

April 17, 2017

**NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (NOFO)  
NIST MEP COMPETITIVE AWARDS PROGRAM**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- **Federal Agency Name:** National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), United States Department of Commerce (DoC)
- **Funding Opportunity Title:** NIST MEP Competitive Awards Program
- **Announcement Type:** Initial
- **Funding Opportunity Number:** 2017-NIST-MEP-CAP-01
- **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:** 11.611, Manufacturing Extension Partnership;
- **Dates:** Electronic applications will be accepted and considered on a rolling basis as they are received but must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Thursday, June 15, 2017, for consideration under this NOFO in the current fiscal year. Applications received after June 15, 2017, may be processed and considered for funding in the current fiscal year or in the next fiscal year, subject to the availability of funds and subject to the publication of a superseding NOFO under this program.

The approximate start date for successful applicants is 90 days following completion of the review, selection and award process. See Section V.3. in the Full Announcement Text of this NOFO.

**Applicants should be aware, and factor in their application submission planning, that the Grants.gov system is expected to be closed for routine maintenance from 12:01 Eastern Time, Saturday, May 20, 2017 until Monday, May 22, 2017 at 6:00 a.m. Eastern Time. Applications cannot be submitted when Grants.gov is closed.**

**Applicants are strongly urged to read Section IV.2.b., Attachment of Required Application Documents, found on page 16 of this NOFO. Applicants should carefully follow the instructions and recommendations regarding adding attachments to an application and using Grants.gov's Download Submitted Applications feature to check that all required attachments were contained in their submission. Applications submitted without the required documents will**

**not pass the Initial Administrative Review, described in Section V.2.a. of this NOFO, which may result in the application not being considered for funding.**

When developing your submission timeline, please keep in mind that (1) all applicants are required to have a current registration in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov); (2) the free annual registration process in the electronic System for Award Management (SAM.gov) (see Section IV.3. and Section IV.7.a.(2). of this NOFO) may take between three and five business days, or as long as more than two weeks; (3) applicants submitting electronic applications are required to have a current registration in Grants.gov; and (4) applicants will receive a series of e-mail messages from Grants.gov over a period of up to two business days before learning whether a Federal agency's electronic system has received its application. Please note that a Federal assistance award cannot be issued if the designated recipient's registration in the SAM.gov is not current at the time of the award.

- **Application Submission:** Applications must be submitted electronically through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). NIST will not accept applications submitted by mail, facsimile, or by e-mail. See Sections IV.2.c.(1)., IV.2.c.(2)., IV.2.c.(7) and IV.7.a. in the Full Announcement Text of this NOFO.
- **Funding Opportunity Description:** NIST invites applications from current MEP Centers to add capabilities to the MEP Program, including the development of projects to solve new or emerging manufacturing problems, that are not already provided for under an applicant's and its collaborating Center's base MEP award. Themes for FY 17 include new manufacturing technologies of relevance to small and mid-size manufacturers, particularly those related to Industry/Manufacturing 4.0 (these technologies are described more fully in Section I.1. below); supply chain management technologies and practices; and workforce intermediary and business services. However, so long as an application addresses the program priorities listed in Section I.2. of this NOFO, it need not focus upon any of the identified thematic areas to be considered for funding under this NOFO.
- **Anticipated Amounts:** NIST anticipates funding individual projects at a level of approximately \$50,000 to no more than \$1,000,000 in total funding for each award. Projects awarded under this NOFO will have a budget and a performance period of up to three (3) years, consistent with the multi-year funding policy. See Section II.3. of this NOFO.
- **Funding Instrument:** Cooperative Agreement. See Section II.1. of this NOFO for additional information concerning the funding instrument for these awards.
- **Who Is Eligible:** Eligible applicants for this funding opportunity are MEP Centers receiving current cooperative agreement funding from NIST AND that, for the two consecutive quarters immediately prior to application, meet or exceed a "Cooperative Agreement Recipient (CAR) Current Quarter Performance" score of 70

as found in the quarterly release of the “CAR Operations Performance Management CARD.” See Section III.1. of this NOFO for more information. An MEP Center may work individually or may include proposed subawards to eligible organizations or proposed contracts with any other organization as part of the applicant’s proposal, effectively forming a team or consortium. NIST encourages project proposals involving participation from multiple MEP Centers as well as other collaborating entities such as local economic development organizations, universities, community colleges and other organizations.

An MEP Center may serve as the lead recipient on no more than three (3) awards under the MEP Competitive Awards Program within a given fiscal year. There are no restrictions on the number of applications in which MEP Centers can be proposed as collaborators. See Section III. of this NOFO for more information regarding eligibility for this funding opportunity.

- **Cost Sharing Requirements:** Non-federal cost share is not required for awards issued pursuant to this NOFO.
- **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).** Questions from applicants pertaining to NOFO eligibility, cost sharing requirements, evaluation criteria and selection factors, selection process, and the general characteristics of a competitive proposal will not be considered on an informal basis. Applicants must submit all such questions in writing to [mepnofo@nist.gov](mailto:mepnofo@nist.gov). Answers to such written questions submitted to NIST MEP may be made available to the public as part of an FAQ document, which will be periodically updated on the MEP website at [www.nist.gov/mep/rolling-competitive-awards-program-round-one](http://www.nist.gov/mep/rolling-competitive-awards-program-round-one).

### Table of Contents

<b>I.</b>	<b>Funding Opportunity Description .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>Federal Award Information .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>III.</b>	<b>Eligibility Information.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>Application and Submission Information.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>Application Review Information .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>VI.</b>	<b>Federal Award Administration Information .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>VII.</b>	<b>Federal Awarding Agency Contacts .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>VIII.</b>	<b>Other Information .....</b>	<b>30</b>

## **FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT**

### **I. Funding Opportunity Description**

#### **1. Program Objectives**

The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) invites applications from current MEP Centers to add capabilities to the MEP Program, including the development of projects to solve new or emerging manufacturing problems, that are not already provided for under an applicant's and its collaborating Center's base MEP award.

MEP is a nationwide network of Centers (referred to hereinafter as the MEP National Network) located in all 50 States and Puerto Rico that serve as trusted business advisors focused on transforming U.S. manufacturers to compete globally, supporting supply chain integration, and providing access to technology for improved productivity. MEP Centers are a diverse network of State, non-profit university-based, and other non-profit organizations, comprising more than 1,200 technical experts offering products, technical expertise and services that address the critical needs of their local manufacturers.

Each MEP Center works directly with area manufacturers to provide expertise and services tailored to their most critical needs, ranging from process improvement and workforce development to business practices and technology transfer. Additionally, MEP Centers connect manufacturers with government and trade associations, universities and research laboratories, and a host of other public and private resources to help manufacturers realize individual business goals.

In developing the themes for this NOFO, the NIST Director consulted with the MEP Director, the MEP Advisory Board and with other Federal Agencies. The NIST Director also consulted with small and medium-sized manufacturers through the publication in the *Federal Register* of a *Request for Information on Identification of New Capabilities Needed by the Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership Program*.<sup>1</sup> Responses were carefully considered by NIST prior to the publication of this NOFO and used to develop the themes discussed immediately below.

Themes for this NOFO include new manufacturing technologies of relevance to small and mid-size manufacturers, particularly those related to Industry/Manufacturing 4.0 (see next paragraph); supply chain management technologies and practices; and workforce intermediary and business services. However, so long as an application addresses the program priorities listed below in Section I.2. of this NOFO, it need not focus upon any of the identified thematic areas to be considered for funding under this NOFO.

