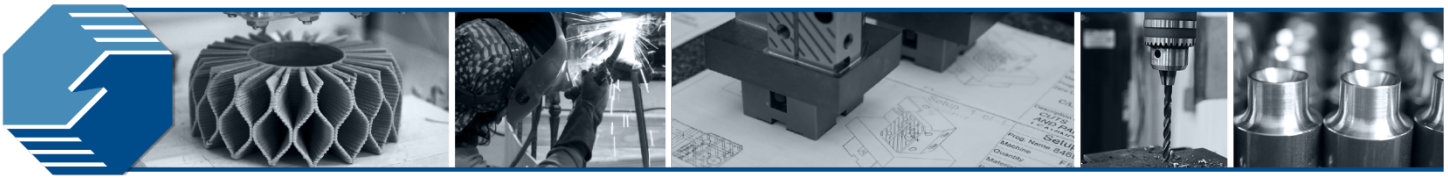

MAKING AN IMPACT ON U.S. MANUFACTURING

Embedding MEP into Manufacturing USA Institutes Competition Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

October 2016

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

MEP • MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

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2016 Embedding MEP into NNMI Manufacturing Institutes Competition
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The below FAQs are for informational purposes only and are intended solely to assist potential applicants in better understanding the MEP program, intent of FFO and the application requirements set forth in the FFO. The FAQs do not and are not intended to supersede, modify, or otherwise alter applicable statutory or regulatory requirements or the specific application requirements set forth in the FFO. In all cases, MEP statutory and regulatory mandates, and the requirements set forth in the FFO, shall prevail over any inconsistencies contained in the below FAQs. ***Please note that recently added questions have been identified by the date in which they were added to this document. Any previous responses that have been updated have also been identified by an "updated date".***

A. EMBEDDING MEP INTO NNMI INSTITUTES BACKGROUND

B. OVERALL COMPETITIVE PROCESS

1. **What is the anticipated schedule for notification of awardees?**

   We anticipate the review, selection and award processing to conclude by end of summer 2016. The anticipated start date for awards made under this opportunity is expected to be October 2016.

2. **May unsuccessful applicants request a debriefing?**

   Yes. Unsuccessful applicants may request a debriefing, which will provide constructive feedback that can assist applicants to develop improved proposals in the future. Briefings should take the form of advice to applicants on the strengths and weaknesses of their own proposals in terms of the published evaluation and review criteria.

3. **Can the applicant engage in conversation with NIST MEP after submitting their application?**

   No, MEP Staff cannot engage in conversations related to the competition or your application once the FFO has published. All questions related to the competition must be directed to mepffo@nist.gov. NIST MEP will review the question(s) and provide a response as appropriate.

4. **How can an applicant track and check their application submission in grants.gov?**

   Applicants 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 indicates only that an application was transferred to a system. It does not provide details concerning whether all attachments (or how many attachments) transferred successfully.

Applicants can use Grants.gov's Download Submitted Applications feature to check that all of the required attachments were contained in their submission.
After submitting the application, follow the directions found in the Grants.gov Online Users Guide (http://go.usa.gov/cjaEh). Click first on Applicants; then click on Applicant Actions; go then to the "Check My Application Status" option, and choose Download Submitted Applications. If any, or all, of the required attachments are absent from the submission, follow the attachment directions found in the Full Announcement/FFO document, resubmit the application, and check again for the presence of the required attachments.

The Grants.gov Online Users Guide available at the Grants.gov site (http://go.usa.gov/cjaEh) provides important information on checking the status of applications.

Applicants can track their submission in the Grants.gov system by following the procedures at the Grants.gov site (http://go.usa.gov/cjamz). It can take up to two business days for an application to fully move through the Grants.gov system to NIST.

NIST uses the Tracking Numbers assigned by Grants.gov, and does not issue Agency Tracking Numbers.Grants.gov

C. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

D. BUDGET

E. EVALUATION CRITERIA

1. **Will you be approving embedding multiple MEP Center resources at the same NNMI. For instance if Center A applied to embed a full or partial FTE at the NNMI for Additive will you also approve another MEP Center (Center B) staff to embedded their too. Will there be a cap of the number of FTEs per NNMI?**

   It is at the discretion of the NNMI Institute to determine how many MEP center personnel (from multiple MEP Centers) they want to imbed within their facility.

