Supplier Scouting Playbook

Supplier Scouting Team
Jul 2024
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MEP National Network Supplier Scouting Overview

Summary
Supply Chain Optimization Intelligence Network (SCOIN) is a 2-year pilot project investing in the MEP National Network™ (MEPNN) to study manufacturing ecosystems and identify gaps in an effort to build more resilient sustainable supply chains.

Supplier Scouting is a key component of the SCOIN pilot. The national Supplier Scouting service can assist in identifying domestic suppliers with the capabilities you need, in some cases allowing you to reshire production, resulting in a shorter supply chain and reduced uncertainty.

The purpose of this playbook is to share information and resources about MEP’s Supplier Scouting Services and the MEIS Supplier Scouting Module. The playbook is intended to be a living document and is divided into 6 sections:

• Frequently Asked Questions – responses to questions from the MEPNN regarding the basics of Supplier Scouting, supplier scouting process and the supplier scouting MEIS module
• Supplier Scouting Terminology – definitions to commonly used terms
• MEIS Supplier Scouting Module User Guide – step-by-step guide to using the Supplier Scouting Module
• Commonly Used Links – list of commonly use links
• Build America, Buy America (BABA) Guidance – introduction to BABA
• Appendix A – Example MEIS Notifications – example email notifications that are related to the supplier scouting process

We encourage MEP Supply Chain Experts to continue asking questions and submitting recommendations to continuously improve MEPNN Supplier Scouting.

Send your questions, recommendations, etc. to scouting@nist.gov.

Frequently asked Questions

What is MEP National Network™ Supplier Scouting?
MEP National Network (MEPNN) Supplier Scouting is a key component of MEP’s Supply Chain Optimization Intelligence Network (SCOIN) pilot. It is a free service that leverages the extensive knowledge of the MEPNN to identify and connect U.S. companies and government agencies with domestic manufacturers to supply/produce products. The purpose of supplier scouting is to record data on local Supply Chain Ecosystems in an effort to fortify domestic supply chains.

How do I submit an Supplier Scouting Opportunity?
Supplier Scouting Opportunities (SSO) are submitted by completing an online form. To initiate the supplier scouting process, MEP Centers and government agencies need to complete and submit our Supplier Scouting Opportunity Synopsis Form. (Companies seeking to engage in supplier scouting should contact their local MEP Center).

The form is used to gather technical and business information and is divided into four sections.

• Section 1: General information (email, item and description)
• Section 2: Technical information (type of supplier being sought, reason for scout, mfg process, dimensions, tolerances, performance specs, required materials, required certifications, regulations, and additional comments)
• Section 3: Business information (business volume, target price, delivery and packaging requirements, and additional comments)
• Section 4: Additional information* (attach drawings, photos, specs, etc.) and a checkbox to notify MEP of outcomes within 30-days of receiving a results report/email

*Agencies and organization scouting to comply with BABA are required to include BABA requirements for the item being scouted and contact information for questions.

What happens after a SSO is submitted?
SSOs are reviewed for technical and business information prior to distribution to the MEPNN. SSOs are typically opened on Wednesdays to the MEPNN for response. If an SSO is submitted on a Monday, Tuesday, or early Wednesday morning, it will typically be distributed on that Wednesday if no further clarification is needed. If a SSO is submitted on Wednesday afternoon, Thursday, or Friday, it will typically be distributed the following Wednesday, pending review. This schedule is subject to change as needs and priorities shift.

What types of results are submitted by MEP Centers?
There are 5 types of responses, 4 match types and 1 no match:
• Manufacturer currently produces the exact item
• Manufacturer currently produces a similar item
• Manufacturer currently possesses the capability to produce the item
• Manufacturer possesses relevant capabilities to allow production of the item with minimal retooling
• No match(es) found

How are SSOs scouted by MEP Centers?
MEP Centers search for matches in their state using a variety of tools and resources.

What happens after a SSO closes?
A notification email is sent with an attached report, to the requester of the SSO and Supply Chain Experts at each Center.