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<sup>1</sup> See 81 FR 90326 (Dec. 14, 2016). The *Federal Register Notice*, along with the information received by NIST is available at [www.nist.gov/mep/rolling-competitive-awards-program-round-one](http://www.nist.gov/mep/rolling-competitive-awards-program-round-one).

For purposes of this NOFO, the term “Industry/Manufacturing 4.0” refers to the set of technologies and practices that “focuses on the end-to-end digitization of all physical assets and integration into digital ecosystems with value chain partners.”<sup>2</sup>

## **2. Program Priorities**

In accordance with 15 U.S.C. § 278k-1(e)(3), the program priorities for this competition are:

- a. Improve the competitiveness of industries in the region in which the Center or Centers are located.
- b. Create jobs or train newly hired employees.
- c. Promote the transfer and commercialization of research and technology from institutions of higher education, national laboratories or other federally funded research programs, and nonprofit research institutes.
- d. Recruit a diverse manufacturing workforce, including through outreach to underrepresented populations, including individuals identified in section 33 or section 34 of the Science and Engineering Equal Opportunities Act (42 U.S.C. 1885a, 1885b).

Applicants must articulate how their proposal achieves one or more of the program priorities listed above while adding new capabilities to the MEP Center program.

The statutory authority for the NIST MEP Competitive Awards Program is 15 U.S.C. 278k-1. This program is not a Federal research and development program. It is not the intent of this program that awardees will perform systematic research.

To learn more about the MEP Center program, please go to <http://www.nist.gov/mep/>.

Refer to Section VII. of this NOFO, Federal Awarding Agency Contacts, Grant Rules and Regulations, if you seek the information at this link or for any link in this NOFO, and it is no longer working or you need more information.

## **II. Federal Award Information**

- 1. Funding Instrument.** The funding instrument that will be used for awards issued pursuant to this NOFO is a cooperative agreement. The nature of NIST’s “substantial involvement” will generally be constituted as collaboration between NIST MEP and the recipient organization. This includes NIST MEP collaboration with a recipient on its progress and approving changes to the statement of work. Additional

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<sup>2</sup> PwC, 2016 Global Industry 4.0 Survey, April 2016; available at <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/industries/industries-4.0/landing-page/industry-4.0-building-your-digital-enterprise-april-2016.pdf>

forms of substantial involvement that may arise are described in Sections C. and G. of the Final Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Guidance Implementing the Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreement Act, 43 Fed. Reg. 36860-65 (Aug. 18, 1978). Examples of NIST involvement in cooperative agreements awarded pursuant to this NOFO may include activities such as, but not limited to:

- Guidelines and assistance in developing scope of work;
- Approval of key personnel;
- Assistance, where possible, in accessing solutions to technical and managerial issues; and
- Assistance to the Recipient organization to define, understand, and resolve issues pertaining to the successful implementation of the Project.

- 2. Funding Availability.** NIST anticipates funding individual projects at a level of approximately \$50,000 to no more than \$1,000,000 in total funding for each award. Projects awarded under this NOFO will have a budget and a performance period of up to three (3) years, consistent with the multi-year funding policy described in Section II.3 below. Funding for awards is contingent upon the availability of appropriated funds and NIST programmatic priorities.
- 3. Multi-Year Funding Policy.** When an application for a multi-year award is approved, funding in some cases will be provided only for the first year of the project. The recipient will be required to submit detailed budgets and budget narratives prior to the award or release of any continued funding. Continued funding for the remaining year(s) of the project will be awarded or released by NIST on a non-competitive basis, and may be adjusted higher or lower from year-to-year of the award, contingent upon satisfactory performance, continued relevance to the mission and priorities of the program, and the availability of funds. Continuation of an award to extend the period of performance and/or to increase or decrease funding is at the sole discretion of NIST.
- 4. Award Kick-off.** For awards exceeding \$250,000 or involving subrecipients unfamiliar with NIST requirements, a recipient should anticipate attending a video or in-person kick-off conference at the NIST Gaithersburg, MD campus, which will be held within 15-30 calendar days post start date of award. The kick-off conference will typically take between 2 and 6 hours and must be attended by the MEP Center Director, along with up to two key project personnel. Applicants must include travel and related costs for the kick-off conference as part of the budget for year one (1), and these costs should be reflected in the SF-424A form. (See Section IV.2.a.(2). of this NOFO.) These costs must also be reflected in the budget table and budget narrative for year 1, which is submitted as part of the budget summary tables and budget narratives section of the Technical Proposal. (See Section IV.2.a.(6).d. of this NOFO.) Representatives from key subrecipients and other key strategic partners may attend the kick-off conference with the prior written approval of the Grants Officer. Applicants proposing to have key subrecipients and/or other key

strategic partners attend the kick-off conference should clearly indicate so as part of the budget narrative for year one of the project.

- 5. MEP National Network Meetings.** NIST MEP typically organizes MEP National Network meetings approximately four times per year to share best practices, and to discuss new and emerging trends and additional topics of interest. These meetings are planned throughout the United States and typically involve 2-3 days of resource time and associated travel costs for each meeting. One key representative from the lead MEP Center and other appropriate partners/collaborators should attend these meetings.

Applicants must include travel and related costs for four quarterly MEP National Network meetings in each of the project years (4 meetings per year; up to 12 total meetings over a three-year award period). These costs must be reflected in the SF-424A (see Section IV.2.a.(2). of this NOFO). These costs must also be reflected in the budget tables and budget narratives for each of the project's years, which are submitted as part of the Technical Proposal. (See Section IV.2.a.(6).d). of this NOFO). In the event that travel and related costs for the MEP Center representative are already accounted for under another MEP award, the applicant should note this in the budget narrative and should not include travel and related costs in the budget.

Project personnel will be expected to actively participate during these meetings and freely share lessons learned regarding the details of the project and attributes conducive to transferring knowledge to other MEP Centers for the benefit of small U.S. manufacturers.

Recipients will be required to provide detailed analysis of the lessons learned through these projects under Section VI.3.a.(2). Performance (Technical) Reports. These analyses will include, but are not limited to: attributes, participant roles, planning of the intended approach, root cause(s) for success/failures, recommendations for how the outcomes of the project might inform expansion of the intended goals, and any plans for sustainment of the effort beyond the period of performance.

- 6. Indirect (F&A) Costs.** NIST will reimburse applicants for proposed indirect (F&A) costs in accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.414. Applicants proposing indirect (F&A) costs must follow the application requirements set forth in Section IV.2.a.(7). of this NOFO.

### **III. Eligibility Information**

- 1. Eligible Applicants.** Applicants for this program must be an active MEP Center that is operating pursuant to a current NIST MEP cooperative agreement, AND that, for the two (2) consecutive quarters immediately prior to application, meet or exceed a "Cooperative Agreement Recipient (CAR) Current Quarter Performance" score of

70 as found in the quarterly release of the “CAR Operations Performance Management CARD.” An MEP Center may work individually or may include proposed subawards to eligible organizations or proposed contracts with any other organization as part of the applicant’s proposal, effectively forming a team or consortium. NIST encourages project proposals involving participation from multiple MEP Centers as well as other collaborating entities such as local economic development organizations, universities, community colleges and other organizations.