   Per the FFO, Section IV.2.a.12(a), a) Each application must include a Letter of Commitment from an authorized representative of: (i) the MEP Center applicant; (ii) each Institute that will be participating in the project; and from (iii) other MEP Centers that will be participating in the project. Each letter should describe the submitting organization's commitment to and activities in support of the proposed project.

2. **Is an entire FTE (1.0) required to be embedded at each NNMI requested or can an MEP Center request to embed .5 of an FTE at multiple NNMI's.**

   Per Section I of the FFO, proposed approaches are required to fund the embedding of MEP Center representatives in residence at NNMI Institutes at a total level of effort and time commitment equal to or greater than 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff each year. This 1.0 FTE requirement for embedded MEP Center personnel represents the minimum level of effort, and embedding of MEP Center personnel at levels of effort and time commitment totaling more than 1.0 FTE each year are encouraged. This 1.0 FTE requirement may be met via the embedding of multiple MEP representatives in NNMI Institutes, but any single MEP Center personnel must be embedded at a level of effort of 0.5 FTE staff year or greater to be counted toward the overall annual 1.0 FTE requirement. It is required that the embedded MEP Center personnel must operate in residence at the participating Institutes.

3. **Regarding the requirement that "… any single MEP Center personnel must be embedded at a level of effort of 0.5 FTE staff year or greater to be counted toward the overall annual 1.0 FTE requirement" – if the proposed project length is for 2 years, does a single person embedded for .25 FTE in year 1 and .25 FTE in year 2 meet this requirement? Or is it a minimum of 0.5 FTE *per year?***

   Per Section I of the FFO, proposed approaches are required to fund the embedding of MEP Center representatives in residence at NNMI Institutes at a total level of effort and time commitment equal to or greater than 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff each year. This 1.0 FTE requirement for embedded MEP Center personnel represents the minimum level of effort, and embedding of MEP Center personnel at levels of effort and time commitment totaling more than 1.0 FTE each year are encouraged. **This 1.0 FTE requirement may be met via the embedding of multiple MEP representatives in NNMI Institutes, but any single MEP Center personnel must be embedded at a level of effort of 0.5 FTE staff year or greater to be counted toward the overall annual 1.0 FTE requirement. It is required that the embedded MEP Center personnel must operate in residence at the participating Institutes.**

4. **Is it a requirement that proposed embedded personnel be current MEP staff? Can NIST provide guidance on its attitude toward or scoring of applications that propose a *new hire* for embedded staff?**

   Per Section V.d of the FFO, Reviewers will assess the quality, merit, and extent to which the following is evident when evaluating the qualifications of the applicant and of program management:

   i. Proposed personnel identified from the MEP Center(s) to be embedded within the participating NNMI Institute(s) have the appropriate education, technical background, and experience assisting small U.S. manufacturers, especially in areas relating to technology acceleration and working with supply chains, to

appropriately represent the involved MEP Center(s) to the involved NNMI Institute(s);

ii. Key personnel are identified in the participating NNMI Institute(s), the participating MEP Center(s), and other participating organizations to appropriately support the activities of the proposed pilot project, including the embedding of personnel;

iii. Proposed management structure and organizational roles are clearly defined and aligned to plan, direct, monitor, organize and oversee the implementation of the proposed approach to achieve project objectives, and the proposed organizational structure flows logically from the specified approach to the project deliverables; and

iv. Proposed organizational structures and participating personnel from the MEP Center(s) and NNMI Institute(s) are ready to begin project operations upon receipt of funding award.