Supplier Scouting Terminology
Supplier Scouting Match
A supplier scouting match occurs when:
• An exact match is located (manufacturer produces the exact item)
• A partial match is located which could mean:
  o Manufacturer currently produces a similar item
  o Manufacturer currently possesses the capability to produce the item
  o Manufacturer possesses relevant capability to allow production of the item with minimum retooling
Supplier Scouting Opportunity (SSO)
An SSO contains the finalized technical and business information for items/services being sought. This form is distributed to the MEPNN for scouting.

Supplier Scouting Response
A supplier scouting response is when a MEP Center submits a match or no match for a SSO.

SSO (Synopsis) Form
A SSO is the form needed to initiate supplier scouting. The purpose of this form is to gather technical and business information about the needed item and about the organization making the request. The form has 4 sections.
- General info (email, item being sought and description)
- Technical info (type of supplier being sought, reason for scout, manufacturing process, dimensions, tolerances, performance specs, required materials, required certifications, regulations, and additional comments such as agency BABA requirements)
- Business info (business volume, target price, delivery and packaging requirements and additional comments)
- Additional info (agency BABA office contact information, attach drawings, photos, specs, etc.)

MEP Center Supply Chain Experts
An MEP Center Supply Chain Expert is the staff designated at each Center to participate in the SCOIN pilot and response to SSOs.

Supplier Scouting Requester
The supplier scouting requester is the individual that submits an SSO to initiate supplier scouting services.

Supplier Scouting Response
A supplier scouting response (exact match, partial match, or no match) is submitted, using the MEIS Supplier Scouting Module) by MEP Center Supply Chain Experts in response to an SSO.

Submitting an Supplier Scouting Opportunity (SSO)
How to submit a Supplier Scouting Opportunity (SSO) Synopsis
Any individual can complete an SSO.
1. Navigate to https://meis.nist.gov/SupplierScouting/Submit
2. Enter and confirm your email address.
3. **Click Start New Submission**

4. **Enter your First Name, Last Name and Item to be scouted.**

5. **Click Create Submission**

6. **You will receive a notification stating the following:**

   “Your Opportunity has been started in the system. This page will reload after you close this dialog.”

7. **Click OK to continue.**

**Note:** As you move from field to field you will receive notification that information is being saved.
Should you need to exit or abandon the form before submission you can return at a later time or date to continue editing or complete the form. **Until you click submit, you are able to return and edit the form using your email address (see How to find existing submissions/edit unsubmitted synopses).**

**Note:** Once submitted, you’ve submitted the synopsis it can only be edited by the MEP Supplier Scouting Team.

8. Once the page reloads, you can complete the fields in the **Contact & Item Information** section by providing the answers, as needed. You will notice some of this fields will be populated with information from the previous page.

   a. Enter the Organization Type of the person submitting the request  
      i. Center  
      ii. Government Agency  
      iii. Private Entity  

   b. Enter your department / Company / MEP Center  
      i. Examples here are Department of Commerce, Department of Energy. **Note:** Members of the MEPNN will choose their Center from the dropdown list.
c. Enter your Bureau / Division / MEP Center Regional Office
   i. Examples here are NIST (part of the Department of Commerce), Catalyst Connection (part of Pennsylvania MEP), Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) (Part of the Department of Energy)

d. Notify Requester Immediately (Only available to members of the MEPNN)
   i. No
   ii. Yes
   iii. Days to be scouted (minimum of 30 days) Ex: 30 days

e. Description
   i. Ex: General information. End use of the item/service being sought. Conditions, in which, item will be used. For example, in a laboratory, submersed, harsh environment (high heat, extreme cold).