MEP CAR Operations Performance Management CARDS, are released to the MEP National Network Center’s on October 1<sup>st</sup>, January 1<sup>st</sup>, April 1<sup>st</sup>, and July 1<sup>st</sup>, of each Fiscal Year, and are also available via the NIST MEP’s Federal Program Officer.

An MEP Center may serve as the lead recipient on no more than three (3) awards under the MEP Competitive Awards Program in a given fiscal year. There are no restrictions on the number of applications in which MEP Centers can be proposed as collaborators.

Eligibility for this program is contingent upon an applicant meeting the NIST MEP CAR Operations Performance Management CARDS prior to application, at the time of award, and for the entire period of performance for awards issued pursuant to this NOFO. 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 a recipient does not maintain its eligibility as such during any time during the period of performance for awards issued pursuant to this NOFO.

- 2. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement.** Non-Federal cost sharing is not required for awards issued pursuant to this NOFO.
- 3. No Double Charging Against other NIST/MEP Awards.** Costs charged against awards issued pursuant to this NOFO, whether paid by federal or non-federal funds, may not also be charged as costs against any other NIST/MEP award (*i.e.*, no double-billing of costs). In addition, NIST/MEP funding provided by an MEP Center to another MEP Center or other collaborator may not be used by such MEP Center or collaborator as a non-federal cost share contribution for an MEP Center or collaborator award (*i.e.*, federal funds may not be used as cost share for other federal awards).

#### **IV. Application 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](http://www.grants.gov). Applicants may also request an application

package by contacting the point of contact for administrative, budget, cost-sharing, eligibility questions and other programmatic questions listed in Section VII. of this NOFO.

**2. Content and Form of Application/Submission.** Set forth below are the required content and form of applications submitted pursuant to this NOFO.

**a. Required Forms and Documents**

- (1) **SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance.** The SF-424 must be certified through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) by an authorized representative of the applicant organization.

SF-424, Item 12, should list the NOFO number as 2017-NIST-MEP-CAP-01.

SF-424, Item 18, should list the total budget information for the full duration of the project.

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 each year of the project, considering all potential cost increases, including cost of living adjustments. The budget should also include staff, travel and other costs associated with the Award Kick-off Meeting and the NIST/MEP National Network meetings as described in Sections II.4. and II.5., respectively, of this NOFO.

The applicant should reflect each year of the project, up to three (3) years, on the **SF-424A form**. Please carefully follow the directions found at <http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/form-instructions/sf-424a-instructions.html> when filling out this form.

The Grant Program Function or Activity on Line 1 under Column (a) should be entered as Manufacturing Extension Partnership. The Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance Number in on Line 1 under Column (b) should be entered as 11.611.

These sections of the SF-424A should reflect funds for only the first year of the award: Section A; Section B; Section C; and Section D. The budget estimate for the second year of the award should be entered in Section E, field 16, column (b). Section E, field 16, column (c) should reflect the third year's budget estimate.

- (3) **SF-424B, Assurances - Non-Construction Programs.**

- (4) **CD-511, Certification Regarding Lobbying.** For the Award Number, enter “2017-NIST-MEP-CAP-01”. In the Project Name field, use the “Descriptive Title of Applicant’s Project” from field 15 of the SF-424, or an abbreviation thereof.
- (5) **SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities.** (if applicable)
- (6) **Technical Proposal.** The Technical Proposal, with a period of performance of up to three (3) years, is a word-processed document not exceeding 20 pages that is responsive to the program description (see Section I. of this NOFO) and the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1. of this NOFO). The following is a suggested format that applicants may use for the technical proposal.

- a) **Table of Contents.** (Does not count toward the page limit).
- b) **Executive Summary.** The executive summary should briefly (usually no longer than two pages) describe the proposed project, consistent with the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1. of this NOFO).

Please note, if an applicant’s proposal is selected for funding, NIST may use all or a portion of the Executive Summary as part of a press release issued by NIST, or for other public information and outreach purposes. Applicants are advised not to incorporate information that concerns business trade secrets or other confidential commercial or financial information as part of the Executive Summary. See *also* 15 C.F.R. § 4.9(c) concerning the designation of business information by the applicant. (Does not count towards page limit).

- c) **Project Narrative.** This section should provide a description of the proposed project sufficient to permit evaluation of the proposal, in accordance with details included in the proposal Evaluation Criteria (see Section V.1. of this NOFO).

The project narrative should clearly explain how the applicant’s approaches will accomplish one or more of the program priorities as identified in Section I.2. of this NOFO:

- Improve the competitiveness of industries in the region in which the Center or Centers are located.
- Create jobs or train newly hired employees.
- Promote the transfer and commercialization of research and technology from institutions of higher education, national laboratories or other federally funded research programs, and nonprofit research institutes.

- Recruit a diverse manufacturing workforce, including through outreach to underrepresented populations, including individuals identified in section 33 or section 34 of the Science and Engineering Equal Opportunities Act (42 U.S.C. 1885a, 1885b).

The project narrative must identify tasks, measurable milestones, and outcomes resulting from the proposed project.

The project narrative should clearly indicate how the proposed technologies, training, tool(s), technique(s), practice(s) or service(s) add capabilities to the MEP Program, and the narrative should detail how the approach solves new or emerging manufacturing problems of small U.S. manufacturers. Specifically, the project narrative should clearly articulate:

**1) Technical Needs & Benefits.**

- a) **How the proposed project will meet the needs of technical assistance providers and/or manufacturers in the target population.** The target population must be clearly defined and the applicant must demonstrate that it understands that population's technology, training, tool, technique, practice and/or service needs within the proposed project area. The applicant should show that the efforts being proposed meet the needs identified.
  - b) **How the proposed approach will enhance the impact of the efforts of the participating MEP Center(s) and their partners/collaborators for the benefit of small U.S. manufacturers,** particularly in terms of measures such as, but not limited to, job creation, employee training, technology transfer and commercialization, and improved manufacturer and supply chain competitiveness.
- 2) The development/deployment methodology to be used and use of appropriate technology and information sources.** The applicant must include a technical plan for the technologies, training, tool(s), technique(s), practice(s), service(s) and/or analyses including the project activities to be used in the development/deployment and the sources of technologies and/or information which will be used to create or deploy the outcomes of the project. Sources may include those internal to the applicant or from other organizations.
- 3) The delivery and implementation mechanisms to be used for getting results/outcomes/services to the target**

**population.** The applicant must set forth clearly defined, effective mechanisms for delivery and/or implementation of proposed outcomes to the target population. The applicant also must demonstrate that the activities will be integrated into and will be of service to the NIST MEP National Network and its Centers.

- 4) **Coordination with other relevant organizations.** Wherever possible the applicant should coordinate with and leverage other organizations which are developing or have expertise with similar projects and outcomes. If no such organizations exist, the applicant should describe the search process used to look for such organizations and explain why existing technologies, tools, or training do not meet the needs of the target population.
- 5) **Project evaluation.** The applicant must specify plans for evaluation of the effectiveness of the proposed project and for ensuring continuous improvement of the technologies, training, tool(s), technique(s), practice(s), service(s) and/or analyses outcomes of the project.
- 6) **Management and organizational experience and plans.** The applicant must specify plans for proper organization, staffing (including but not limited to the key personnel, see Section IV.2.a.(11), and management of the development and implementation processes.
- 7) **Financial plan.** Applicants must show the relevance and cost effectiveness of the financial plan for meeting the objectives of the project; the firmness and level of the applicant's total financial support for the project; and a plan to maintain the program after the cooperative agreement has expired.
- 8) **Best Practices and Knowledge Sharing.** Applicants must also provide details about approaches for sharing lessons learned and best practices resulting from the conduct of the project. This should include plans for sharing with the MEP National Network and other organizations and entities involved with U.S. manufacturing, including but not limited to NIST, U.S. manufacturers, manufacturing trade associations, economic development organizations, and others.

