

March 1, 2012

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (FFO)
Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Centers for South Dakota and Kentucky**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Federal Agency Name:** National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), United States Department of Commerce (DoC)
- **Funding Opportunity Title:** Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Centers for South Dakota and Kentucky
- **Announcement Type:** Initial
- **Funding Opportunity Number:** 2012-NIST-MEP-SD-AND-KY-01
- **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:** 11.611
- **Dates:** All proposals, paper and electronic, must be received no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on Monday, April 30, 2012. Proposals received after this deadline will not be reviewed or considered. Review, selection, and award processing is expected to be completed in June 2012. The approximate start date for awards under this FFO is expected to be July 1, 2012.
- **Proposal Submission Address:**
 - For electronic submission - Applicants should follow the Application Instructions provided at www.grants.gov
 - Paper Submission: Diane Henderson
National Institute of Standards and Technology
Manufacturing Extension Partnership
100 Bureau Drive, Mail Stop 4800
Gaithersburg, MD 20899-4800

Phone: 301-975-5105
- **Funding Opportunity Description:** NIST invites proposals from eligible proposers for funding projects that provide manufacturing extension services to primarily small- and medium-sized manufacturers in the United States. These projects will establish MEP centers in South Dakota and Kentucky.
- **Total Amount to be Awarded:** Approximately \$1,000,000 for new awards.
- **Anticipated Amounts:** NIST anticipates funding two (2) proposals at the level of up to \$400,000 for the state of South Dakota and up to \$600,000 for the state of Kentucky. The projects awarded under this FFO will have a budget and performance period of one (1) year. Each award may be renewed on an annual basis subject to the review requirements described in 15 C.F.R. 290.8. Renewal of each project shall be at the sole discretion of

NIST and shall be based upon satisfactory performance, priority of the need for the service, existing legislative authority, and availability of funds.

- **Funding Instrument:** Cooperative Agreement
- **Who Is Eligible:** The eligibility requirements given in this section will be used in lieu of those published in the MEP regulations found at 15 C.F.R. part 290, specifically 15 C.F.R. § 290.5(a)(1). Each award recipient must be a U.S.-based nonprofit institution or organization. For the purpose of this FFO, nonprofit organizations include, but are not limited to, universities and state and local governments. An eligible organization may work individually or include proposed subawards or contracts with others in a project proposal, effectively forming a team or consortium. Existing MEP centers are eligible.
- **Cost Sharing Requirements:** This Program requires a non-Federal cost share of at least 50 percent of the total project cost for the first year of operation. Any renewal funding of an award will require non-Federal cost sharing as follows:

Year of Center Operation	Maximum NIST Share	Minimum Non-Federal Share
1-3	½	½
4	2/5	3/5
5 and beyond	1/3	2/3

- **Webinar Information Session.** NIST MEP will hold an information session for organizations considering applying to this opportunity. An information session in the form of a webinar will be held approximately 14 business days after publication in the *Federal Register*. The exact date and time of the webinar will be posted on the MEP website at www.nist.gov/mep. Organizations wishing to participate in the webinar must sign up by contacting Diane Henderson at diane.henderson@nist.gov.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

NIST invites proposals from eligible proposers for funding two (2) separate MEP centers to provide manufacturing extension services to primarily small- and medium-sized manufacturers in two separate locations, South Dakota and/or Kentucky. These MEP centers will become part of the MEP national system of extension service providers, currently comprised of more than 400 centers and field offices located throughout the United States and Puerto Rico.

The objective of an MEP center is to provide manufacturing extension services that enhance productivity, innovative capacity, and technological performance, and strengthen the global competitiveness of primarily small- and medium-sized U.S.-based manufacturing firms in its service region. Manufacturing extension services are provided by utilizing the most cost effective, local, leveraged resources for those services through the coordinated efforts of a regionally-based MEP center and local technology resources. The management and operational structure of an MEP center is not prescribed, but should be based upon the characteristics of the manufacturers in the region and locally available resources with demonstrated experience working with manufacturers.

It is not the intent of this program that the centers perform research and development.

Information regarding MEP and these centers is available at www.nist.gov/mep.

