MEP Center State Competition
Funding Opportunity Number: 2026-NIST-MEP-02

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

These FAQs are being provided for informational purposes only and to assist potential applicants in navigating the MEP Center application process. In cases where these FAQs conflict with the MEP Center statutory authorization in 15 USC 278k and/or with the MEP Center State Competition Funding Opportunity Number 2026-NIST-MEP-02, the MEP authorizing statute and the NOFO will control in all cases.

Applications

Q: For companies that are not eligible to serve as the prime applicant but could provide technology, data, supplier-scouting, or implementation capabilities, will NIST publish an opt-in list of interested eligible applicants by state or otherwise facilitate teaming introductions so that potential partners can identify and contact California applicants before the deadline?

A: MEP invites entities seeking to connect with potential applicants or other entities to join a public teaming partner list. If you would like to be added to the list, please complete the form at https://www.nist.gov/mep/mep-center-state-competition-teaming-partner-list. The results will be shared publicly. By enabling this list, MEP is not endorsing, sponsoring, or otherwise evaluating the qualifications of the entities that are self-identifying for placement on the list. MEP will not pay any entity for the development or provision of any information, nor will it give any preference to such entity that does so. Participation in the list is voluntary and does not bear any relation to, substitute, or replace the application requirements described in any MEP Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Q: Section IV.5 states that applications submitted by state and local governments are subject to E.O. 12372.

We have not received confirmation as to whether Assistance Listing 11.611 has been selected for state review. Our State Single Point of Contact has an out of office message through August 31, so I emailed the back-up contact he provided, with our

SPOC copied, and have not received a response. Should I save that email correspondence as a PDF and submit it within our application?

Can NIST advise how we should complete Item 19 of the SF-424 if we do not receive a response before the submission is due?

A: As stated in Section IV.5 of the 2026-NIST-MEP-02 NOFO, applications submitted by State and local governments are subject to Executive Order (E.O.) 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. Each State designates an entity to coordinate and review proposed Federal financial assistance.

For purposes of completing Item 19 of the SF-424, you should complete the item based on the status of its submission under the State's E.O. 12372 process and the applicable SF-424 instructions. NIST cannot make the State's determination or provide confirmation on behalf of the State Single Point of Contact.

If confirmation from the State Single Point of Contact is not received before the application deadline, please do not delay submission of the application while awaiting that response. Applications must be submitted through Grants.gov by **August 21, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time.**

Q: In the narrative, should tables be double-spaced as well or can they be single-spaced?

A: The NOFO requires the Project Narrative to be double-spaced. However, as noted in the NOFO, a smaller type size (10-point minimum) is easy to read and may be used in figures and tables, provided it is clearly legible. Therefore, tables may use smaller, clearly legible type; the NOFO does not specifically provide an exception to the double-spacing requirement for tables.

Q: I have two questions regarding our submission.

1. **Does the SF-424A Section F boxes 21 and 22 need to be filled out?**
2. **Can the subaward first year and five year budgets be submitted in Excel?**

A: Regarding the SF-424A, the NOFO provides specific instructions for completing Sections A through E, but does not provide specific instructions for completing Section F, boxes 21 and 22. Applicants should complete the SF-424A consistent with the instructions provided in the NOFO and the applicable SF-424A form instructions.

Regarding subaward budgets, each proposed subaward must complete and submit the required MEP Single-Year Budget Workbook. The workbook provides the required structure and format for detailing the subaward's cost categories and line items. Therefore, the required MEP Single-Year Budget Workbook should be submitted in Excel format rather than a separate applicant-created budget format.

Q: In reviewing our commitment letters, we have found a few letters from prominent organizations that have the word "support" versus "commitment" in the body of the letter. Will these support letters be counted against the 25-page narrative? In other words, will we be penalized for including them.

Further, will "commitment" letters that are considered weak in substance be counted against the 25-page narrative?

A: As stated in Section IV.2.a.10 of the 2026-NIST-MEP-02 NOFO, letters of commitment do not count toward the twenty-five (25) Project Narrative page limit, provided they are submitted consistent with the intent of Section IV.2.a.10.a-f. Any pages beyond the twenty-five (25) page limit that do not meet this criterion, including letters of support that do not constitute a genuine commitment, will be excluded from review.

Q: We have one additional question regarding the budget SF-424A that is part of the Grants.gov package that covers the first 4 years.

In Section A: Should we fill out a column for each year or should we fill out one row that reflects the first 4 years of the budget requested? Year 5 will be reflected in the supplemental SF-424A that we'll submit separately.