The proposals must articulate the details of the administrative, financial, and other business parameters associated with the project.

- d) **Budget Tables and Budget Narratives.** (Do not count toward the page limit). In addition to the SF-424A form (see Section IV.2.a.(2). of

this NOFO), applicants must provide a detailed budget table and budget narrative for the proposed period of performance, fully explaining and justifying all proposed project funding (both revenue and expenses) in accordance with applicable federal cost principles.

In the budget narrative, the recipient should provide adequate information to support the costs identified in each category of the budget table. For example, providing the annual salary and the percentage of time dedicated to the project by personnel to demonstrate the total cost of that individual; providing the airfare, lodging, per diem, number of days and number of travelers for each proposed trip; and identifying anticipated subaward/contract amounts, the subawardees/contractors, to the extent known at the time of application, and a detailed description of the purpose of each subaward/contract. Applicants must also include staff, travel and related expenses for any anticipated Award Kick-Off and System-Wide meetings described in Sections II.4. and II.5. of this NOFO in the budget tables and budget narratives. A suggested budget table and budget narrative template are available on the MEP website [www.nist.gov/mep/rolling-competitive-awards-program-round-one](http://www.nist.gov/mep/rolling-competitive-awards-program-round-one).

When preparing project budgets, applicants must be cognizant of the prohibition on double-billing costs against multiple federal awards and on the prohibition on using NIST MEP federal funding as non-federal cost share on any other federal award. See Section III.3. of this NOFO.

- (7) **Indirect Cost Rate Agreement.** (Does not count toward the page limit). 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. If the successful applicant includes indirect costs in the budget and has not established an indirect cost rate with a cognizant Federal audit agency, the applicant will be required to obtain such a rate in accordance with the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions available at: <http://go.usa.gov/hKbj>.

Alternatively, in accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.414(f), applicants that have never received a negotiated indirect cost rate may elect to charge indirect costs to an MEP award pursuant to a de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC), in which case a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement is not required. Applicants proposing a 10 percent de minimis rate pursuant to 2 C.F.R. § 200.414(f) should note this election as part of the budget portion of the application.

- (8) **Table of Abbreviations and Acronyms.** (Does not count toward the page limit). An alphabetical list of all abbreviations and acronyms, and their meaning, should be included.
- (9) **Table of Funded Project Participants and Unfunded Informal Collaborators.** (Does not count toward the page limit). Provide a table that identifies all organizations that will participate in and contribute to the project, if funded, known at the time of the application submission. The table should consist of an alphabetically ordered list, by organization, of all Funded Project Participants and all Unfunded Informal Collaborators. The table should include the organization's name, address, administrative role, scope of work (funded participants only) and proposed funding amount (funded participants only). Administrative roles are: applicant, subrecipient, or contractor for funded participants; or collaborator if they will not receive funding.
- (10) **Bibliographic List of References.** (Does not count toward the page limit). A complete bibliographic listing of all references used within the application should be included.
- (11) **Resumes of Key Personnel.** (Do not count toward the page limit, but are limited to one-page each). One-page resumes of no more than five key personnel from each participating organization may be included; these do not count toward the page limit. Any information beyond one page for each resume and any additional resumes submitted will not be considered.
- (12) **Required Letters of Commitment.** (Do not count toward the page limit). In the event that the application is funded, letters that commit specific resources (not funding) to the project are required from all of the following that apply:
- a) Each application must include a Letter of Commitment from an authorized representative of: (i) the MEP Center applicant and from (ii) other MEP Centers that will be participating in the project. For non-profit applicants and other non-profit MEP Centers which are participating in the proposed project, a resolution from the fiduciary board authorizing submission of the MEP Center application to NIST and supporting the activities described therein is required. Each letter should describe the submitting organization's commitment to and activities in support of the proposed project.
  - b) If the application includes subawards, contracts or other payments to known third parties, including other MEP Centers, the letter of commitment shall discuss the scope of work, and its relevance to the proposed project. The reviewers will consider the scope of each agreement and its relevance to the proposed project.

- c) Letters of Commitment should not be letters submitted by non-proposing entities wishing to vouch for the applicant's (or entities associated with the applicant) knowledge, skills, and abilities or entities to conduct the proposed work. These should be in the form of a Letter of Interest (see next paragraph, Section IV.3.a.(13). of this NOFO below).

**(13) Letters of Interest.** (Do not count toward the page limit). Optional letters may be included with an application that indicate willingness from any third party to help accelerate establishment of a new or strengthening of an existing industry-driven technology consortium and/or consortium project results. This may include letters from unfunded collaborators who will participate as unfunded team members, potential organizations involved across stages of the value chain, or strategic partners who can aid in any element of the plan to realize impact. Letters of Interest should outline the nature and importance of the collaboration or involvement being offered. Letters of Interest may also be from non-proposing entities wishing to vouch for the applicant's knowledge, skills, and abilities or entities to conduct the proposed work. All letters of interest must be included with the application and not sent separately to NIST.

**(14) Data Management Plan.** (Does not count toward the page limit). Consistent with NIST Policy 5700.00<sup>3</sup>, *Managing Public Access to Results of Federally Funded Research*, and NIST Order 5701.00<sup>4</sup>, *Managing Public Access to Results of Federally Funded Research*, applicants should include a Data Management Plan (DMP).

The DMP is a supplementary document of not more than two pages that must include, at a minimum, a summary of proposed activities that are expected to generate data, a summary of the types of data expected to be generated by the identified activities, a plan for storage and maintenance of the data expected to be generated by the identified activities, and a plan describing whether and how data generated by the identified activities will be reviewed and made available to the public. As long as the DMP meets these NIST requirements, it may take the form specified by the applicant's institution or some other entity (e.g., the National Science Foundation<sup>5</sup> or the National Institutes of Health<sup>6</sup>).

All applications for activities that will generate scientific data using NIST funding are required to adhere to a DMP or explain why data sharing and preservation are not within the scope of the project.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nist.gov/sites/default/files/documents/data/Final-P-5700.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.nist.gov/sites/default/files/documents/data/Final-O-5701\\_0.pdf](https://www.nist.gov/sites/default/files/documents/data/Final-O-5701_0.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/dmp.jsp>

<sup>6</sup> [http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/data\\_sharing/data\\_sharing\\_guidance.htm](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/data_sharing/data_sharing_guidance.htm)

For the purposes of the DMP, NIST adopted the definition of “research data” at 2 C.F.R. § 200.315(e)(3) (available at <http://go.usa.gov/3sZvQ>).

Reasonable costs for data preservation and access may be included in the application.

The sufficiency of the DMP will be considered as part of the administrative review (see Section V.2.a. of this NOFO); however, the DMP will not be evaluated against any evaluation criteria.