The statutory authority for the MEP Program is 15 U.S.C. 278k, as implemented in 15 C.F.R. part 290.

II. Award Information

1. Funding Instrument

The funding instrument that will be used for each award is a cooperative agreement. The nature of NIST's "substantial involvement" will generally be collaboration between MEP and the recipient organizations. This includes MEP collaboration with a recipient on its progress and approving changes in the statement of work. Additional forms of substantial involvement that may arise are described in the Department of Commerce (DoC) Grants and Cooperative Agreements Interim Manual, which is available at http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/doc_grants_manual/default.htm

2. Funding Availability

NIST anticipates funding one (1) proposal at the level of up to \$400,000 for an MEP Center in the state of South Dakota and one (1) proposal at the level of up to \$600,000 for an MEP Center in the state of Kentucky. The projects awarded under this FFO will have a budget and performance period of one (1) year. Each award may be renewed on an annual basis subject to the review requirements described in 15 C.F.R. 290.8. Renewal of each project shall be at the sole discretion of NIST and shall be based upon satisfactory performance, priority of the need for the service, existing legislative authority, and availability of funds.

III. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Proposers

The eligibility requirements given in this section will be used in lieu of those published in the MEP regulations found at 15 C.F.R. part 290, specifically 15 C.F.R. § 290.5(a)(1). Each award recipient must be a U.S.-based nonprofit institution or organization. For the purpose of this FFO, nonprofit organizations include, but are not limited to, universities and state and local governments. An eligible organization may work individually or include proposed subawards or contracts with others in a project proposal, effectively forming a team. Existing MEP centers are eligible.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

Non-Federal cost sharing of at least 50 percent of the total project costs is required for the first year of operation. Any renewal funding of an award will require non-Federal cost sharing 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 proposer's share of the MEP center expenses may include cash, services, and third party in-kind contributions, as described at 15 C.F.R. Sec. 14.23 or 24.24, as applicable, and the MEP program rule, 15 C.F.R. Sec. 290.4(c). No more than 50% of the proposer's total non-Federal cost share may be third party in-kind contributions of part-time personnel, equipment, software, rental value of centrally located space, and related contributions, per 15 C.F.R. Sec. 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 submitted with the proposal and will be considered as part of the evaluation review under Section V.1.d.iv. of this FFO.

All non-Federal cost share contributions require a letter of commitment signed by an authorized official from each source.

Any cost sharing must be in accordance with the "cost sharing or matching" provisions of 15 C.F.R. Part 14, *Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, Other Non-Profit, and Commercial Organizations* and 15 C.F.R. Part 24, *Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements to State and Local Governments*.

As with the Federal share, any proposed costs included as non-Federal cost sharing must be an allowable/eligible cost under this Program and the following applicable Federal cost principles: 1) Institutions of Higher Education: 2 C.F.R. part 220 (OMB Circular A-21); 2) Nonprofit Organizations: 2 C.F.R. part 230 (OMB Circular A-122); and 3) State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments: 2 C.F.R. part 225.

As with the Federal share, any proposed non-Federal cost sharing will be made a part of the cooperative agreement award and will be subject to audit if the project receives MEP funding.

3. Other

Pre-Proposals. NIST is not accepting pre-proposals or white papers under the MEP program.

IV. Application/Proposal and Submission Information

1. Address to Request Application Package

The standard application package, consisting of the standard forms, i.e., SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B, SF-LLL, and the CD-511, is available at www.grants.gov. The standard application package may also be requested by contacting:

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

Phone: 301-975-5105

2. Content and Format of Application/Proposal Submission – The requirements given in this section of this FFO will be used in lieu of those given in the MEP regulations found at 15 C.F.R. part 290, specifically 15 C.F.R. § 290.5(a).

