST Lab capabilities, as well as MEP Center efforts
- Follow-up reporting is included.

Currently, Dr. Walker is fielding requests and is very well-connected within the NIST Labs. So far, requests for assistance have been very low volume. If the volume increases, NIST may create a rotating position to take requests. Laboratory Directors have been asked to identify individuals familiar with their Lab's portfolio.

NIST Lab staff will be connected to the thousands of small manufacturers MEP serves. Searchable profile sheets for NIST staff are being created that include current research interests, selected publications, and relevant equipment/techniques used in research.

Steps needed to implement MATTR

- Dec 2016 - Focus groups of NIST scientific staff members
- Dec 2016 - NIST Division Chief Critique
- Jan-Mar 2017/ongoing - MEP Center input
- Feb 2017 - Associate Director for Laboratory Programs approval
- Feb 2017 - NIST OU leadership input
- Mar 2017/ongoing - MEP Advisory Board feedback
- TBD - NIST Leadership Board approval
- 2017 - Pilot program roll-out

The simplicity of MATTR underpins its likelihood for success.

- NIST buy-in is happening from the bottom-up and top-down
- MEP Centers are kept in loop throughout the process
- NIST MEP plays a critical, value-adding role
- NIST MEP dedicates knowledgeable staff resources to operate MATTR
- Connections are based on person-to-person interactions
- MATTR value is bi-directional

MATTR will be critical to MEP's success in becoming the Go-To Trusted Advisors to U.S. manufacturers enabling Manufacturing 4.0.

Discussion

- NIST's Material Measurement Laboratory includes interaction with and impact on industry in its individual performance plans.
- Hopefully, the Lab staff that draw value from the pilot will advocate for MATTR.
- During the presentation, SMM was being used interchangeably with small manufacturer. MEP was encouraged not to lose sight of the medium-sized manufacturers.
- Small and medium-sized manufacturers may not have the technical expertise to speak the language of researchers. MEP-Assistance will be very useful in bridging this gap.
- The Material Measurement Laboratory and the Engineering Laboratory have provided positive feedback.
- This is a great way to reach a lot of manufacturers.

Embedding projects underway

- Manufacturing USA Institutes and MEP have mission-centric focus on U.S. manufacturers
 - Institutes need to connect with small manufacturers on large scale
 - The national MEP network provides hands-on assistance to thousands of small U.S. manufacturers annually
- MEP Centers serve as Trusted Advisors to small U.S. manufacturers
 - The portfolio of Embedding Projects has the potential to transform the Manufacturing USA approach to serving small U.S. manufacturers
 - It could also transform MEP's approach to serving small U.S. manufacturers

Discussion

- NIST does not oversee the Innovation Institutes but is responsible for working with DOE and DoD to coordinate and share best practices. The Institutes were targeted because they are similar in structure to MEP.
- Jim Watson, Mike Coast, and Dave Boulay said embedding MEP center staff into local Manufacturing USA Institutes has helped them develop great relationships that have been mutually beneficial and have opened opportunities for small companies.
- A Joint Council has been formed.

MEP Learning Organization

Speaker: MaryAnn Pacelli, NIST MEP

Ms. Pacelli introduced the work being done to develop capabilities as part of the Strategic Plan. The MEP Learning Organization aims to capture critical information and ensure that it is available in a formalized process. It is embedded in Strategic Goal 4.

- To develop MEP's capabilities as a learning organization and high performance system
- To create a national framework to enable Centers to focus on and gain access to
 - Best practices
 - Knowledge and education designed to enhance Center performance
 - Expanded market penetration
 - Technology transfer

- Increased client top and bottom line performance

The MEP Learning Organization is for

- The System
 - to rapidly identify and transfer best practices
 - to efficiently develop and share resources across Centers
- Centers
 - to analyze gaps in service delivery and identify possible resources to remedy
 - to establish a culture of continuous improvement
 - to contribute to System learning
- Staff
 - to access development resources to gain capabilities
 - to contribute to Center and System learning

Surveys and Center focus groups have been used to clarify needs for client services and Center operations, and prioritization.

The MEP Learning System brings together four main areas

- MEP Knowledge Base
- MEP Network Learning
- MEP Best Practices
- MEP Future Needs Sensing

Topics may include (based on surveys and staff input)

- New Lean
- ExportTech
- TDMI/TS
- Sales training
- Project management

A new MEPU (MEP University) system would need to figure out how to take the findings of the Emerging Leaders program, vet them, and move forward with new programming.