- (15) Intellectual Property (IP) – Plan for the Allocation of Legal Rights.** (Does not count toward the page limit). Applicants must include as part of its application a plan for the allocation of the legal rights associated with any intellectual property, which may result from activities of an applicant and/or team member in connection with the performance of the proposed award. The proposed IP plan must be consistent with the IP provisions set forth in 2 C.F.R. § 200.315. There is no required format for the IP plan. Applicants not expecting to acquire or generate any IP pursuant to the proposed project must explain as part of its application why the allocation of legal rights associated with IP is not within the scope of the proposed project. The sufficiency of the IP plan or an explanation in lieu of an IP plan will be considered by NIST as part of the administrative review of the application (see Section V.2.a. of this NOFO); however, the IP plan or explanation in lieu of an IP plan will not be evaluated against any evaluation criteria and will not count towards the overall page count of an application. Necessary, reasonable and allocable costs associated with implementation of the IP plan may be proposed as part of the overall budget for the proposed project.

#### **b. Attachment of Required Application Documents**

When submitting the application 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.(15). 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.**

Applicants should carefully follow specific Grants.gov instructions at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) to ensure the attachments will be accepted by the Grants.gov system. **A receipt from Grants.gov does not provide details concerning whether all attachments (or how many attachments) transferred successfully.** Applicants using Grants.gov will receive a series of e-mail messages over a period of up to two business days before learning whether a Federal agency’s electronic system has received its application.

**Applicants are urged to use Grants.gov's Download Submitted Applications feature to check that all required attachments were contained in their submission. Go to the *Grants.gov Online Users Guide available at the Grants.gov site* (<http://go.usa.gov/cjaEh>), choose *Applicants*, then *Applicant Actions*, then select the "Check My Application Status" option, click on the Download Submitted Applications feature, and follow the directions.**

***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.

### **c. Application Format**

- (1) **E-mail submissions.** Will not be accepted
- (2) **Facsimile submissions (fax).** Will not be accepted.
- (3) **Figures, graphs, images, and pictures.** Should be of a size that is easily readable or viewable and may be landscape orientation.
- (4) **Font.** Easy to read font (11-point minimum). Smaller type may be used in figures and tables but must be clearly legible.
- (5) **Line spacing.** Single.
- (6) **Margins.** One (1) inch top, bottom, left, and right.
- (7) **Paper copies.** Will not be accepted. All submissions must be made via [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).
- (8) **Page layout.** Portrait orientation only (except figures, graphs, and pictures (see Section IV.2.c.(3))).
- (9) **Page Limit.** Twenty (20) pages.
  - a) **Page limit includes:** Cover page, Technical Proposal (with the exception of the Executive Summary), figures, graphs, tables, images, pictures, and all other pages of an application, with the exception of the page limit exclusions listed below.

**b) Page limit excludes:** SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance; the SF-424A, Budget Information – Non- Construction Programs form; SF-424B, Assurances – Non-Construction Programs; CD-511, Certification Regarding Lobbying; SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities; Table of Contents; Executive Summary; Budget Tables and Budget Narratives; Indirect Cost Rate Agreement; Table of Abbreviations and Acronyms; Table of Funded Project Participants and Unfunded Informal Collaborators; Bibliographic List of References; Resumes of Key Personnel (note these are limited to one page each for no more than five (5) key personnel); Required Letters of Commitment; Letters of Interest; Data Management Plan; and the Intellectual Property (IP) Plan for the Allocation of Legal Rights.

**(10) Page numbering.** Number pages sequentially.

**(11) Paper size.** 21.6 centimeters by 27.9 centimeters (8 ½ inches by 11 inches).

**(12) Application language.** English.

**(13) Typed document.** All applications, including forms, must be typed.

**d. Application Replacement Pages.** Applicants may not submit replacement pages and/or missing documents after an application has been submitted. Any revisions must be made by submission of a new application that must be received by NIST by the submission deadline.

**e. Pre-Applications.** NIST is not accepting pre-applications or white papers under this NOFO.

**f. Certifications Regarding Federal Felony and Federal Criminal Tax Convictions, Unpaid Federal Tax Assessments and Delinquent Federal Tax Returns.** In accordance with Federal appropriations law, an authorized representative of the selected applicant(s) may be required to provide certain pre-award certifications regarding federal felony and federal criminal tax convictions, unpaid federal tax assessments, and delinquent federal tax returns.

**3. Unique Entity Identifier and System for Award Management (SAM).** Pursuant to 2 C.F.R. part 25, applicants and recipients (as the case may be) are required to: (i) be registered in SAM before submitting their applications; (ii) provide a valid unique entity identifier in their applications; and (iii) continue to maintain an active SAM registration with current information at all times during which they have an active Federal award or an application or plan under consideration by a Federal awarding agency, unless otherwise excepted from these requirements pursuant to 2 C.F.R. § 25.110. NIST will not make a Federal award to an applicant until the applicant has complied with all applicable unique entity identifier and SAM requirements and, if an applicant has not fully complied with the requirements by the time that NIST is ready

to make a Federal award pursuant to this NOFO, NIST may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive a Federal award and use that determination as a basis for making a Federal award to another applicant.

- 4. Submission Dates and Times.** Applicants must submit applications electronically through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov). Electronic applications must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on Thursday, June 15, 2017. Applications received after June 15, 2017 may be processed and considered for funding in the current fiscal year or in the next fiscal year, subject to the availability of funds and subject to the publication of a superseding NOFO under this program.

**Applicants should be aware, and factor in their application submission planning, that the Grants.gov system is expected to be closed for routine maintenance from 12:01 Eastern Time, Saturday, May 20, 2017 until Monday, May 22, 2017 at 6:00 a.m. Eastern Time. Applications cannot be submitted when Grants.gov is closed.**

When developing your submission timeline, please keep in mind that (1) all applicants are required to have a current registration in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov); (2) the free annual registration process in the electronic System for Award Management (SAM.gov) (see Section IV.3. and Section IV.7.a.(2). of this NOFO) may take between three and five business days or as long as more than two weeks; and (3) electronic applicants are required to have a current registration in Grants.gov; and (4) applicants using Grants.gov will receive a series of e-mail messages over a period of up to two business days before learning whether a Federal agency's electronic system has received its application. **Please note that a federal assistance award cannot be issued if the designated recipient's registration in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) is not current at the time of the award.**

**Applicants will find instructions on registering with SAM.gov as part of the Grants.gov process at:**

**<http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration.html>.**

The date and time recorded by [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) will be considered the official time that the application was received by NIST. Applicants are cautioned that the validation process may take up to two full business days after the application is submitted to Grants.gov.

NIST strongly recommends that applicants do not wait until the last minute to submit an application. NIST will not make allowance for any late submissions. The responsibility for ensuring a complete application is received by NIST by the deadline is the sole responsibility of the applicant. To avoid any potential processing backlogs due to last minute Grants.gov registrations, applicants are strongly encouraged to start their Grants.gov registration process at least four (4) weeks prior to the application due date.

NIST will not accept applications submitted by mail, facsimile, or by e-mail.

**5. Intergovernmental Review.** Applications under this Program are not subject to Executive Order 12372.

**6. Funding Restrictions.** Construction activities are not an allowable cost under this program. In addition, a recipient or a subrecipient may not charge profits, fees or other increments above cost to an award issued pursuant to this NOFO. Pre-award costs under this NOFO are subject to the prior written approval of the NIST Grants Officer.