The NIST MEP Operating Plan Guidelines are a resource framework for proposers to consider in developing their proposal. These guidelines are available at <http://nist.gov/mep/>. Complete proposals must, at a minimum, include the following forms and documents:

a. Required Forms and Documents

- (1) SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance. The SF-424 must be signed by an authorized representative of the proposer organization. The FFO number 2012-NIST-MEP-SD-AND-KY-01 must be identified in item 12 of the SF-424. The list of certifications and assurances referenced in item 21 of the SF-424 is contained in the SF-424B.
- (2) SF-424A, Budget Information - Non-Construction Programs (The budget should reflect anticipated expenses for no more than five (5) years, considering all potential cost increases, including cost of living adjustments.)
- (3) SF-424B, Assurances - Non-Construction Programs
- (4) CD-511, Certification Regarding Lobbying
- (5) SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable)
- (6) Technical Proposal. The Technical Proposal is a word-processed document not exceeding 25 pages responsive to the program description (see Section I. of this FFO) and the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1. of this FFO). It should contain the following sections:
 - (a) **Executive Summary.** The executive summary should briefly describe the proposed project, consistent with the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1. of this FFO).
 - (b) **Project Narrative.** A description of the proposed project, sufficient to permit evaluation of the proposal, in accordance with the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1. of this FFO).
 - (c) **Qualifications.** A description of the qualifications and proposed center operational or management activities of key personnel who will be assigned to work on the proposed project.
 - (d) **Statement of Work.** The statement of work should discuss the specific tasks to be carried out, including a schedule of measurable events and milestones.
 - (e) **Integration Plans.** Include plans for integration into the MEP national system and linkages to appropriate national resources.
 - (f) **Past Performance** (*for existing or previous MEP center proposers only*). Proposals from existing or previous MEP centers or partners must provide specific information that addresses whether the proposer's past performance with the program is indicative of expected performance under a possible new award and describing how and why performance is expected to be the same or different.
 - (g) **Additional Information.** In addition, the proposal must contain the following requirements, which are being included in lieu of those identified in 15 C.F.R. 290.5(a)(3), which are:
 - i. A plan for the allocation of intellectual property rights associated with any invention or copyright which may result from the involvement in the Center's

- technology transfer or research activities consistent with the conditions of 15 C.F.R. 290.9;
- ii. A statement that provides adequate assurances that the host organization will contribute the required cost share. *(Although the MEP regulation, 15 C.F.R. 290.5 (a)(3)(ii), states that applicants should provide evidence that the proposed Center will be self-supporting after six years, this requirement is no longer in effect.)*
 - iii. A statement describing linkages to industry, government, and educational organizations within its service region.
 - iv. A statement defining the initial service region including a statement of the constituency to be served and the level of service to be provided, as well as out-year plans.
 - v. A statement agreeing to focus the mission of the Center on technology transfer activities within the region but not to exclude companies based on state boundaries.
 - vi. A proposed plan for the annual evaluation of the success of the Center by NIST, including appropriate criteria for consideration and weighting those criteria.
 - vii. A plan to focus the Center's technology emphasis on areas consistent with NIST technology research programs and organizational expertise.
 - viii. A description of the planned Center sufficient to permit NIST to evaluate the proposal in accordance with 15 C.F.R. 290.6.

(7) Budget Narrative. There is no set format for the Budget Narrative; however, it should provide a detailed breakdown of each of the object class categories as reflected on the SF-424A. It should include:

- (a) All expenses for year one (1) of operation and identify all sources of funds to pay these expenses.
- (b) A budget outline for annual costs and sources of funds for potential years two (2) through five (5) at no more than \$400,000 per year in NIST support for an MEP center in South Dakota and at no more than \$600,000 per year in NIST support for an MEP center in Kentucky.

(8) Letters of Commitment for Non-Federal Cost Sharing. Letters of commitment from all sources of the non-Federal cost sharing are required. Letters of commitment do not count toward the page limit. General "letters of support" are not required and will be counted toward the page limit for the Technical Proposal if included in the proposal. A summary listing of this support is allowed but will count toward the page limit. It is inappropriate for any Federal employee to provide critique or feedback on project ideas, etc., and it is also inappropriate to ask Federal employees for a letter of support.

(9) 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. Successful proposers will be required to obtain such a rate.

