B2B Network Pilot Federal Funding Opportunity
(2014-NIST-MEP-B2BN-01)
Frequently Asked Questions

1) **If MEP centers team up to share resources, does the pot they can pull from increase? E.G.: In the FFO, it is stated that up to 10 awards of ~$250k will be made. If 3 MEPs team up together for an application, can they apply for up to $750k or should they still be focused on the $250k figure in their proposal?**

   • Answer: As noted in the FFO, "NIST anticipates making up to 10 awards at approximately $250,000 per award." Each applicant for an award, regardless of the number of partners, should submit a project proposal and corresponding proposed budget based on approximately $250,000 of federal funding. Applications submitted in response to the B2B FFO will be evaluated on their individual merits and will not be considered as part of, or in conjunction with, other applications.

2) **What is the reason for recommending MEP centers form teaming arrangements? Demonstrate their ability to work together so their efforts could scale to other organizations and specific efforts are not duplicated? This directly correlates to question 1.**

   • Answer: Teaming arrangements are encouraged by NIST/MEP to help ensure that MEP Centers bring together the appropriate resources (technical and business) needed to address the requirements of the FFO. It should be noted, that NIST does not endorse or support any particular technical or business resource as a subcontractor, subrecipient or partner in the development of B2B proposals and that, while teaming arrangements are strongly encouraged, they are not required.

3) **Is the goal of this project for MEP Centers to define a new product/service offering to manufacturers that helps them with Supplier Scouting or is it to prove that they have the technical and strategic capabilities to execute Supplier Scouting for a myriad of use cases? IE: Is the outcome of this project academic or business focused?**

   • Answer: Many MEP Centers already provide supplier, technology and market scouting services. The goal of the project is to expand and enhance those capabilities, and to develop various models and techniques that may be deployed throughout the MEP network. The outcome should be business focused as the intent is for

manufacturers to have access to viable buying and selling opportunities, as noted in the FFO.

4) **What is the desired deliverable from the awardees at the end of the 2 years if the desire is not to form the infrastructure required to repeat this process? IE: I believe that almost any MEP can demonstrate their ability to source products locally and establish case studies of supplier scouting, but putting the infrastructure together to be able to repeat the process in a way that makes money for the MEP Center is a completely different animal. Please clarify what an ideal deliverable at the end of the Period of Performance is.**

   - Answer: The Program Objectives and Program Priorities discussed in Section I of the FFO identify NIST's goals and expectations relative to the B2B Pilot Program. In this respect, the ideal deliverable will depend on the MEP Center and its partners. NIST has not established and will not establish an ideal deliverable as these are pilot projects that may or may not be scalable, interoperable or usable beyond the region that develops the pilot.

5) **Given that the desired deliverables are delivered during FY 2016, what is the follow on plan to expand this from a Pilot project? IE: What type of resources and what type of timeline will MEP National provide a follow on RFP of sorts? What are the planned goals of that RFP (to build the infrastructure required to make this process scalable)?**

   - NIST has not established a follow-on plan at this time Whether a follow-on plan is established will depend on the progress and results of the pilots, which NIST will consider when determining whether to allocate future resources in this area.

6) **Would a non-profit organization dedicated to building community among technology entrepreneurs and the organizations, individuals, and institutions that support them be eligible to be a proposed subawardee and/or contractor or other collaborator in a project proposal? My understanding is that a MEP needs to be the lead applicant but others can be part of the proposal.**

   - Answer: A non-profit that brings relevant skills, knowledge, technologies and/or opportunities may be included as a subrecipient or contractor to the lead applicant, as long as it is clear in the proposal what roles and responsibilities are to be addressed by the subrecipient/contractor along with appropriate budgets.

7) **Currently there is not an active center in the State of Florida? What opportunities are there to collaborate with an MEP Center if one is not currently available?**

Answer: Only existing MEP Centers are eligible to apply for the B2B funding opportunity, however MEP Centers may form teaming arrangements with other organizations such as non-profits. The FFO for an MEP Center in the State of Florida closed on May 14, 2014. MEP is currently evaluating applications and does not anticipate announcing a new MEP Center for the State of Florida prior to the close of the B2B FFO (August 4th). As such, MEP recommends contacting existing MEP Centers (http://www.nist.gov/mep/) to see if they are planning to submit a B2B application and, if so, whether they would be interested in forming a teaming arrangement with your organization as part of its application.