## **7. Other Submission Requirements**

**a. Applications under announcement 2017-NIST-MEP-CAP-01 must be submitted electronically through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).** NIST will not accept applications submitted by mail, facsimile, or by e-mail.

(1) Submitters of electronic applications 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 an application is received does not provide information about whether attachments have been received. For further information or questions regarding applying electronically for the 2017-NIST-MEP-CAP-01 announcement, contact Christopher Hunton by phone at 301-975-5718 or by e-mail at [grants@nist.gov](mailto:grants@nist.gov).

(2) Applicants are strongly encouraged to start early and not wait until the approaching due date before logging on and reviewing the instructions for submitting an application 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. Applicants must have a valid unique entity identifier number and must maintain a current registration in the Federal government's primary registrant database, the System for Award Management (<https://www.sam.gov/>), as explained on the Grants.gov Web site. See also Section IV.3. of this NOFO. After registering, it may take several days or longer from the initial log-on before a new Grants.gov system user can submit an application. Only individuals authorized as organization representatives will be able to submit the application, and the system may need time to process a submitted application. Applicants should save and print the proof of submission they receive from Grants.gov. If problems occur while using Grants.gov, the applicant 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](mailto:support@grants.gov).

- (3) To find instructions on submitting an application on Grants.gov, Applicants should refer to the “Applicants” tab in the banner just below the top of the [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) home page. Clicking on the “Applicants” tab produces two exceptionally useful sources of information, Applicant Actions and Applicant Resources, which applicants are advised to review.

Applicants will receive a series of e-mail messages over a period of up to two business days before learning whether a Federal agency’s electronic system has received its application. Closely following the detailed information in these subcategories will increase the likelihood of acceptance of the application by the Federal agency’s electronic system.

Applicants should pay close attention to the guidance under “Applicant FAQs,” as it contains information important to successful submission on Grants.gov, including essential details on the naming conventions for attachments to Grants.gov applications.

*All applicants should be aware that adequate time must be factored into applicants’ schedules for delivery of their application. Applicants are advised that volume on Grants.gov may be extremely heavy on the deadline date.*

The application must be both received and validated by Grants.gov. The application is “received” when Grants.gov provides the applicant a confirmation of receipt and an application tracking number. If an applicant does not see this confirmation and tracking number, the application has not been received. After the application has been received, it must still be validated. During this process, it may be “validated” or “rejected with errors.” To know whether the application was rejected with errors and the reasons why, the applicant must log in to Grants.gov, select “Applicants” from the top navigation, and select “Track my application” from the drop-down list. If the status is “rejected with errors,” the applicant may still seek to correct the errors and resubmit your application before the deadline. If the applicant does not correct the errors, the application will not be forwarded to NIST by Grants.gov.

Refer to important information in Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times, to help ensure your application is received on time.

- (4) **Amendments.** Any amendments to this NOFO will be announced through Grants.gov. Applicants may sign up on Grants.gov to receive amendments by

e-mail or may request copies from Jennifer Leon by telephone at (301) 975-4176 or by e-mail to [mepnofo@nist.gov](mailto:mepnofo@nist.gov).

## **V. Application Review Information**

- 1. Evaluation Criteria.** The evaluation criteria, selection factors, and review and selection process for this program are set forth below. Reviewers will evaluate how well the applicant's proposed approach will achieve the priorities and objectives of this competition, and support the MEP mission, as described in Section I. of the NOFO. NIST will use the follow criteria in evaluating applications and assigning weights, with a maximum score of 100. See Section I.1. of this NOFO for the relevant themes for FY 2017.
  - a. Demonstration that the proposed project will meet the needs of technical assistance providers and/or manufacturers in the target population. (20 points).** Reviewers will assess the extent to which the applicant's proposal clearly defines the target population(s) and how well the proposal demonstrates that the applicant understands that population's technology, training, tool, technique, service, and/or practice needs within the proposed project area. Reviewers will also assess the extent to which the proposal shows that the efforts being proposed meet the needs identified and is consistent with the anticipated impacts relative to proposed expenditures of federal and any optional non-federal cost share contributions.
  - b. Development/deployment methodology and use of appropriate technology and information sources. (20 points).** Reviewers will assess the extent to which the applicant's technical plan for the technologies, training(s), tool(s), technique(s), service(s), practice(s) and/or analyses included in the project will be used to successfully create and/or deploy the outcomes of the project. Reviewers will also evaluate the applicability of any identified sources of technologies, training(s), tool(s), technique(s), service(s), and practice(s) to solving new or emerging manufacturing problems of small U.S. manufacturers.
  - c. Service Delivery and implementation mechanisms. (15 points).** Reviewers will evaluate the extent to which the mechanisms for delivery and/or implementation of proposed outcomes effectively serves the target population(s). Reviewers will also evaluate the extent to which the proposal clearly describes how the project's activities and work products will be integrated into and will be of service to the NIST MEP National Network and its Centers. Factors that may be considered include: ease of access to the outcomes of the project, especially for MEP Centers; methodology for disseminating or promoting involvement in and/or use of the outcomes especially within the MEP System; and demonstrated interest in the outcomes, especially by MEP Centers.

- d. Coordination with other relevant organizations. (10 points).** Reviewers will assess the degree to which the proposed project is coordinated with and leverages other organizations which are developing or have expertise with similar projects and outcomes. Factors that may be considered include: demonstrated understanding of existing organizations and resources relevant to the proposed project; adequate linkages and partnerships with existing organizations and clear definition of those organizations' roles in the proposed activities; and that the proposed activity does not duplicate existing services or resources.
- e. Program evaluation. (10 points).** Reviewers will assess the degree to which the applicant's plan for evaluation of the effectiveness of the proposed activity and for ensuring continuous improvement of the technologies, training(s), tool(s), technique(s), service(s), practice(s) and/or analyses outcomes of the project. Factors that may be considered include: thoroughness of evaluation plans, including internal evaluation for management control, external evaluation for assessing outcomes of the activity, and "customer satisfaction" measures of performance.
- f. Management and organizational experience and plans. (15 points).** Reviewers will assess the degree to which the applicant's plans for proper organization, staffing, and management of the implementation process describe key personnel's experience and education relevant to the project(s) proposed; management structure and organizational roles are aligned to plan, direct, monitor, organize and control the monetary resources of the proposed project(s); and organizational structure that flows logically from the specified approach to the market and use of technologies, training(s), tool(s), technique(s), service(s), practice(s) and/or analyses outcomes of the project.
- g. Financial Plan. (10 points).** Reviewers will assess the degree to which the applicant's budget and financial plan contribute to the applicant's ability to meet the objectives of the project; the firmness and level of the applicant's total financial support for the project; and maintaining the program after the cooperative agreement has expired. Factors that may be considered include: reasonableness of the budget, both in income and expenses; strength of commitment and amount of the proposer's non-Federal cost share, if any; any program income generated as a result of this project must be added to the funds committed to the project using the additive method of accounting to further the project or program objectives; effectiveness of management plans for control of budget; appropriateness of matching contributions, if any; and plan for maintaining the program after the cooperative agreement has expired.

## **2. Review and Selection Process**

Proposals, reports, documents and other information related to applications submitted to NIST and/or relating to financial assistance awards issued by NIST will

be reviewed and considered by Federal employees, Federal agents and contractors, and/or by non-Federal personnel, all of whom enter into appropriate nondisclosure agreements covering such information.