If submitting the proposal electronically via Grants.gov, items IV.2.a.(1) through IV.2.a.(5) above are part of the standard application package in Grants.gov and can be completed through the download application process. Items IV.2.a.(6) through IV.2.a.(9) must be completed and

attached by clicking on “Add Attachments” found in item 15 of the SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance. This will create a zip file that allows for transmittal of the documents electronically via Grants.gov. Proposers should carefully follow specific Grants.gov instructions at www.Grants.gov to ensure the attachments will be accepted by the Grants.gov system. A receipt from Grants.gov indicating a proposal is received does not provide information about whether attachments have been received.

If submitting a proposal by paper, all of the required proposal documents should be submitted in the order listed above.

b. Proposal Format

- (1) **Double-sided copy.** For paper submissions, print on both sides of the paper (front to back counts as two (2) pages).
- (2) **E-mail submissions.** Will not be accepted.
- (3) **Facsimile submissions (fax).** Will not be accepted.
- (4) **Figures, graphs, images, and pictures.** Should be of a size that is easily readable or viewable and may be landscape orientation.
- (5) **Font.** Easy to read font (10-point minimum). Smaller type may be used in figures and tables but must be clearly legible.
- (6) **Line spacing.** Single.
- (7) **Margins.** One (1) inch top, bottom, left, and right.
- (8) **Number of paper copies.** For paper submissions, one (1) signed stapled original and two (2) stapled copies. If original proposal is in color, the two (2) copies must also be in color. If submitting electronically via Grants.gov, paper copies are not required.
- (9) **Page layout.** Portrait orientation only (except figures, graphs, and pictures (see Section IV.2.b.(4))).
- (10) **Page Limit.** Twenty-five (25) pages.

Page limit includes: Table of contents (if included), Technical Proposal with all required sections, resumes, figures, graphs, tables, images, and pictures.

Page limit excludes: SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance; SF-424A, Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs; SF-424B, Assurances – Non-Construction Programs; SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities; CD-511, Certification Regarding Lobbying; Budget Narrative; letters of commitment for non-Federal cost sharing; and Indirect Cost Rate Agreement.
- (11) **Page numbering.** Number pages sequentially.
- (12) **Paper size.** 21.6 by 27.9 centimeters (8 ½ by 11 inches).

(13) Proposal language. English.

(14) Staple paper submission. For paper submissions, staple the original signed proposal and each of the two (2) copies securely with one (1) staple in the upper left-hand corner.

(15) Typed document. All proposals, including forms, must be typed.

3. Submission Dates and Times

All proposals must be received by NIST no later than 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time on Monday, April 30, 2012. This deadline applies to all modes of proposal submission, including courier services, express mailing, and electronic.

Proposals not received by the specified due date and time will not be considered and will be returned without review. NIST determines whether proposals submitted by paper have been timely received by the deadline by the date and time receipt they are physically received by NIST at its Gaithersburg, Maryland campus. For electronic submissions, NIST will consider the date and time stamped on the validation generated by www.Grants.gov as the official submission time.

NIST strongly recommends that proposers do not wait until the last minute to submit a proposal. NIST will not make any allowances for late submissions, including but not limited to incomplete Grants.gov registration, delays in mail delivery caused by Federal Government security screening for U.S. Postal Service mail, or for delays by guaranteed express mailing and/or couriers. To avoid any potential processing backlogs due to last minute Grants.gov registrations, proposers are highly encouraged to start their Grants.gov registration process at least four (4) weeks prior to the proposal due date.

Important: All proposers, both electronic and paper submitters, should be aware that adequate time must be factored into proposers' schedules for delivery of their proposal. Submitters of electronic proposals are advised that volume on Grants.gov may be extremely heavy on the deadline date, and if Grants.gov is unable to accept proposals electronically in a timely fashion, proposers are encouraged to exercise their option to submit proposals in paper format. Submitters of paper proposals should allow adequate time to ensure a paper proposal will be received on time, taking into account that Federal Government security screening for U.S. Postal Service mail may delay receipt of mail for up to two (2) weeks and that guaranteed express mailings and/or couriers are not always able to fulfill their guarantees.

In the event of a natural disaster that interferes with timely proposal submissions, NIST may issue an amendment to this FFO to change the proposal submission due date.

4. Executive Order 12372 (Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs)

Proposals under this Program are not subject to Executive Order 12372.