For Section B: Should we fill out each column reflecting the budget categories for Years 1 - 4?

For Section C: There are 4 rows, does that mean that it should reflect each Year separately for Non-Federal resources?

A: For the SF-424A covering Years 1–4, please complete the form as follows:

Section A: Use one row (Line 1) for the Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (Assistance Listing 11.611). Section A should reflect the total Federal budget amount for the term of the award in Column (e) and the total non-Federal budget amount for the term of the award in Column (f). You should not create a separate row for each project year.

Section B: Column (1) should reflect the costs by object class category for Year 1, including both the Federal and non-Federal cost-share amounts.

Section C: This section should account for all non-Federal resources/match for the entire project, rather than using one row for each year. Enter applicant resources in Column (b), state resources in Column ©, and other resources (such as in-kind contributions or program income) in Column (d), as applicable.

Section E: This is where the Federal funding estimates are broken out by project year. Years 1–4 should be entered in Columns (b) through (e), respectively.

As noted in the NOFO, the SF-424A included in the Grants.gov package covers the first four project years, and a second SF-424A must be submitted separately for Year 5.

Q: We are working on submitting our application soon. We wanted to seek some clarity on the Current and Pending Support Form. In the form, when it asks for the "Proposal/Active Project Start Date and Proposal/Active Project End Date" should this be for 5 years or just Year 1? If Year 1, does that mean we should fill out one for each year for every key personnel?

Additionally, for the Person-Month per year devoted to the Proposal/Active Project: Can we enter, for example, Year 1 - Year 5: 1.8 months/year? Or do we have to enter only one year at a time? If the person-months are different per year, we'll break it down per year in the box.

A: For the Current and Pending (Other) Support Common Form, applicants should complete a separate form for each applicable key personnel identified in the application. The form should include this proposed project, as well as all other current or pending projects or activities requiring a portion of the individual's time, even if no salary support is received. The number of person-months devoted to each project should also be reported, regardless of the source of support.

For specific instructions on entering the Proposal/Active Project Start and End Dates and reporting person-months across multiple project years, please refer to the NIST Current and Pending Support guidance provided with the form. The NOFO directs applicants to use that guidance when completing the Common Form.

Q: Does the 2-page Executive Summary count toward the 25 pages of the Project Narrative? Or is the 2 page Executive Summary in addition to the 25 pages of the Project Narrative for a max of 27 pages (combined)?

A: The two-page Executive Summary is included within the 25-page limit for the Project Narrative. Therefore, the Project Narrative, including the Executive Summary and all other required information, may not exceed 25 pages total.

As stated in Section IV.2.a.(5) of the NOFO, the Project Narrative is limited to 25 pages, and the Executive Summary is a required component of the Project Narrative. The Executive Summary itself should not exceed two pages.

Q: I am currently waiting on SAM to complete my registration. We have an application ready to go. What steps can I take to ensure I'm able to submit it before the deadline? Is there a way for you to use our UEI to grant us access to the grants.gov application portal now?

A: All applications must be submitted through Grants.gov by the application deadline of August 21, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. ET. NIST is unable to provide access to Grants.gov or expedite SAM.gov registration or UEI verification.

For assistance with your SAM.gov registration or UEI verification, please contact the Federal Service Desk (FSD) at 866-606-8220 or visit FSD.gov for live chat and support.

For assistance with Grants.gov registration or application submission, please contact the Grants.gov Support Center at 1-800-518- 4726 or support@grants.gov. Grants.gov Applicant Support is available 24/7, except on federal holidays.

Please continue working directly with SAM.gov and Grants.gov to resolve any registration or access issues and ensure that your application is submitted through Grants.gov by the stated deadline.

Q: Section IV.2.a.(9) of the NOFO states that the mandatory SF-424A accommodates the first four years of the project and that applicants should download and complete a second SF-424A to cover Year 5.

The NOFO provides specific instructions for completing Sections A–E of the primary SF-424A, including the treatment of five-year totals in Sections A and C, Year 1 costs in Section B, Year 1 quarterly cash needs in Section D, and Years 1–4 Federal funding in Section E. However, we do not see corresponding field-level instructions for completing the supplemental Year 5 form.