- a. **Initial Administrative Review of Applications.** All applications received in response to this NOFO will be reviewed as received on a rolling basis to determine whether they are eligible, complete, and responsive to this NOFO and aligned with the program objectives as described in the Program Description (see Section I. of this NOFO). Applications determined to be ineligible, incomplete, and/or non-responsive will not be reviewed by MEP. However, NIST, in its sole discretion, may continue the review process for an application that is missing non-substantive information which may easily be rectified or cured.
- b. **Full Review of Eligible, Complete, and Responsive Applications.** Applications 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/Review.** Each application will be peer-reviewed by at least three (3) technically qualified individual reviewers with appropriate professional and technical expertise relating to the topics covered in this NOFO who will evaluate each application based on the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1. of this NOFO). Reviews will be limited to technical and cost matters, based on the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1. of this NOFO). The reviewers may ask questions of some or all applicants in writing. Each reviewer will provide a written technical assessment against the evaluation criteria and based on that assessment will assign each application a numeric score, with a maximum score of 100. If one or more non-Federal reviewers are used, the reviewers may discuss the applications with each other, but scores will be determined on an individual basis, not as a consensus.

Applicants whose applications receive an average score of 70 or higher out of 100 will be deemed as potentially fundable. All applicants submitting potentially fundable applications will be invited to participate in a site visit with the same reviewers conducting the technical review described above. A site visit will be conducted using one of the following methods: a conference call, a video conference, and/or an in-person visit either at NIST or at the applicant's location. Applicants will be evaluated during the site visits, and reviewers may revise their assigned numeric scores based on the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1. of this NOFO) as a result of these sessions.

Based on an average of the reviewers' final scores, applications will be assigned adjectival ratings in accordance with the following scale:

Fundable, Outstanding (90-100);  
Fundable, Very Good (80-89);  
Fundable (70-79); or

Unfundable (0-69).

The Subject Matter Expert, who will be a NIST MEP federal employee, will review the reviewers' final scores, written technical comments and the final ranking of the proposals, and will provide a written recommendation to the Selecting Official concerning the funding of awards under this NOFO.

- 2) Selection.** The Selecting Official is the MEP Director or designee. The Selecting Official makes the final recommendation to the NIST Grants Officer regarding the funding of applications under this NOFO. The Selecting Official will take into consideration the results of the reviewers' final scores and technical assessments, the written recommendation from the NIST Subject Matter Expert, the relevance of the application to the program objectives and priorities described in Section I. of this NOFO, and all information obtained from the applicants during the evaluation, review and negotiation processes.

The Selecting Official will generally select and recommend the most meritorious applications for awards based on the technical comments, recommendation from the NIST Subject Matter Expert, and/or one or more of the selection factors described in Section V.2.b.3). of this NOFO. The Selecting Official's recommendation to the Grants Officer shall set forth the bases for the selection decision.

As part of the overall review and selection process, NIST reserves the right to request that applicants provide pre-award clarifications and/or to enter into pre-award negotiations relative to programmatic, financial or other aspects of an application, such as but not limited to the revision or removal of proposed budget costs, or the modification of proposed project activities, work plans or program goals and objectives. In this regard, NIST may request that applicants provide supplemental information required by the Agency prior to award. NIST also reserves the right to reject an application where information is uncovered that raises a reasonable doubt as to the responsibility of the applicant. NIST may select some, all, or none of the applications, or part(s) of any application. In some cases, NIST may ask applicants to consider combining projects. The final approval of selected applications and issuance of awards will be by the NIST Grants Officer. The award decisions of the NIST Grants Officer are final.

- 3) Selection Factors.** The Selection Factors for this NOFO are:

- a. Diversity of the proposed project relative to the overall portfolio of projects funded under this NOFO;
- b. Diversity of geography in the awarding of MEP funding, as well diversity in awarding MEP funding to multiple MEP Centers;
- c. Diversity of targeted industry sectors and/or supply chains;
- d. Relevance of the proposed project to the overall objectives and priorities of this program;

- e. Whether the proposed project duplicates other projects funded by the Department of Commerce or by other Federal agencies; and
- f. Availability of Federal funds.

**c. Federal Awarding Agency Review of Risk Posed by Applicants.** After applications are proposed for funding by the Selecting Official, the NIST Grants Management Division (GMD) performs pre-award risk assessments in accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.205, which may include a review of the financial stability of an applicant, the quality of the applicant's management systems, the history of performance, reports and finding from financial assistance audits, and/or the applicant's ability to effectively implement statutory, regulatory, or other requirements imposed on non-Federal entities.

In addition, prior to making an award where the total Federal share is expected to exceed the simplified acquisition threshold (currently \$150,000), NIST GMD will review and consider the publicly available information about that applicant in the Federal Awardee Performance and Integrity Information System (FAPIIS). An applicant may, at its option, review and comment on information about itself previously entered into FAPIIS by a Federal awarding agency. As part of its review of risk posed by applicants, NIST GMD will consider any comments made by the applicant in FAPIIS in making its determination about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards. Upon completion of the pre-award risk assessment, the Grants Officer will make a responsibility determination concerning whether the applicant is qualified to receive the subject award and, if so, whether appropriate special conditions that correspond to the degree of risk posed by the applicant should be applied to an award.

**3. Anticipated Announcement and Award Date.** Awards will be made approximately 90 days after the end of the review and selection process (see Section V.2. of this NOFO). See information in Section IV.4. Submission Dates and Times regarding awards made in a subsequent fiscal year.

#### **4. Additional Information**

- a. Notification to Unsuccessful Applicants.** Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing.
- b. Retention of Unsuccessful Applications.** An electronic copy of each nonselected application will be retained for three (3) years for record keeping purposes.

## **VI. Federal Award Administration Information**

- 1. Federal Award Notices.** Successful applicants will receive an award package from the NIST Grants Officer.

## 2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

- a. **Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements.** Through 2. C.F.R. § 1327.101, the Department of Commerce adopted Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards at 2 C.F.R. Part 200, which apply to awards in this program. Refer to <http://go.usa.gov/SBYh> and <http://go.usa.gov/SBg4>.
- b. **Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions.** The Department of Commerce will apply the Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions dated March 31, 2017, accessible at <https://go.usa.gov/xXRxK>, to this award. Refer to Section VII. of this NOFO, Federal Awarding Agency Contacts, Grant Rules and Regulations, if you seek the information at this link and it is no longer working or you need more information.
- c. **Pre-Award Notification Requirements.** The Department of Commerce will apply the Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements dated December 30, 2014 (79 FR 78390), accessible at <http://go.usa.gov/hKkR>. Refer to Section VII. of this NOFO, Federal Awarding Agency Contacts, Grant Rules and Regulations, if you seek the information at this link and it is no longer working or you need more information.
- d. **Funding Availability and Limitation of Liability.** Funding for the program listed in this notice is contingent upon the availability of Fiscal Year 2017 appropriations. NIST issues this notice subject to the appropriations made available under the current continuing resolution funding the Department of Commerce, the Further Continuing and Security Assistance Appropriations Act of 2017, Public Law 114-254 (December 11, 2016). NIST anticipates making awards for the program listed in this notice provided that funding for the program is continued beyond April 28, 2017, the expiration of the current continuing resolution. In no event will NIST or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs if these programs fail to receive funding or are cancelled because of agency priorities. Publication of this announcement does not oblige NIST or the Department of Commerce to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.
- e. **Collaborations with NIST Employees.** All applications should include a description of any work proposed to be performed by an entity other than the applicant, and the cost of such work should ordinarily be included in the budget. If an applicant proposes collaboration with NIST, the statement of work should include a statement of this intention, a description of the collaboration, and prominently identify the NIST employee(s) involved, if known. Any collaboration by a NIST employee must be approved by appropriate NIST management and is at the sole discretion of NIST. Prior to beginning the merit review process, NIST will verify the approval of the proposed collaboration. Any unapproved collaboration will be stricken from the application prior to the merit review. Any collaboration with an

identified NIST employee that is approved by appropriate NIST management will not make an application more or less favorable in the competitive process.