5. Funding Restrictions

No special restrictions apply.

6. Other Submission Requirements

a. Proposals may be submitted by paper or electronically.

(1) Paper proposals must be submitted in triplicate (an original and two copies) and sent to:

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

Phone: 301-975-5105

(2) Electronic proposals must be submitted via Grants.gov at www.grants.gov. Submitters of electronic proposals should carefully follow specific Grants.gov instructions to ensure the attachments will be accepted by the Grants.gov system. A receipt from Grants.gov indicating a proposal is received does not provide information about whether attachments have been received. For further information or questions regarding applying electronically for the 2012-NIST-MEP-SD-AND-KY-01 announcement, contact Christopher Hunton by phone at 301-975-5718 or by e-mail at christopher.hunton@nist.gov.

Proposers are strongly encouraged to start early and not wait until the approaching due date before logging on and reviewing the instructions for submitting a proposal through Grants.gov. The Grants.gov registration process must be completed before a new registrant can apply electronically. If all goes well, the registration process takes three (3) to five (5) business days. If problems are encountered, the registration process can take up to two (2) weeks or more. Proposers must have a Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number and must be registered with the Federal Central Contractor Registry and with a Credential Provider, as explained on the Grants.gov Web site. After registering, it may take several days or longer from the initial log-on before a new Grants.gov system user can submit a proposal. Only authorized individual(s) will be able to submit the proposal, and the system may need time to process a submitted proposal. Proposers should save and print the proof of submission they receive from Grants.gov. If problems occur while using Grants.gov, the proposer is advised to (a) print any error message received and (b) call Grants.gov directly for immediate assistance. If calling from within the United States or from a U.S. territory, please call 800-518-4726. If calling from a place other than the United States or a U.S. territory, please call 606-545-5035. Assistance from the Grants.gov Help Desk will be available around the clock every day, with the exception of Federal holidays. Help Desk service will resume at 7:00 a.m. Eastern Time the day after Federal holidays. For assistance using Grants.gov, you may also contact support@grants.gov.

Information essential to successful submission of proposals on the Grants.gov system is detailed in the For Applicants section found in red on the left side of the www.grants.gov home page, and all potential proposers should pay close attention to the information contained therein. The All About Grants, Applicant FAQs, and Submit Application FAQs sections found under the Applicant Resources option are particularly important.

Refer to important information in Section IV.3. Submission Dates and Times, to help ensure your proposal is received on time.

- b. Any amendments to this FFO will be announced through Grants.gov. Proposers can sign up for Grants.gov FFO amendments or alternatively may call Diane Henderson at 301-975-5105, to request copies. Since this opportunity is also announced in the *Federal Register*, any amendments to that notice will be published in the *Federal Register*. Copies of the *Federal Register* announcement and any amendments published in the *Federal Register* may also be requested from Diane Henderson.

V. Application/Proposal Review Information

The evaluation criteria, selection factors and review and selection process provided in this section will be used for this competition in lieu of that provided in the MEP regulations found at 15 C.F.R. part 290, specifically 15 C.F.R. §§ 290.6 and 290.7

(<http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&sid=8652afebd3b81ef821cdaba9a0b5197c&rgn=div5&view=text&node=15:1.2.2.10.13&idno=15>):

1. Evaluation Criteria

The proposals will be evaluated based on the evaluation criteria described below, which are set in the context of the proposer's ability to align the proposal for accomplishing the objectives of 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.

The evaluation criteria that will be used in evaluating proposals are as follows:

- a. **Identification of Target Firms in Proposed Region.** *Does the proposal clearly address the entire service region, providing for a large enough population of target firms of small- and medium-sized manufacturers that the proposer understands and can serve, and which is not presently served by an existing Center?*
 - (1) **Market Analysis.** *Demonstrated understanding of the service region's manufacturing base, including business size, industry types, product mix, and technology requirements.*
 - (2) **Geographical Location.** *Physical size, concentration of industry, and economic significance of the service region's manufacturing base. Geographical diversity of the Center as compared to existing Centers will be a factor in evaluation of proposals.*
- b. **Technology Resources.** *Does the proposal assure strength in technical personnel and programmatic resources, full-time staff, facilities, equipment, and linkages to external sources of technology to develop and transfer technologies related to NIST research results and expertise in the technical areas noted in the MEP regulations found at 15 C.F.R. part 290 as well as from other sources of technology research and development?*
- c. **Technology Delivery Mechanisms.** *Does the proposal clearly and sharply define an effective methodology for delivering advanced manufacturing technology to small- and medium-sized manufacturers and mechanism(s) for accelerating the adoption of technologies for both process improvement and new product adoption?*