Could you please clarify how NIST would like applicants to complete the second SF-424A? Specifically:

- **Section A: Should the five-year Federal and non-Federal totals be repeated, or should this section reflect Year 5 only?**
- **Section B: Should Column (1) reflect Year 5 Federal plus non-Federal costs by object class?**
- **Section C: Should the five-year non-Federal resources be repeated, or should this section reflect Year 5 resources only?**
- **Section D: Should this section be completed using Year 5 quarterly cash needs, or left blank because the primary SF-424A already reports the first project year's cash needs?**

- **Section E: Which column should be used to report the Year 5 Federal funding amount?**

We want to make sure the supplemental form provides the Year 5 information NIST intends without unnecessarily duplicating or conflicting with the information reported on the primary SF-424A.

A: As stated in Section IV.2.a.(2) of the NOFO, applicants should reflect Years 1–4 on the SF-424A included in the Grants.gov application package and submit a second SF-424A to cover Year 5.

For the supplemental SF-424A, please complete the form as follows:

- Section A: Report the total Federal and non-Federal budget amounts for the entire five-year term of the award, consistent with the instructions in the NOFO.
- Section B: Column (1) should reflect the costs by object class category for the first year of the award, including the total Federal share plus non-Federal cost share.
- Section C: Report non-Federal resources/match for the entire project, including applicant, State, and other sources, as applicable.
- Section D: This section requires a quarterly breakdown of the first year's Federal and non-Federal share.
- Section E: The NOFO specifies that Section E is used to report the Federal funds needed for each project year, with Years 1–4 entered in Columns (b) through (e) on the primary SF-424A. For the supplemental SF-424A covering Year 5, the applicant should use the corresponding available field to identify the Year 5 Federal funding requirement.

Applicants should ensure that the information provided across both SF-424A forms is consistent with the overall five-year project budget and the other required budget documentation submitted with the application.

Q: Can resources donated by a vendor at no charge qualify as third-party in-kind non-Federal cost share under 2 CFR 200.306 and the applicable NIST MEP requirements if a vendor may also separately perform paid work as a contractor/solution provider to the MEP Center?

If those two roles are incompatible for cost-share purposes, would the vendor need to be excluded from contractor/paid solution-provider status in order for its donated engineering time, equipment usage, and facility/space usage to qualify as third-party in-kind cost share?

We are seeking clarification regarding the applicable cost-share and organizational classification requirements so that we can structure and document the application correctly.

A: The NOFO permits non-Federal cost share to include cash, services, and third-party in-kind contributions, as described in 2 C.F.R. § 200.306. Any proposed cost share must be allowable and eligible under the program and applicable Federal cost principles, and the source and detailed rationale for the contribution must be appropriately documented in the application's budget tables and budget narrative.

However, the NOFO specifically provides that contractors may not contribute cost share toward the project except with prior written approval from the NIST Grants Officer. Therefore, if a vendor serves as a contractor to the MEP Center, resources donated by the vendor generally may not be counted toward the required non-Federal cost share unless prior written approval is obtained from the NIST Grants Officer.

If a vendor is instead proposed solely as a third-party contributor and is not serving as a contractor, any proposed in-kind contribution would need to satisfy the requirements of the NOFO, 2 C.F.R. § 200.306, and the applicable Federal cost principles, including requirements concerning allowability, valuation, documentation, and allocability.

In any case, any financial or business relationship between parties under an MEP cooperative agreement must be fully disclosed and will be scrutinized by NIST due to the overlapping leadership between the two organizations.

Applicants are responsible for determining and clearly documenting the proposed organizational and cost-share structure in their application. NIST cannot advise an applicant on how to structure its proposal in order to achieve a particular outcome.

For questions regarding whether a particular arrangement requires prior Grants Officer approval or the application of Federal grants regulations, you may also contact the NIST Grants Management Division at NOFO@nist.gov.

Q: We wanted clarification on the NIST-MEP proposal. Can multiple PIs be listed on a proposal that has one lead PI?

A: Yes, an applicant may identify multiple key personnel in its proposal while designating one individual as the MEP Center Director. The roles and responsibilities of the MEP Center Director and other key personnel should be clearly identified within the application.

Please also note that the NOFO requires applicants to complete a separate Current and Pending (Other) Support Common Form for each individual identified in a key personnel role.

Q. May a for-profit entity serve as a named subrecipient in more than one application within the same state?

A: Yes. The NOFO does not prohibit a for-profit entity from serving as a proposed subrecipient on more than one application submitted for the same state. However, applicants should ensure that all proposed subrecipient arrangements are consistent with the requirements of the NOFO and applicable Federal regulations.

Q. Will NIST publish an opt-in teaming list or otherwise facilitate introductions between prospective applicants and potential subrecipients or service providers, as raised during the July 28 informational webinar?