5. **If an MEP Center is proposing to embed a person at an NNMI headquarters can another FTE or partial FTE be embedded at one of the NNMI satellite nodes.**

   Yes. The FFO states that proposed approaches are required to fund the embedding of MEP Center representatives in residence at NNMI Institutes at a total level of effort and time commitment equal to or greater than 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff each year. This 1.0 FTE requirement for embedded MEP Center personnel represents the minimum level of effort, and embedding of MEP Center personnel at levels of effort and time commitment totaling more than 1.0 FTE each year are encouraged. This 1.0 FTE requirement may be met via the embedding of multiple MEP staff members in NNMI Institutes, but any single MEP Center personnel must be embedded at a level of effort of 0.5 FTE staff year or greater to be counted toward the overall annual 1.0 FTE requirement. It is required that the embedded MEP Center personnel operate in residence at the participating Institutes. Applicants may also propose approaches that involve the participation of multiple NNMI Institutes, as well as multiple MEP Centers.

   It is up to the MEP Center and NNMI Institute to determine the best approach for the embedding. It must comply with the requirements set for the in the FFO.

6. **We are a team representing four states exploring the interest of submitting a proposal through 4 MEPs to the funding opportunity 2016-NIST-MEP-ENNMI-01. As we meet with MEPs in our respective states one question that is of concern is the period of time that MEP representatives must spent on site. The solicitation mentions up to two years in residence, can you provide more information with regards to this expectation, as for example does the residence period needs to be continuous? Can a set of forum/workshops be designed within NNMIs to accelerate technology**

transfer/education so that the MEP representative(s) is on site at extended periods, but not continuously.

The FFO states that proposed approaches are ***required to fund the embedding of MEP Center representatives in residence at NNMI Institutes at a total level of effort and time commitment equal to or greater than 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff each year.*** This 1.0 FTE requirement for embedded MEP Center personnel represents the minimum level of effort, and embedding of MEP Center personnel at levels of effort and time commitment totaling more than 1.0 FTE each year are encouraged. This 1.0 FTE requirement may be met via the embedding of multiple MEP staff members in NNMI Institutes, but any single MEP Center personnel must be embedded at a level of effort of 0.5 FTE staff year or greater to be counted toward the overall annual 1.0 FTE requirement. It is required that the embedded MEP Center personnel operate in residence at the participating Institutes. Applicants may also propose approaches that involve the participation of multiple NNMI Institutes, as well as multiple MEP Centers. A proposal that fails to meet these requirements will be deemed as unresponsive to this FFO.

F. REVIEW AND SELECTION PROCESS

G. ELIGIBILITY

1. **Can a center request to be embedded at an NNMI that is currently under FFO competition but will be awarded before October1st?**

   Per Section III of the FFO, an applicant MEP Center must form a collaboration, teaming arrangement, or other appropriate relationship with one or more of the current established and operating NNMI Institutes.

   Per Section III of the FFO, eligibility for this program is contingent upon an applicant being a NIST MEP Center at the time of application, at the time of award, and for the entire period of performance for awards issued pursuant to this FFO. NIST reserves the right to take appropriate action, which may include not making an award, or terminating an award or a portion thereof, should an MEP Center fail to maintain its eligibility at all required times. NIST further reserves the right to take appropriate action, including terminating an award or a portion thereof, if an Institute does not maintain its designation as such during any time during the period of performance for awards issued pursuant to this FFO.

2. **It is allowable for an MEP to simultaneously serve as the LEAD on a funded application, and also as a FUNDED subrecipient or contractor on another funded application, correct?**

Per Section III of the FFO, An MEP Center may serve as the lead MEP Center/applicant on only one proposal. There are no restrictions on the number of applications in which MEP Centers or NNMI Institutes can be proposed as collaborators.

3. **In the FFO it states where an MEP Center issues subawards to "MEP Affiliates", are the MEP Affiliates eligible to be the lead applicant?**

   Per the FFO, the eligibility section reads:

   III. Eligibility Information

   1. Eligible Applicants. Eligible applicants for this program are MEP Centers receiving current cooperative agreement funding from NIST. …..Eligibility for this program is contingent upon an applicant being a NIST MEP Center at the time of application, at the time of award, and for the entire period of performance for awards issued pursuant to this FFO.