- (1) **Linkages.** *Development of effective partnerships or linkages to third parties such as industry, universities, nonprofit economic organizations, and state governments who will amplify the Center's technology delivery to reach a large number of clients in its service region.*
- (2) **Program Leverage.** *Provision of an effective strategy to amplify the Center's technology delivery approaches to achieve the proposed objectives as described in 15 C.F.R. 290.3(e).*

d. **Management and Financial Plan.** *Does the proposal define a management structure and assure management personnel to carry out development and operation of an effective Center?*

- (1) **Organizational Structure.** *Completeness and appropriateness of the organizational structure, and its focus on the mission of the Center. Assurance of local full-time top management of the Center. This includes a clearly presented Oversight Board structure with a membership representing small- and medium- sized manufacturers in the region. MEP has determined that centers clearly benefit when a majority or more of its Board members/Trustees compose a membership representing principally small and medium manufacturing as well as committed partners and do not have dual obligations to more than one Center. Two-thirds of the members of the Center's oversight board must not be members of any other MEP Center boards.*
- (2) **Program Management.** *Effectiveness of the planned methodology of program management. This includes committed local partners and demonstrated experience of the leadership team in manufacturing, outreach and partnership development.*
- (3) **Internal Evaluation.** *Effectiveness of the planned continuous internal evaluation of program activities. The proposal must provide the methodology for continuous internal evaluation of the program activities and demonstrate the effectiveness of defined methodology.*
- (4) **Plans for Financial Cost Share.** *Demonstrated stability and duration of the proposer's funding commitments. Identification of the sources of cost share and the general terms of funding commitments. The total level of cost share and detailed rationale of the cost share, including cash and in-kind, must be documented in the budget submitted with the proposal.*
- (5) **Budget.** *Suitability and focus of the proposer's detailed one-year budget and budget outline for years two (2) through five (5).*

Each of these factors will be given equal weight in the evaluation process.

2. Selection Factors

The Selecting Official shall select proposals for award based upon the rank order of the proposals, and may select a proposal out of rank based on one or more of the following selection factors:

- a. The availability of Federal funds.

- b. The need to assure appropriate regional distribution.
- c. Whether the project duplicates other projects funded by DoC or by other Federal agencies.
- d. Proposer's performance under current or previous Federal financial assistance awards.
Note: Proposals from existing or previous MEP centers or partners must contain specific information that addresses whether the proposer's past performance with the program is indicative of expected performance under a possible new award and describing how and why performance is expected to be the same or different.

3. Review and Selection Process.

- a. **Initial Administrative Review of Proposals.** An initial review of timely received proposals will be conducted to determine eligibility, completeness, and responsiveness to this FFO and the scope of the stated program objectives. Proposals determined to be ineligible, incomplete, and/or non-responsive may be eliminated from further review.
- b. **Full Review of Eligible, Complete, and Responsive Proposals.** Proposals that are determined to be eligible, complete, and responsive will proceed for full reviews in accordance with the review and selection processes below:
 - (1) **Evaluation and Review.** NIST will appoint an evaluation panel, consisting of at least three technically qualified reviewers to evaluate each proposal based on the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1. of this FFO) and assign a numeric score for each proposal. If more than one non-Federal employee reviewer is used on the panel, the panel member reviewers may discuss the proposals with each other, but scores will be determined on an individual basis, not as a consensus. Proposals with an average score of 70 or higher out of 100 will be deemed finalists.
 - (2) **Site Visits.** Site visits may be required to make full evaluation of a proposal that has been determined to be a finalist. If site visits are deemed necessary, all finalists will receive site visits conducted by the same evaluation panel reviewers referenced in the preceding paragraph. NIST may enter into negotiations with the finalists concerning any aspect of their proposal. Finalists will be reviewed, evaluated, and assigned numeric scores based on the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1. of this FFO).
 - (3) **Ranking and Selection.** Based on the average of the panel member reviewers' scores, a rank order will be prepared and provided to the Selecting Official for further consideration. The Selecting Official, who is the Director of the NIST MEP Program, will then select funding recipients based upon the rank order and the selection factors (see Section V.2. of this FFO).