A: NIST has published a teaming list on the NIST MEP website at https://www.nist.gov/mep/mep-center-state-competition-teaming-partner-submissions. By enabling this list, MEP is not endorsing, sponsoring, or otherwise evaluating the qualifications of the entities that are self-identifying for placement on the list. MEP will not pay any entity for the development or provision of any information, nor will it give any preference to such entity that does so. Participation in the list is voluntary and does not bear any relation to, substitute, or replace the application requirements described in any MEP Notice of Funding Opportunity.
Applicants are also encouraged to use the MEP National Network website and other publicly available resources to identify and connect with potential partners. The MEP National Network website is available at https://www.nist.gov/mep.

Q: I had a question about how technology partners could access the list of organizations preparing applications to help support and contribute to their submissions?

A: NIST does not maintain or distribute a list of organizations that are preparing applications for this funding opportunity. However, as noted in the NOFO, prospective applicants are encouraged to review the resources available on the NIST MEP website, which may help identify potential partners.

Q: We need to add more rows for more than one current and pending effort for our personnel. Your form that we downloaded doesn't allow us to add rows. Please provide us with direct information on current and pending efforts.

A: If you have more than one current and pending effort to report, please complete an additional Current and Pending Support form for each additional effort and include all completed forms with your application materials.

Q: Are Letters of Commitment allowed for collaborators who will not be receiving funds from the MEP award?
A: Yes.

Q: Are you looking for regional strengths for specific MEP focuses?
A: No. NIST will review all proposals for thoroughness and responsiveness to the NOFO

Q: Are multi-university submissions considered ideal over singular university submissions?
A: No. NIST will review all proposals for completeness and responsiveness to the NOFO.

Q: How should technology partners locate and contact the lead applicants to participate?
A: Please visit NIST MEP website where we have included a teaming page section at https://www.nist.gov/mep/mep-center-state-competition-teaming-partner-submissions.

Q: Is there a limited submission per institute? In the proposed ecosystem is a letter of collaboration and partnership required
A: Application requirements for this competition are set forth in the NOFO and must be adhered to by applicants.

Q: Are cluster centers that support multiple industries acceptable?
A: Yes, provided that they meet the eligibility, programmatic and financial requirements set forth in the NOFO.

Q: Is it required to partner with an existing MEP center in order to submit the proposal?
A: No

Q: Could there be a situation where a few entities apply and none of them score above 70 percent? What happens next.

A: We will review proposals for thoroughness and responsiveness.

Q: Should the technical narrative be outlined in the same way as the outline you had earlier in the presentation?
A: Technical narrative should be responsive to the NOFO.

Q: Are the standard and technical forms found anywhere I can look up now?
A: The application package forms are available at Grants.gov. Please see the NOFO for information on all required forms and documents.

Q: We are preparing our application for Funding Opportunity No. 2026-NIST-MEP-02 and would appreciate clarification regarding the required applicant Letter of Commitment for non-Federal cost share.

Section IV of the NOFO states that the applicant's stand-alone Letter of Commitment:

"...must cover the one-year period of the proposed MEP Center project and include a break-out of the applicant's contribution of non-Federal cost share, as well as a break-out of anticipated program income (if any)."

However, the MEP Center State Competition FAQs (Rev. V1, Aug. 3, 2026) state that applicants must document the required non-Federal cost share through:

"...a letter of commitment from the applicant documenting its five-year cost-share commitment."

Could you please clarify which requirement applicants should follow when preparing the applicant's Letter of Commitment?

A: While non-Federal cost share is evaluated and required annually, the applicant's Letter of Commitment is intended to demonstrate the applicant's commitment to meeting the cost share requirement throughout the proposed project period. Accordingly, Section IV.2.a.(10)(b) requires that the applicant's stand-alone Letter of Commitment cover all five (5) years of the proposed MEP Center project and include a per-year breakout of the applicant's non-Federal cost share contribution, as well as a per-year breakout of anticipated program income (if any).

Therefore, applicants should prepare the Applicant Letter of Commitment to reflect their commitment to the full five-year project period, with annual cost share and anticipated program income identified for each year.

Q: Do the submission of letters of support from state and local government partners that do not commit cost share count towards the 25-page project narrative limit?

A: Letters of support from state or local government partners that do not include a non-Federal cost share commitment may be submitted as separate attachments and do not count toward the 25-page Project Narrative limit.

The NOFO states that Letters of Commitment do not count toward the 25-page limit and describes the types of letters that may be submitted as part of an application.