Recommended priorities

- MEPU-type System is needed
 - Need technology platform
 - Process to determine what the content should be
 - How to make it available
 - How to sustain it
 - Resources – staff, contractors, partners, technology
 - Ongoing for new content
- Continuous Learning: Communities of Practice, Working Groups
 - Guidelines for startup and maintenance
 - Resources
 - Evaluation of outcomes
- Summits/conferences
 - Resources, content, follow-up
 - Evaluation of outcomes

Current Actions

Current Planning Team:

- Drafting details of needs for a Technology Platform for MEPU – Planning team with PPD Team Lead for Systems Deployment

- Critical components
- Expectations
- Drafting Statement of Work content for competitive bid release in March/April
- Draft MEPU content start up
 - Assemble an implementation team (MEP staff and Center reps)
 - Develop decision matrix
 - Pilot the decision matrix with Tech Platform start-up
- Systems Learning and Management Group
 - Define Communities of Practice and Working Groups
 - Start/re-start current groups

Discussion

- As programs finish in the various Centers, there should be a way to capture and put the operating basics of that into this knowledge center.
- There are many learning tools available for managing things that are high-level enough that anyone can follow the steps and figure it out.
- Perhaps videos of MEP events could be created and made available for manufacturers.

Presidential Memoranda

Speaker: Phil Singerman, NIST Associate Director for Innovation and Industry Services, and Earl Comstock, Director, Office of Policy and Strategic Planning, U.S. Department of Commerce

Mr. Comstock discussed the recent Presidential memoranda seeking to minimize regulatory burden on manufacturers. An RFI was published designed to elicit responses from the community of stakeholders on the subject. DOC will be preparing a report on how to streamline the regulatory process for improving manufacturing.

RFI Questions

- Manufacturing Permitting Process:
 - How many permits from a Federal agency are required to build, expand or operate your manufacturing facilities?
 - Which Federal agencies require permits and how long does it take to obtain them?
 - Do any of the Federal permits overlap with (or duplicate) other federal permits or those by State or local agencies?
 - If the answer is yes, how many permits? From which Federal agencies?
 - Briefly describe the most onerous part of your permitting process.
- Regulatory Burden/Compliance:
 - Please list the top four regulations that you believe are most burdensome for your manufacturing business. Please identify the agency that issues each one. *Specific citation of codes from the CFR would be appreciated.*
 - How could regulatory compliance be simplified within your industry or sector?
 - Please provide any other specific recommendations that you believe would help reduce unnecessary Federal agency regulation of your business.

Discussion

- EPA paperwork was noted as being a major burden. Manufacturers with the means to do so have hired a full-time employee to ensure environmental paperwork is done correctly. Most small companies cannot afford this expense.
- The Alabama Department of Environmental Management does a pretty good job working with manufacturers when they can, but often their hands are tied by the EPA.
- Environmental restrictions on privately financed facility expansion require information on neighboring facilities and past land use, environmental reports, and a costly

Environmental Insurance Policy on property already owned by the company. Local permits are not a problem to obtain.

- In the nuclear field, export control is overseen by at least four agencies and their requirements are not the same. Jurisdiction over a particular product is often unclear and the cost of acquiring an export license varies. Other countries have controls that are just as rigorous but overseen by a single agency. The delays in getting an export license have cost American manufacturers work to foreign competitors.
- Time and resources required for compliance are a major issue, especially legal costs.
- Overuse of ITAR labeling creates large amounts of bureaucratic red tape and limits the sharing of knowledge.
- Many small companies are unaware of all of the regulations that apply to them.
- The impact of compliance is much greater on small companies when regulations apply regardless of size.
- Regulations getting passed down to sub-tier manufacturers that are severely burdened.
- SMMs need assistance addressing cybersecurity requirements.
- DOC should streamline exporting as much as possible.
- DOC's presence on the ground in India has been very helpful and they should advertise their services to SMMs.
- FARs and DFARs flow down to sub-tier suppliers even if they are not applicable. It creates a legal expense and customers do not accept it when a small business takes exception to them. If the small business accepts them, they accept an unknown liability.

Mr. Comstock said that it would be very helpful to get input from the Centers so the Department can get something out by June.

NIST MEP Brand Update

Speakers: David Cranmer and Zara Brunner

Dr. Cranmer said that MEP is tired of being a best kept secret, so it will work on its branding.

Ms. Brunner discussed the research on the issue that has been done since the September Advisory Board meeting. The contractors working with MEP are Industrial Strength Marketing and Stone & Associates. Previous marketing research has been repurposed in addition to stakeholder interviews. A 55-page report of the findings is available.