NIST reserves the right to negotiate the budget costs with the proposers that have been selected to receive awards, which may include requesting that the proposer remove certain costs. Additionally, NIST may request that the proposer modify objectives or work plans and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to award. NIST also reserves the right to reject a proposal where information is uncovered that raises a reasonable doubt as to the responsibility of the proposer. NIST may select part, some, all,

or none of the proposals. The final approval of selected proposals and issuance of awards will be by the NIST Grants Officer. The award decisions of the NIST Grants Officer are final.

4. Anticipated Announcement and Award Date

Review, selection, and award processing is expected to be completed in June 2012. The earliest anticipated start date for awards made under this FFO is expected to be July 1, 2012.

5. Additional Information

- a. Proposal Replacement Pages.** Proposers may not submit replacement pages and/or missing documents once a proposal has been submitted. Any revisions must be made by submission of a new proposal that must be received by NIST by the submission deadline.
- b. Notification to Unsuccessful Proposers.** Unsuccessful proposers will be notified in writing.
- c. Retention of Unsuccessful Proposals.** One (1) of each non-selected proposal will be retained for three (3) years for record keeping purposes and the other two (2) copies will be destroyed. After three (3) years the remaining copy will be destroyed.

VI. Award Administration Information

- 1. Award Notices.** Successful proposers will receive an award from the NIST Grants Officer. The award cover page, i.e., CD-450, Financial Assistance Award is available at <http://ocio.os.doc.gov/s/groups/public/@doc/@os/@ocio/@oitpp/documents/content/dev01002513.pdf> and the DoC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions (March 2008), which may be updated by the time of award, are available at <http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/archive/docs/GRANTS/DOC%20STCsMAR08Rev.pdf>.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.

- a. DoC Pre-Award Notification Requirements.** The DoC Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements, which are contained in the *Federal Register* notice of February 11, 2008 (73 FR 7696), are applicable to this FFO and are available at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2008-02-11/pdf/E8-2482.pdf>.
- b. Employer/Taxpayer Identification Number (EIN/TIN), Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS), and Central Contractor Registration (CCR).** All proposers for Federal financial assistance are required to obtain a universal identifier in the form of DUNS number and maintain a current registration in the CCR database. On the form SF-424 items 8.b. and 8.c., the proposer's 9-digit EIN/TIN and 9-digit DUNS number must be consistent with the information on the CCR (www.ccr.gov) and Automated Standard Application for Payment System (ASAP). For complex organizations with multiple EIN/TIN and DUNS numbers, the EIN/TIN and DUNS numbers MUST be the numbers for the applying organization. Organizations that provide incorrect/inconsistent EIN/TIN and DUNS numbers may experience significant delays in receiving funds if their proposal is selected for funding. Confirm that the EIN/TIN and DUNS numbers are consistent with the information on the CCR and ASAP.

Per the requirements of 2 C.F.R. Part 25, each proposer must:

- (1) Be registered in the CCR before submitting a proposal;
- (2) Maintain an active CCR registration with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or a proposal under consideration by an agency; and
- (3) Provide its DUNS number in each application or proposal it submits to the agency.

See also the *Federal Register* notice published on September 14, 2010, at 75 FR 55671.

- c. **Funding Availability and Limitation of Liability.** Funding for the program listed in this FFO is contingent upon the availability of appropriations. In no event will NIST or DoC be responsible for proposal preparation costs if this program fails to receive funding or is cancelled because of agency priorities. Publication of this FFO does not oblige NIST or DoC to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.
- d. **Award Implementation.** Given the partnership nature of MEP Centers, and to clarify and support the project activities and budget, including cost sharing, NIST may ask recipients to provide copies of sub-tier agreements, including subawards and contracts over \$100,000. In addition, to better understand and implement the national manufacturing extension network and partnership, NIST may ask recipients to provide an Operating Plan and Budget showing manufacturing extension service activity and costs in which the Center is engaged outside the Federal share and cost share for the project.