Q: Could you please clarify whether each subrecipient is expected to complete these worksheets, or whether they are intended to be completed only by the prime recipient, with subrecipients completing only the Expense Narrative worksheet supporting their respective subawards?

Any guidance you can provide regarding the intended completion of the MEP Single-Year Budget Workbook for subrecipient budgets would be greatly appreciated.

A: Each proposed subrecipient should complete and submit a separate MEP Single-Year Budget Workbook for its proposed subaward. The workbook should reflect the subrecipient's proposed budget and provide sufficient detail to justify the costs associated with that subaward. This requirement is outlined in the NOFO, which states that each subaward must complete and submit the MEP Single-Year Budget Workbook.

For worksheets designed to capture information at the recipient level (such as overall program income or recipient-wide budget summaries), they should be completed by the prime applicant. Subrecipients should complete only the portions of the workbook that are applicable to their proposed subaward and should not duplicate information that is maintained solely by the prime recipient.

Q: What documentation should be submitted to demonstrate the required 50% non-Federal cost share during the application phase?

A: Applicants must document the required non-Federal cost share in the application through:

The SF-424A Budget Forms;

- The MEP Single-Year Budget Workbook and Budget Narrative, identifying Federal and non-Federal funding sources;
- A letter of commitment from the applicant documenting its five-year cost-share commitment;

- While not required, letters of commitment from third-party contributors and subrecipients providing cash or in-kind contributions are strongly encouraged and may strengthen the application.

The cost share may consist of cash, allowable services, and third-party in-kind contributions that comply with 2 CFR Part 200.

Q: When are applications due?

A: Applications are due by August 21, 2026, at 11:59 p.m. (ET).

Q: How do I submit an application?

A: Applications must be submitted using Grants.gov. Paper applications will not be accepted.

Boards

Q: I am writing to request clarification regarding the advisory-board provisions in Section I.3.a.ii of the NOFO.

The section identifies the following types of recipients as eligible to establish an advisory board rather than an oversight board:

1. **A recipient that is an institution of higher education or a state, local, or Tribal governmental entity, where state, local, or Tribal law or policy prohibits the establishment of an oversight board; and**
2. **A recipient that is a nonprofit organization with multiple programs, where MEP Center activities are not the applicant's primary activity.**

We would appreciate confirmation that these are two separate, alternative eligibility pathways.

Specifically, is our understanding correct that:

- **An institution of higher education or governmental entity must also demonstrate that applicable law or policy prohibits it from establishing an oversight board with fiduciary responsibility; but**
- **An institution of higher education or governmental entity qualifying under that first pathway does not also have to be a nonprofit organization meeting the conditions described in the second pathway?**

Could you also clarify what documentation NIST would consider sufficient to demonstrate the applicable legal or policy prohibition? For example, would NIST accept:

- **A citation to applicable state law;**
- **An existing Board Policy or Administrative Procedure;**
- **A written determination from District General Counsel; or**
- **Documentation showing that fiduciary authority is legally reserved to the District's Board of Trustees?**

We want to ensure that we correctly identify the appropriate board structure and provide sufficient supporting documentation in the application.

A: Your understanding is correct that the NOFO identifies two separate circumstances under which a recipient may establish an advisory board rather than an oversight board:

A recipient that is an institution of higher education or a State, local, or Tribal governmental entity, where State, local, or Tribal law or policy prohibits the establishment of an oversight board; or

A recipient that is a nonprofit organization with multiple programs where MEP Center program activities are not the applicant's primary activity.

Accordingly, an institution of higher education or governmental entity relying on the first provision must demonstrate that applicable State, local, or Tribal law or policy prohibits the establishment of an oversight board. It also does not need to qualify under the separate nonprofit-organization provision.

With respect to documentation, the NOFO does not prescribe a specific form of documentation that will, in all circumstances, be considered sufficient to establish such a prohibition. Applicants should provide sufficient information in their application to demonstrate how the applicable law or policy prohibits the establishment of an oversight board and supports the proposed advisory board structure. NIST will evaluate the sufficiency of the proposed board in accordance with the requirements and applicable evaluation criteria identified in the NOFO.

As provided in Section I.3.a.iii, if a compliant oversight or advisory board is not in place at the time of application, the applicant may submit a plan for establishing the appropriate structure. An awardee will have up to 90 calendar days from the award start date to establish the applicable board, and no Federal award funds will be released until the NIST

Grants Officer, in consultation with the MEP Program Office, determines that the board conforms with the requirements of the NOFO.