Discovery and Research: Key Insights

- Strength of the MEP Network
 - Lack of awareness of what the MEP Network is and few opportunities for Centers to interact with the Network.
 - Lack of clarity around what "strength of the MEP Network" means. Significant demand for a stronger Network.
 - Lack of awareness by SMMs about MEP Network.
- Benefits to Centers
 - Being part of NIST and DOC lends credibility to people in the field. Part of a national system of experts.
 - Access to best practices and validated data and market research
 - Funding
- Disconnect with target audiences
 - Inconsistency in how MEP describes itself
 - Tendency to prioritize language or focus areas that do not resonate with people in the field
- SMM mindset
 - Small manufacturers are busy and often focus more on the immediate rather than the long-term

- Might not be familiar with the needs that they are faced with or what opportunities are available
- May be wary of government intervention
- SMM perception of Centers
 - Trustworthiness - If an MEP Center cannot do something, they will find someone that can.
 - Affordability - Great services at a greatly reduced price.
 - Effectiveness - Validated business results that Centers can get for SMMs.

Ms. Brunner presented the blueprint tool that ISM will use for its 10-year target.

Dr. Cranmer discussed the integration of this effort with other initiatives. Much of the three-year picture will come out of the work being done on the Strategic Plan. The vision of what the brand is for the Network feeds from and back into the FIN group's work.

The Brand Blueprint lays out

- Why – What does the MEP Network do?
- How – The core values of MEP previously discussed
- What – What does MEP do that no one else can?
- MEP's unique offerings:
 - Connectedness
 - Comprehensive services
 - Being within easy reach of a manufacturer
 - Affordable
 - Validated business results

Next Steps

- Mar 2017 - meeting in Gaithersburg to review three identity and messaging options.
- Apr 30, 2017 – Brand Reveal at the MEP National Summit in Denver.

Discussion

- Centers need to repeatedly brand themselves. This effort has to be clearly in lockstep with each of the MEP Centers. A national system may be a tough sell; regional co-branding may work better. Ms. Brunner said that co-branding is in the blueprint.
- Star Alliance was cited as a good co-branding model which works across states.
- Some Centers may get pushback from their customer base.
- MEP should co-brand in such a way that people's perception of the local Center is unchanged, but that gives a sense of a larger connectivity.
- MEP should more fully explain the motivating factor behind focusing on a brand.
- Having a stated mission helps MEP become Trusted Advisors.
- The Centers need a common language.
- The branding effort is about how the philosophy is being presented and the value of being in the MEP Network. It is critical that anyone talking about MEP is saying the same thing concerning the mission and value of the Network.
- The integrity of the states will help the value of the national brand and the value of the national brand will add to the integrity of the states.
- The brand should operate similarly to the Marriott brand, by setting a certain standard without expecting Centers to be the same or even equal.

NIST MEP Governance

Speakers: Vickie Wessel, Dave Cranmer, David Spence, Office of the General Counsel

Ethics Briefing

Mr. Spence provided a brief overview of ethics for industry representatives and Special Government Employees.

FACA representatives should refrain from:

- Misuse of government property
- Misuse of government information
- Misuse of government affiliation
- Conflict of interest. Special government employees are prohibited from receiving gifts valued at \$20 or more.

Charter Update and Bylaws Draft

Dr. Cranmer opened the floor for discussion on the proposed Charter revision and Bylaws draft that had previously been distributed to the Board. The Board does not currently have a set of bylaws.

- Legislative changes requiring a report to be transmitted from the Board to Congress in accordance with two provisions have been eliminated. MEP will work with General Counsel to figure out how to reconcile this.
- Anticipated timeline:
 - A counsel-reviewed draft should be available within two weeks.
 - A conference call to discuss them would require 15 days' notice for the Federal Register. A meeting of the whole would not require notice, but no actions could be taken, simply for informational purposes.
 - The charter and bylaws will be officially approved at the next Board meeting in April.
- Any issues Board members have should be addressed to Dr. Cranmer.
- Bylaws do not need to state anything that is already in the charter. They give the Board the opportunity to set some direction without having to revisit the charter.
- Language referring to alternate members was removed because they are prohibited by the charter.
- MEP will send the counsel-reviewed draft, the charter, and relevant language from the statute to the Board members along with the meeting notice.
- Language clarifying the need for a DFO on subcommittee calls was added.

Wrap-Up and Public Comments

Speakers: Vickie Wessel, Cheryl Gendron

Concluding Comments

- Ms. Cheryl Gendron discussed the logistics of the next Board meeting. She will email Board members a link to the Summit website.
- Buckley Brinkman said that MEP needs to work on relationships. It has to be very clear where MEP wants overlap and where there are gaps that someone should be filling. Goals should be clear and measurable for the system, and every action that come before this Board should be evaluated on how it directly impacts one of those measures. MEP Centers are jointly and severally liable for the success of the system.

Next Meeting

The next Advisory Board Meeting is on April 30, 2017, in Denver, Colorado.

Adjournment

With no further business, Ms. Wessel adjourned the meeting.