8) **Can you comment further about the energy efficiency piece?**
   - Answer: The energy efficiency requirement is imposed by the legislation [15 U.S.C. 278k(f)] being used for this competition. The minimum requirement is that applicants must address energy efficiency opportunities among the various business, technology, supplier and market scouting activities they propose.

9) **Will travel requirements imposed by NIST MEP for successful awards be expected such as in previous tcars?**
   - Answer: Applicants should factor up to 2-3 meetings during the project period of performance. The thinking at this point is that there will be face-to-face meetings for the project kick-off, followed by semi-annual meetings (at locations to be determined based on where the awardees are located) thereafter. Quarterly and monthly progress will be done via teleconference or web conference.

10) **Do Resumes count in 20 pages?**
   - Answer: No, Resumes are not included in the page count.

11) **Does NIST anticipate there being additional rounds for proposals in the future (this year or next)?**
   - Answer: At this time, NIST does not anticipate additional competitions for this activity.

12) **Will the presentation be made available to attendees?**
   - Answer: The presentation and webinar recording will be available at http://www.nist.gov/mep/ffo_b2b.cfm

13) **In other words should we budget for meetings with MEP national?**

- Answer: See Question #9's Response

14) **Will unsuccessful bids be informed and receive feedback where application was lacking?**
- Answer: All unsuccessful applicants will be formally notified once all the successful applicants have received their awards. NIST MEP will offer a debrief for the unsuccessful applicants on an individual basis. The debrief is structured around communicating strengths and weaknesses in an effort to help you be more successful in future funding opportunities.

15) **Are there NIST resources available for the portal such as IELI resources?**
- Answer: The only NIST resources available are those that are part of this competition. No additional resources are expected to be available to support the program, other than the evaluation contractor noted in the FFO.

16) **Is it possible that a partnership of several large centers across several states could request more than $250K?**
- Answer: The FFO limits the availability of funding "per award" to approximately $250K. Applicants who are planning to work with other applicants should so note in their proposal that they will do so if both (or more) applicants are awarded funds.

17) **Must we have an indirect cost rate agreement to participate?**
- Answer: You are not required to have an indirect cost rate. However, if within your budget you propose to use an indirect cost rate, you must provide a copy of your indirect cost rate agreement.

18) **What are the matching requirements?**
- Answer: This funding opportunity does not require cost share.

19) **What metrics will be required (# firms, # jobs, sales increased, etc.)?**
- Answer: It is up to each applicant to define and describe the metrics they plan to use to determine whether the effort is a success. Section IV.2.a.6.d states that the project narrative's Management and Financial Plan includes the following "Identify and describe measurable performance outcomes that demonstrate the validity, value and success of the network."

20) **We have an existing matchmaking technology but are not an MEP Center. If two MEP Centers partner with our organization separately and write two grants that use our technology as the base of their grant proposal - will these grants score less points because they are using the same technology?**

- Answer: It is up to each center to determine the appropriate technology to use for their particular network. NIST will not prescribe any particular solution(s) for the underlying technology. The intent is to have something that works with minimal to no development costs.

21) **In the Funding opportunity section of the announcement, you refer to market scouting and opportunity scouting. What are these? MEP clearly explains what Tech Scouting and Supplier Scouting are on their website, but has no information clarifying what these other types of scouting specifically refer to?**
   - Answer: Opportunity scouting refers generally to a viable sale or purchase of technologies, products and/or services. A viable opportunity is one for which there is documented or documentable verification of the opportunity. The verification can take the form of items such as purchase orders, purchase commitments, letters of intent to purchase/sell, etc.

     Market scouting refers generally to a search for or identification of a market where a company's products, services and/or technologies might be a good fit and which the company is not currently actively engaged in.