Q: We are considering donating staff time for a team member to serve on the MEP Center's advisory committee. Would the value of that staff time qualify as an allowable in-kind match contribution under this NOFO?

A: Yes. The NOFO permits non-Federal cost share to include cash, services, and third-party in-kind contributions, provided the contribution is an allowable cost under the program and complies with the applicable Federal cost principles and the requirements of 2 C.F.R. § 200.306. Any proposed in-kind contribution must be adequately documented and included in the applicant's budget narrative.

Q: If our staff member joins the advisory committee, would our organization be prohibited from also acting as a sub awardee to conduct project work?

A: Maybe. Representatives of subrecipients may serve as members of an Oversight Board, however, Oversight Boards, particularly those serving in a fiduciary capacity, with subrecipient members may be viewed as having significant real or apparent conflicts of interest to the organization receiving the MEP cooperative agreement (and responsible for administering and enforcing subawards) and are generally discouraged. Such board memberships will need to be justified by the Center and will be reviewed by NIST on a case-by-case basis. For your reference, here is a link to the current NIST MEP Oversight Board Standards: NIST MEP Oversight Board Standards (2025)

Q: Since an Oversight Board or Advisory Board may be established within 90 days after award, are there recommended governance profiles that would strengthen an application?

A: If an applicant does not have an Oversight Board or Advisory Board in place at the time of application, it must submit a plan describing how the board will be established, including proposed membership criteria. Upon request, applicants should be prepared to provide draft governance documents, such as bylaws and conflict-of-interest policies. Awardees have up to 90 calendar days after the award start date to establish a compliant board, and Federal funds will not be released until NIST determines the board meets the NOFO requirements.

To strengthen an application, applicants should describe a board that is broadly representative of the manufacturing ecosystem, includes a majority of members from small and medium-sized manufacturers where required, and demonstrates appropriate governance, conflict-of-interest safeguards, and relevant expertise.

Cost share

Q. Are there restrictions on a subrecipient contributing cost share through its subaward beyond the requirements of 2 C.F.R. § 200.306?

A: The amount of cost share contributed by a subrecipient is based on the terms of the subject subaward, and there are no required minimums or caps relative to a subrecipient's contribution of cost share.

Q: As opposed to previous funding opportunities and iterations of the program that focused on non-strategic day-to-day activities to improve company productivity and efficiency improvements, such as lean manufacturing, business growth services, and streamlining human resources and payroll, it is imperative that the NIST MEP program be focused and structured to support strategic critical science and technology priorities of interest to sustain America's economic and national security interests.

Does this mean that traditional MEP projects such as lean manufacturing training and implementation, quality systems implementation and training, and general business growth services will not be reportable and allowed for cost share purposes? If not, will a transition period be granted after an award is made?

A: The NOFO reflects a shift in emphasis toward strategic activities that support the adoption and scale-up of advanced manufacturing technologies and strengthen U.S. industrial competitiveness. While the NOFO contrasts this approach with previous funding opportunities that focused on activities such as lean manufacturing and general business growth services, it also states that MEP Centers should address critical manufacturing needs, including advanced manufacturing technology adoption, implementation of process improvements, and workforce development.

Accordingly, traditional MEP services are not categorically prohibited. However, applicants should demonstrate how their proposed activities align with the objectives, requirements, and priorities identified in the NOFO, particularly the focus on advanced manufacturing technologies and the identified priority manufacturing sectors.

Regarding cost share, proposed costs must be allowable under the program and applicable Federal cost principles. The NOFO requires a non-Federal cost share of at least 50 percent of total annual allowable project costs.

Q: Regarding the cost share requirements, I'm wondering if a full IDC is allowed or if there is a cap on IDC such that the rest of it can be used as a part of cost share?

A: The NOFO does not establish a cap on indirect (F&A/IDC) costs. Applicants may propose indirect costs in accordance with their federally negotiated indirect cost rate agreement or, if eligible, elect to use the 15 percent de minimis rate under 2 C.F.R. § 200.414(f).

Indirect costs are treated like any other allowable project cost. The Federal share and the required non-Federal cost share should be allocated across all allowable cost categories, including indirect costs, as appropriate. All proposed costs, including those used to meet the cost-share requirement, must be allowable, allocable, and reasonable in accordance with 2 C.F.R. 200.

Q: Just confirming that the cost share is 1:1 or 50% of the total project costs, right?