3. Reporting

- a. **Reporting Requirements.** In lieu of the reporting requirements described in sections A.01 Financial Reports and B.01 Performance (Technical) Reports of the DoC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions dated March 2008 (<http://www.osc.doc.gov/oam/archive/docs/GRANTS/DOC%20STCsMAR08Rev.pdf>), the following reporting requirements shall apply:

- (1) **Financial Reports.** Each award recipient will be required to submit an SF-425, Federal Financial Report in triplicate (an original and two (2) copies), on a quarterly basis for the periods ending March 31, June 30, September 30, and December 31 of each year. Reports will be due within 30 days after the end of the reporting period

- (2) **Performance (Technical) Reports.** Each award recipient will be required to submit a technical progress report in triplicate (an original and two (2) copies), on a quarterly basis for the periods ending March 31, June 30, September 30, and December 31 of each year. Reports will be due within 30 days after the end of the reporting period. A final technical progress report shall be submitted within 90 days after the expiration date of the award. Two (2) copies of the technical progress report shall be submitted to the Project Manager and the original report to the NIST Grants Officer. Technical progress reports shall contain information as prescribed in the NIST MEP Reporting Guidelines available at www.nist.gov/mep (OMB Control Number 0693-0032).

- b. **OMB Circular A-133 Audit Requirements.** Single or program-specific audits shall be performed in accordance with the requirements contained in OMB Circular A-133, “*Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations*,” and the related *Compliance Supplement*. OMB Circular A-133 requires any non-Federal entity (*i.e.*, including non-profit institutions of higher education and other non-profit organizations) that expends Federal awards of \$500,000 or more in the recipient’s fiscal year to conduct a single or program-

specific audit in accordance with the requirements set out in the Circular. Proposers are reminded that NIST, the DoC Office of Inspector General or another authorized Federal agency may conduct an audit of an award at any time.

- c. **Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006.** In accordance with 2 C.F.R. Part 170, all recipients of a Federal award made on or after October 1, 2010, are required to comply with reporting requirements under the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 (Pub. L. No. 109-282). In general, all recipients are responsible for reporting sub-awards of \$25,000 or more. In addition, recipients that meet certain criteria are responsible for reporting executive compensation. Proposers must ensure they have the necessary processes and systems in place to comply with the reporting requirements should they receive funding. Also see the *Federal Register* notice published September 14, 2010, at 75 FR 55663.
- 4. **Performance Reviews.** NIST will perform program evaluations of the recipient as follows: (1) in an annual review, as required by 15 C.F.R. Sec. 290.8, and (2) in an independent review during the third year of operation, at the sixth year, and at least every two years thereafter, as required by 15 U.S.C. Sec. 278k(c)(5).
- 5. **Post Client Project Follow-Up.** The recipient will be required to provide client and project data in the specified format to the organization identified by NIST/MEP in order for post-project follow-up data to be obtained (OMB Control Number 0693-0032).

VII. Agency Contact(s)

Questions should be directed to the following contact persons:

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: diane.henderson@nist.gov
Grants.gov - Proposal submission	Christopher Hunton Grants & Agreements Management Division NIST Phone: 301-975-5718 Fax: 301-840-5976 E-mail: christopher.hunton@nist.gov
Grant rules and regulations	Melinda Chukran Grants & Agreements Management Division NIST Phone: 301-975-5266 Fax: 301-926-6458 E-mail: melinda.chukran@nist.gov

VIII. Other Information

Webinar Information Session. NIST MEP will hold an information session for organizations considering applying to this opportunity. An information session in the form of a webinar will be held approximately 14 business days after publication in the *Federal Register*. The exact date and time of the webinar will be posted on the MEP website at www.nist.gov/mep. Organizations wishing to participate in the webinar must sign up by contacting Diane Henderson at diane.henderson@nist.gov.