9. Complete Supplier Information
   a. Select the type of supplier being sought.
   b. Select the Reason

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supplier Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of supplier being sought: Manufacturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason: 2nd Supplier</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of technical specifications and performance requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Describe the manufacturing processes (elaborate to provide as much detail as possible)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide dimensions / size / tolerances / performance specifications for the item</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List required materials needed to make the product, including materials of product components</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold and Nickel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials Needed is required</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supplier Scouting Req.</th>
<th>meisut.nist.gov</th>
<th>SupplierScouting/Submit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://tpt.nist.gov">https://tpt.nist.gov</a>...</td>
<td>Business_Card...</td>
<td>Bookmarks...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland Office of...</td>
<td>Blue Jeans Network...</td>
<td>Sign In</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Complete the section on Summary of technical specifications and performance requirements.

c. Describe the manufacturing processes (elaborate to provide as much detail as possible)
   i. Ex: injection molding, metal casting, electronic assembly.
d. Provide dimensions / size / tolerances / performance specifications for the item.
e. List required materials needed to make the product, including materials of product components.

f. Are there applicable certification requirements?
g. Are there applicable regulations?
h. Are there any other standards, requirements, etc.?
i. NAICS 1 and NAICS 2 - Are there any NAICS Codes associated with the item being sought?
j. Additional Technical Comments*

*Agencies and organization scouting to comply with BABA are required to include BABA requirements for the item being scouted and contact information for questions.
10. Complete the section on Volume and Pricing  
a. Estimated potential business volume.  
b. Estimated target price / unit cost information (if unavailable explain)

11. Complete the section on Delivery Requirements  
a. When is it needed by?  
b. Describe packaging requirements.  
c. Where will this item be shipped?

12. Supporting Documents  
a. Upload any necessary documents.

13. Additional Comments  
a. Enter any additional comments and/or information.
14. Click Submit
   a. You will receive a notification stating the following:
      “This Opportunity will no longer be available for editing once submitted, continue?”
      i. No – you can return to the form to further edit.
      ii. Yes
         1. Form will be submitted.
         2. You will receive a notification stating the following:
            a. This Opportunity has been submitted and will be reviewed by NIST MEP. You will receive an email once responses have been collected for the opportunity. For questions email scouting@nist.gov. This page will reload after you close this dialog.

15. You will be returned to the landing page.

How to find existing submitted synopses/edit unsubmitted synopses
1. Navigate to https://meis.nist.gov/SupplierScouting/Submit
2. Enter and confirm your email address.
3. Click Find Existing Submissions
1. If there are no synopses, you will receive a notification stating the following:

“No submissions were found associated with your email address; would you like to start one?”

2. If there are synopses associated with the email entered,
   A list of synopses and their status is displayed.
   a. Started – A Supplier Scouting Opportunity (SSO) synopsis has been started, but has not yet been submitted (the submit button has not been selected)
   b. Submitted – A SSO has been forwarded to NIST MEP for Review (the submit button has been selected). The SSO can only be further edited by a member of the NIST MEP Supplier Scouting Team (SST)
   c. Open For Responses – A SSO has been forwarded to the MEP National Network (MEPNN) to be reviewed by Supply Chain Experts in all 50 states and Puerto Rico within a specified time frame. Hopefully, producing potential matches with the ability to satisfy the need.
   d. Closed for Responses – When the open period has elapsed, additional responses from Centers are not allowed. Responses are reviewed for very basic information. If that information is present, the response is allowed to be published along with the opportunity
   e. Published – The opportunity synopsis, and all allowed responses are released to be reviewed by the requestor and the MEPNN.
f. For those with *Submitted* status, NIST MEP will need to be contacted to make changes before being distributed to the National Network for response.

g. For those with *Started* status, edits can still be made by clicking the link of the item to be scouted.
   i. You will receive an email with a *One Time Use Link* that can be used to access the unsubmitted SSO.

   **Example**

   ii. Clicking the One Time Use Link in the email will open the synopsis for editing. Changes can be made and then the window closed for additional editing later or Submit can be clicked closing the form for editing and sending to NIST MEP for review.
**Note:** As you move from field to field you will receive notification that information is being saved. Should you need to exit or abandon the form before submission you can return at a later time or date to continue editing or complete the form. **Until you click submit, you are able to return and edit the form using your email address** (see How to find existing submissions/edit unsubmitted synopses).