A: Yes, that’s correct. The NOFO requires a minimum non-Federal cost share of 50% of the total annual allowable project costs, which is effectively a 1:1 match between Federal and non-Federal funding. Applicants must meet this minimum cost-share requirement annually.

Eligibility

Q: Specific examples would be very helpful to clarify what manufactering stakeholders may benefit from this opportunity besides the NOFO eligiblity. Can you provide more clarity beyond the example of small and medium-sized manufacterers who would most likely need to partner with a non-profit or higher education partner?

A: Please see the NOFO for eligibility requirements. You can learn more about the MEP National Network on the NIST MEP website at https://www.nist.gov/mep/mep-national-network.

Q: MEP Funding opportunity Can Get outside off USA?

A: No. This is a U.S. domestic-driven program.

Q: What are the eligibility criteria?

A: Eligibility is open to a United States-based non-profit institution, an institution of higher education, or a State, United States territory (specifically Puerto Rico), local, or tribal government, or a consortium thereof.

Q: Can MEP Center incumbents apply to this NOFO?

A**:** Yes

Q: Does my organization's headquarters need to be in the state of proposal interest to serve or operate as an MEP Center?

A: No, your organization's headquarters does not need to be in the state of interest but should have physical presence in that state of interest in order to serve manufacturing clientele effectively.

General

Q: We are interested in partnering with MEP Centers and applicants pursuing 2026-NIST-MEP-02, particularly around AI, agentic AI, automation, and advanced manufacturing technology adoption for small and mid-sized manufacturers.

Our interest is in serving as a technology and implementation partner—not as the MEP Center operator. We would like to support Centers in identifying high-value manufacturing use cases, deploying AI and automation solutions, integrating technologies into existing operations, and measuring adoption and operational impact.

Given the emphasis in the current MEP competition on advanced manufacturing technology adoption and collaboration with technology solution providers, could you connect us with the appropriate MEP Centers, applicants, or partnership contact?

We would be happy to provide a short capabilities overview and discuss where we could support current or future MEP initiatives.

A: MEP invites entities seeking to connect with potential applicants or other entities to join a public teaming partner list. If you would like to be added to the list, please complete the form at https://www.nist.gov/mep/mep-center-state-competition-teaming-partner-list. The results will be shared publicly. By enabling this list, MEP is not endorsing, sponsoring, or otherwise evaluating the qualifications of the entities that are self-identifying for placement on the list. MEP will not pay any entity for the development or provision of any information, nor will it give any preference to such entity that does so. Participation in the list is voluntary and does not bear any relation to, substitute, or replace the application requirements described in any MEP Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Q: I am an AI governance, cybersecurity and post-quantum cryptography specialist working on technology validation, manufacturing cybersecurity, crypto-agility and evidence-based implementation frameworks.

Could you please confirm whether a non-U.S.-based independent expert may participate as a technical advisor, subcontractor or consortium contributor to an eligible U.S. applicant under this NOFO?

I would be particularly interested in supporting advanced manufacturing technology adoption, AI assurance, cybersecurity, supply-chain resilience and post-quantum readiness.

A: Non-U.S. based organizations are not excluded from being selected as contractors by recipients awarded Cooperative Agreements under this NOFO following their procurement policies.

Q: Would you be able to forward the NOFO recording from 7/28/26?

A: We've attached the recording link from the July 28, 2026, MEP NOFO webinar below: https://www.nist.gov/video/mep-center-state-competition-fy2026-information-session

Q: How were the states selected for this program?

A: MEP Centers are located in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. These 14 States are up for open competition per statutory requirements set forth in 15 USC 278k(h).

Q: One per State since 2017?
A: NIST expects to issue one cooperative agreement per State, which may include a consortium of applicants and/or subrecipients.

Q: How do we know which of these awards is a renewal and which is new?
A: Cooperative agreements issued pursuant to the NOFO will constitute new MEP Center awards and are open for competition by eligible parties of interest (incumbent and new entrants included).

Q: How often are MEPs university-affiliated vs standalone nonprofits? Is there a preference for one over the other?
A: No. NIST will all proposals for thoroughness and responsiveness.

Q: Ohio has five MEPs, is the goal for this to have one targeted MEP that then hands the money out to other individuals or will this have different considerations?
A: NIST expects to issue one MEP Center award for the State of Ohio, which may include a consortium of eligible applicants and/or proposed subrecipients.

Q: Are there performance statistics available from the performance of incumbents?
A: Please visit NIST MEP website.

Q: Is a list of incumbents available to share?
A: Please visit the NIST MEP website to see active directory of NIST MEP Centers.