- f. **Supporting Documentation.** Following the issuance of an MEP award, NIST may require recipients to provide copies of sub-tier agreements, including subawards and contracts over \$150,000, as well subrecipient performance monitoring plans.

### 3. Reporting

- a. **Reporting Requirements.** The following reporting requirements described in Sections A.01.b. Performance (Technical) Reports and A.01.c. Financial Reports of the Department of Commerce Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, accessible at <https://go.usa.gov/xXRxK> (March 31, 2017) apply to awards in this program (see Section VI.2.b. of this NOFO):

(1) **Financial Reports.** The Recipient shall submit an SF-425, Federal Financial Report, into the MEP's Enterprise Information System (MEIS) on a semi-annual basis after the sixth and twelfth month of each operating year, unless other reporting intervals and/or due dates are identified by the NIST Grants Officer pursuant to a Special Award Condition. Reports will be due within 30 days after the end of each semi-annual reporting period. The Recipient shall submit a final SF-425 within 90 days after the expiration date of the award.

(2) **Performance (Technical) Reports.** The Recipient shall submit a Technical Report (completing all required MEIS fields) on a semi-annual basis after the sixth and twelfth month of each operating year, unless other reporting intervals and/or due dates are identified by the NIST Grants Officer pursuant to a Special Award Condition. Reports are due in MEIS no later than 30 days following the end of each reporting period. The Recipient shall submit a final Technical/Quarterly report within 90 days after the expiration date of the award, and publication citation information as well as links to publicly available data shall be submitted as soon as they become available.

If a recipient's Data Management Plan has changed since their last submission of a technical report, the recipient must include their revised plan in the next technical report following the revision to the plan. The revised plan must include all of the requirements described in Section IV.2.a.(14). of this NOFO.

Technical/Quarterly Report details are accessible on the MEIS website (<https://meis.nist.gov/>). Technical progress reports shall contain information as prescribed in the NIST MEP Reporting Guidelines (OMB Control Number 0693-0032). For further information regarding the NIST MEP Reporting Process, you may download a copy of the NIST MEP Reporting Guidelines at <http://nist.gov/mep>.

**(3) Patent and Property Reports.** From time to time, and in accordance with the Uniform Administrative Requirements set forth in 2 C.F.R. part 200 and in accordance with other terms and conditions governing the award, the recipient may be required to submit property and patent reports.

**(4) Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters.** In accordance with section 872 of Public Law 110-417 (as amended; see 41 U.S.C. 2313), if the total value of a recipient's currently active grants, cooperative agreements, and procurement contracts from all Federal awarding agencies exceeds \$10,000,000 for any period of time during the period of performance of an award made under this NOFO, then the recipient shall be subject to the requirements specified in Appendix XII to 2 C.F.R. Part 200, <http://go.usa.gov/cTBwC>, for maintaining the currency of information reported to SAM that is made available in FAPIIS about certain civil, criminal, or administrative proceedings involving the recipient.

**a. Audit Requirements.** 2 C.F.R. 200 Subpart F, adopted by the Department of Commerce through 2 C.F.R. § 1327.101 requires any non-Federal entity (including non-profit institutions of higher education and other non-profit organizations) that expends Federal awards of \$750,000 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 Subpart. Applicants are reminded that NIST, the Department of Commerce Office of Inspector General, or another authorized Federal agency may conduct an audit of an award at any time.

**b. 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. Applicants 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 available here <http://go.usa.gov/hKnQ>.

## **VII. Federal Awarding Agency Contacts**

Questions should be directed to the following contact persons:

<b>Subject Area</b>	<b>Point of Contact</b>
Administrative, budget, cost-sharing, eligibility questions and other programmatic questions.	J. Michael Simpson Phone: (301) 975-6147 Fax: (301) 963-6556 E-mail: <a href="mailto:mepnofo@nist.gov">mepnofo@nist.gov</a>

Subject Area	Point of Contact
Grants.gov - application submission	Christopher Hunton Phone: (301) 975-5718 Fax: (301) 975-8884 E-mail: <a href="mailto:grants@nist.gov">grants@nist.gov</a>
Grant rules and regulations	Gilbert Castillo Phone: (301) 975-3726 Fax: (301) 975-6368 E-mail: <a href="mailto:gilbert.castillo@nist.gov">gilbert.castillo@nist.gov</a>

**VIII. Other Information**

- 1. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).** Questions from applicants pertaining to eligibility, evaluation criteria and selection factors, selection process, and the general characteristics of a competitive MEP proposal will not be considered on an informal basis. Applicants must submit all such questions in writing to [mepnofo@nist.gov](mailto:mepnofo@nist.gov). Questions submitted to NIST MEP may be posted as part of an FAQ document, which will be periodically updated on the MEP website at [www.nist.gov/mep/rolling-competitive-awards-program-round-one](http://www.nist.gov/mep/rolling-competitive-awards-program-round-one).
- 2. Protected and Proprietary Information.** The applicant acknowledges and understands that information and data contained in applications for financial assistance, as well as information and data contained in financial, performance and other reports submitted by applicants, may be used by the Department of Commerce in conducting reviews and evaluations of its financial assistance programs. For this purpose, applicant information and data may be accessed, reviewed and evaluated by Department of Commerce employees, other Federal employees, Federal agents and contractors, and/or by non-Federal personnel, all of whom enter into appropriate conflicts of interest and nondisclosure agreements covering the use of such information. As may be provided in the terms and conditions of a specific financial assistance award, applicants are expected to support program reviews and evaluations by submitting required financial and performance information and data in an accurate and timely manner, and by cooperating with Department of Commerce and external program evaluators. In accordance with 2 C.F.R. § 200.303(e), applicants are reminded that they must take reasonable measures to safeguard protected personally identifiable information and other confidential or sensitive personal or business information created or obtained in connection with a Department of Commerce financial assistance award.

In addition, Department of Commerce regulations implementing the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. Sec. 552, are found at 15 C.F.R. Part 4, Public Information. These regulations set forth rules for the Department regarding making requested materials, information, and records publicly available under the FOIA. Applications submitted in response to this NOFO may be subject to requests for release under the Act. In the event that an application contains information or data that the applicant deems to be confidential commercial information that should be exempt from disclosure under FOIA, that information should be identified, bracketed, and marked as Privileged, Confidential, Commercial or Financial Information. In accordance with 15 CFR § 4.9, the Department of Commerce will protect from disclosure confidential business information contained in financial assistance applications and other documentation provided by applicants to the extent permitted by law.