**Once an SSO has closed**

NIST MEP will “publish” the SSO within the MEIS Supplier Scouting module with all relevant responses. The requester will receive a email notification with a one-time link. Click the link to review responses and next steps.

**Commonly Used Links**

- MEPNN Supplier Scouting Opportunity Request
- Executive Order 14005
- MEP Supplier Scouting Team
- The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)
- Build America Buy America Fact Sheet
- Buy America Act Guidance
- Made in America Office

**Build America, Buy America (BABA) Guidance**

**What are the requirements of Build America, Buy America?**

1. All iron and steel items used in covered projects must be produced in the United States. This means all manufacturing processes, from the initial melting stage through the application of coatings, occurred in the United States.
2. All manufactured products used in covered projects must be produced in the United States. This means the manufactured product was manufactured in the United States, and the cost of the components of the manufactured product that are mined, produced, or manufactured in the United States is greater than 55 percent of the total cost of all components of the manufactured product.
3. All construction materials used in covered projects must be manufactured in the United States.
States. This means that all manufacturing processes for the construction material occurred in the United States.

What Federal financial assistance awards are covered by Build America, Buy America?
Build America, Buy America provisions apply to Federal financial assistance awards (e.g., grants and loans) made after May 14, 2022, that will be used to construct, alter, maintain, or repair infrastructure in the United States. Note that these provisions are not limited to infrastructure projects funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. Assistance recipients who have questions about whether their particular project is covered by Build America, Buy America should contact the funding agency. (Source: Build America, Buy America Factsheet and FAQs for Award Recipients (whitehouse.gov)

How can product compliance with BABA requirements be demonstrated?
The use of a signed letter is the most direct and effective form of compliance documentation for ensuring products are Buy America compliant. Companies can provide proper documentation that demonstrate compliance with the law. The Federal agency that is funding the infrastructure project subject to Build America, Buy America requirements may have specific requirements for demonstrating compliance.

Buy American Act Guidance

What Federal funding is subject to is the Buy America Act (BAA)?
Generally, BAA requirements apply to direct Federal procurement—what the Federal government buys for its own use. BAA requires a preference for domestic end products (i.e. an article, material, or supply to be acquired for public use) and domestic construction materials procured by the Federal government. BAA is implemented through Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) Part 25.

What are the BAA requirements?
An end product or construction material that is not iron or steel qualifies as a domestic end product or construction material if it is manufactured in the U.S. and more than 65 percent of the cost of all components is also mined, produced or manufactured in the U.S. The threshold for the domestic component requirement is scheduled to increase to 75 percent in calendar year 2029. For iron and steel products, the applicable percentage of cost of domestic components is 95 percent. See FAR 25.003 for more information.

Do domestic items receive a preference in Federal procurement?
Yes, for offers of domestic end products and construction material subject to BAA, an evaluation factor (price preference) is applied. The preference is 50 percent in procurements conducted by the Department of Defense. For procurements conducted by civilian agencies, the preference is 30 percent if the offer is made by a small business and 20 percent if the offer is made by an entity other than a small business.

How do vendors ensure that they are satisfying the BAA requirements?
Offerors submitting an offer for Federal procurement subject to BAA are required to self-certify to Federal agencies that each end product is a domestic end product. See FAR 52.225-2 Buy American Certificate or DFARS 252.225-7000 Buy American-Balance of Payments Program Certificate for more information.
Appendix A – Example Supplier Scouting Notifications

Publishing Notification: Received when SSO results have been published

Recipients: Requestor
Subject: MEPNN: A Supplier Scouting Opportunity you submitted is ready for your review
Attachments: Summary Results Report (see Appendix – Summary Results Report)

Greetings {{SupplierScouting.SubmitterFirstName}},

The results for the Supplier Scouting Opportunity submitted on {{SupplierScouting.SubmittedOn}}, is ready for review. The table below details the number and types of matches that were received. Please go to MEPNN: Supplier Scouting to find opportunities associated with your email address and locate the opportunity "{{SupplierScouting.ItemToBeScouted}} ({{SupplierScouting.ScoutingNumber}})".