Q: I am a professor in Maryland but would like to participate in the MEP program through other states if possible. I am a computational modeler of AM and have ongoing collaborations with researchers at NIST. Is there any lead that you can provide to me for connecting with any of the other potential MEPs in others states that I can contact?

A: While we are unable to make direct introductions or referrals to specific MEP Centers, you may use the MEP National Network Center Locator to identify and contact MEP Centers in other states: https://www.nist.gov/mep/centers

Q: I am a professor of Engineering at Johns Hopkins. I am very interested in participating in the NIST MEP program. However, I do not see any opportunity for Maryland in this call. Am I missing something? How to get connected to a team for this round?

A: You are correct, Maryland is not included in the current competition. This funding opportunity is limited to the states and territories specifically identified in the NOFO. Because Maryland already has an MEP Center that is not up for recompete at this time, there is no opportunity to apply for Maryland under this announcement. For your reference, here is a link to the Maryland MEP Center's contact information: https://mdmep.org/.

Additionally, you may wish to reach out to organizations preparing applications for one of the eligible states to explore potential collaboration as a partner, subrecipient, contractor, or another collaborator. NIST also encourages prospective applicants and collaborators to review the competition resources available on the MEP website.

Q: What states will the MEP Centers be established in?

A: Awards will be made to establish and operate an MEP Center in the states of Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, California, Georgia, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, Montana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Utah, and Vermont, and in the U.S. Territory of Puerto Rico.

Q: How many MEP Centers will there be per state?

A: Awards will be made for one cooperative agreement holder, but can include a consortium of eligible applicants.

Q: Given our consortium framework involving municipal, nonprofit, and academic partners, does NIST have a preference for a consortium versus a single-entity lead structure?

A: NIST does not express a preference for either a consortium or a single-entity applicant. Eligible applicants include nonprofit organizations, institutions of higher education, state, local, or Tribal governments, or a consortium thereof. The key consideration is whether the applicant demonstrates the organizational capacity to operate the MEP Center and retains responsibility for the required Core Management and Oversight Functions. Applicants may collaborate with subrecipients and strategic partners, but the lead applicant cannot delegate responsibility for core management of the MEP Center.

Terms and Conditions

Q: Can you please outline the measurements for success that would be needed for the centers?
A: Please review the NOFO and visit NIST MEP website to learn more about the MEP Center program.

Q: What are the quarterly and annual reporting requirements
A: MEP Centers selected for funding will be required to report on project performance and progress consistent with the NIST-approved Operating Outcome Plan, the NIST MEP Reporting Guidelines, and the terms and conditions of the cooperative agreement. Specific reporting schedules, formats, and required metrics will be communicated to award recipients following the award and will be administered in accordance with the NIST MEP Reporting Guidelines and the cooperative agreement requirements.

Q: Based on the goals and objectives outlined in the MEP Center NOFO, what will be the reporting and metric requirements of the Center?
A: MEP Centers selected for funding will be required to report on project performance and progress consistent with the NIST-approved Project Approach and Project Execution Plan, the NIST MEP Reporting Guidelines, and the terms and conditions of the cooperative agreement.
Applicants should clearly describe in their proposal:

- The anticipated project impacts;
- The methodology they propose using to identify and evaluate project outcomes, including the uptake of advanced manufacturing technologies by small and medium-sized manufacturers (SMMs); and
- How project learnings will be disseminated.

Specific reporting schedules, formats, and required metrics will be communicated to award recipients following the award and will be administered in accordance with the NIST MEP Reporting Guidelines and the cooperative agreement requirements.

Q: What version of the general terms and conditions will apply to this funding award (i.e. 2024, 2025, or a new version)?
A: The June 23, 2025 version of the General Terms and Conditions will apply to these awards.

Q: What general terms and conditions are new for this award that have not been applied to previous awards?

A: The June 23, 2025 version of the General Terms and Conditions will apply to these awards.

Q: How many years of funding will this award be for?

A: NIST anticipates funding fourteen (14) awards with an initial period of performance period of up to five (5) years, subject to annual performance reviews, annual funding availability, and the continued relevance of the project to the program and to Department of Commerce priorities, with an additional non-competitive 5-year award period based on annual performance reviews, annual funding availability and the continued relevance of the project to the program and to Department of Commerce priorities.

Q: Will there be a cost share requirement?

A: Non-Federal cost share is required. Annual cost sharing of at least 50 percent is required for awards issued pursuant to this NOFO. See section III.2 of the NOFO.