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Match Type</th>
<th>Number of Matches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturer currently possesses the capability to produce this item</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturer currently produces a similar item</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturer possesses relevant capabilities to allow production of this item with minimal retooling</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No match</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MEP client matches were identified, however, some clients had concerns due to {{concern or concerns sited}}. Please contact the MEP Centers below if you are interested in more details.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Center</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Responder</th>
<th>Responder Title</th>
<th>Responder Email</th>
<th>Concern Areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indiana MEP - Purdue Manufacturing Extension Partnership</td>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>Adam West</td>
<td>Supply Chain Services Specialist</td>
<td><a href="mailto:adam.west@purduecenter.com">adam.west@purduecenter.com</a></td>
<td>Volume</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NIST MEP makes no claim that this report represents all capabilities in the U.S. to produce/supply this item/service. We recommend contacting the Center point of contact prior to contacting the company, as each MEP Center has knowledge of the manufacturing ecosystem in their state. They can make introductions, as well as provide additional details about the company’s ability to produce the requested item, such as pricing, timing and required investments needed for retooling facilities.

Contact the MEP Supplier Scouting Team (scouting@nist.gov) with any questions.
Submission Notification: Received when an SSO has been successfully submitted

Recipient: Requestor

Subject: ALERT: A new Supplier Scouting Opportunity has been submitted

Thank you for your submission.

MEP will review and get back to you if further information is needed. If no additional information is required, your opportunity will be distributed to National Network for scouting.

The link below allows you to view the Supplier Scouting Opportunity. Any further editing requires contacting the MEP Supplier Scouting team (scouting@nist.gov).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Request Id</th>
<th>12345</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item To Be Scouted</td>
<td>{{SupplierScouting.ItemToBeScouted}}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State item is needed in</td>
<td>{{SupplierScouting.StateName}}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link to Opportunity</td>
<td>{{SupplierScouting.DirectAccessLink}}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Contact the MEP Supplier Scouting team (scouting@nist.gov) with any questions.

Appendix B – Example Supplier Scouting Results Report

**MEP National Network Supplier Scouting Results – 20XX-XXX [Item]**

07/25/2024

The results for the Supplier Scouting Opportunity submitted on Friday June 21, 2024, are ready for review.

The National Institute of Standards and Technology Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NIST MEP) makes no claim that this report represents all capabilities in the U.S. to produce this item. The requesting organization will need to vet the identified manufacturers, if any, to determine whether they are a good match. We recommend contacting the Center POC prior to contacting the company.

**Scouting results**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Match Type</th>
<th>Number of Matches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exact Match</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturer currently possesses the capability to produce this item</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturer currently produces a similar item</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturer possesses relevant capabilities to allow production of this item with minimal retooling</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No match</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Result 1

**Company:** Callahan Auto (identified by Maryland MEP)

**Partial match:** Manufacturer currently possesses the capability to produce this item

**Product lines and relevant notes:** Brakes and brake pads

**Company website:** Not provided

**MEP Center contact:**
Superb Scout
superb.scout@mdmep.org
(410) 555-1212

Result 2

**Company:** Zalinsky Auto Parts (identified by Iowa Center for Industrial Research and Service)

**Partial match:** Manufacturer currently produces a similar item

**Product lines and relevant notes:** Auto parts for personal and commercial applications

**Company website:** Not provided

**MEP Center contact:**
Excellent Scout
excellent.scout@iastate.edu
(515) 555-1212
Summary

The above results for this supplier scouting instance have been recorded by NIST MEP. Each U.S. manufacturer identified represents a legitimate, potential, viable domestic manufacturer for this item.

Recommendations/Next Steps
NIST MEP recommends that you:
• Contact the Center’s POC prior to contacting the company.
• Vet these companies for additional information.
• Provide regular updates on the status of this opportunity.