

June 20, 2014

**ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY (FFO)
Business-to-Business Network Pilots**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- **Federal Agency Name:** National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), United States Department of Commerce (DoC)
- **Funding Opportunity Title:** Business-to-Business Network Pilots
- **Announcement Type:** Initial
- **Funding Opportunity Number:** 2014-NIST-MEP-B2BN-01
- **Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number:** 11.611, Manufacturing Extension Partnership;
- **Dates:** Electronic applications must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday, August 4, 2014. Applications received after the respective deadline will not be reviewed or considered. The approximate start date for awards under this FFO is expected to be December 2014.

When developing your submission timeline, keep in mind that a free annual registration process in the electronic System for Award Management (SAM) (see Section VI.2.b. of this FFO) takes on average fourteen (14) business days for new registrations, and between seven (7) and ten (10) business days for renewal registrations. The SAM registration process will likely take more time if problems are encountered. Also, please keep in mind that applicants using Grants.gov will receive a series of receipts over a period of up to two (2) business days before learning via a validation or rejection whether a Federal agency's electronic system has received its application.

- **Application Submission Address:** See Section IV in the Full Announcement Text of this FFO.
- **Funding Opportunity Description:** NIST invites proposals from eligible applicants to deploy and maintain one or more Business-to-Business Network (B2B Network) pilot projects. The B2B Network pilots shall have the human and information infrastructure needed to conduct real-time business opportunity scouting, technology scouting, supplier scouting and market scouting including the active content management and human interactions needed to establish and maintain data quality, identify opportunities and make matches on behalf of companies.
- **Total Amount to be Awarded:** Up to \$2,500,000.
- **Anticipated Amounts:** NIST anticipates making up to 10 awards at approximately \$250,000 per award. The projects awarded under this FFO will have a budget and performance period of up to two (2) years.
- **Funding Instrument:** Cooperative Agreement
- **Who Is Eligible:** Eligible applicants are existing Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Centers. Applicants are strongly encouraged to form teaming arrangements involving multiple MEP Centers and service providers such that multiple Centers share appropriate infrastructure (hardware, software, expertise, knowledge and/or services as examples) to address scouting needs on a regional level. An eligible organization may work individually or include proposed subawardees

and/or contractors or other collaborators in a project proposal, effectively forming a team or consortium.

- **Cost Sharing Requirements:** Cost Sharing is not required for awards under this program.
- **Webinar Information Session:** NIST MEP will hold an information session for organizations that are considering applying to this opportunity. This webinar will provide general information regarding the B2B Network pilots program and offer general guidance on preparing proposals. NIST/MEP staff will be available on the webinar to answer general questions. During the webinar, proprietary technical discussions about specific project ideas will not be permitted. Also, NIST/MEP staff will not critique or provide feedback on any project ideas during the webinar or at any time before submission of a proposal to B2B Network pilots program. However, NIST/MEP staff will provide information about the B2B Network pilots program eligibility, evaluation criteria and selection factors, selection process, and the general characteristics of a competitive B2B Network pilots program proposal during this webinar, and by phone and email. The webinar will be held approximately 14 business days after posting of this FFO. The exact date and time of the webinar will be posted on the MEP website at www.nist.gov/mep. The webinar will be recorded and a link to the recording will be posted on the MEP website. In addition, the webinar presentation will be available after the webinar on the MEP website. Organizations wishing to participate in the webinar must sign up by contacting Diane Henderson at diane.henderson@nist.gov.

FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

I. Funding Opportunity Description

1. Program Objectives

NIST invites eligible applicants to submit proposals to establish pilot projects that will develop, deploy and maintain a Business-to-Business Network (B2B Network) to support active business opportunity, supplier, technology and/or market matching within regions of the Manufacturing Extension Partnership System. Regions may be those of individual Centers, multi-Center, state-wide or multi-state. Proposed projects should consist of teams with expertise in business opportunity identification, technology identification and translation, and market and technology scouting, as detailed further below.

Over the life of the NIST Manufacturing Extension Partnership, a frequent need has been demonstrated for a business and technology matching system that supports the work of MEP Centers with their clients in finding timely business opportunities, meeting outstanding technology needs and making known supplier capabilities and capacities to new potential customers. Previous attempts to develop and deploy a robust network to achieve these types of matching have not fully met expectations for breadth/depth of use and impacts. Several opportunities for improvement were identified that should increase the use and impacts including (1) an active, human network to enter and extract timely, relevant information on the various opportunities, actively manage content related to opportunities and the hands-on client knowledge needed to make effective, efficient matches; (2) a flexible IT platform/solution that is responsive to the needs of the MEP system; (3) a sustainable business model for B2B Network transactions conducted on the network; (4) more robust content management related to the business, technology and market opportunities; and (5) a more robust education/awareness effort to demonstrate the benefits of the B2B Network to the manufacturers themselves.

The envisioned pilot B2B Network pilots are, first and foremost, human networks that are supported by underlying, appropriate technology that is easy to access and use and that contains the necessary data (i.e. technical and business) of sufficient quality, validity and timeliness that allows matches to be made in an effective, efficient manner. The B2B Network pilots must include an approach that provides for easy assignment of outcomes which can be linked to Centers in terms of direct impacts (projects, connections, commercialization, sales, etc.), postings of opportunities and information that

are current or active and in which a matchmaker would have relative confidence in the figures provided in terms of value of the opportunities and outcome-based metrics upon which to evaluate network performance and efficacy. Specifically, each proposal must address the following objectives:

- *Currency, Critical Mass and Validation of Data* – How the applicant will identify, vet and assemble a critical mass of viable opportunities. What constitutes a critical mass will depend on the region considered, the demographics of its manufacturers and the resources which can be brought to bear to provide solutions and matches. The proposal must also address how the information included in the network will be actively managed to ensure the data are validated and maintained so that as opportunities are realized or aged out, there is an appropriate action taken within the system to remove or update those opportunities. The proposal must also describe how critical mass in the network will be maintained over time by ensuring that new opportunities are continually sought, vetted, and maintained.
- *Functionality* –How the functionality of the network (including any web sites or other displays of the information associated with it) will be easy to use, developed with the preferences of the intended audiences in mind and provide the general ability to search and find viable solutions. The human interface is imperative to optimize the matches that are not self-evident from exact syntax. That is, matches may become apparent only after analysis of opportunity and careful comparison against manufacturer inherent capabilities. It must be manufacturer-friendly. In other words, if Centers and the small and mid-size manufacturers are to embrace and utilize it, it needs to be designed with that in mind.
- *Potential Duplication* – In regions where there are existing networks supported by state and/or local governments, how the particular B2B Network pilot will build on, complement or supplement those networks, not duplicate them.
- *Concrete Successes and Measurable Outputs* –How the applicant will define appropriate metrics that produce evidence to validate the successful use of the network. Examples of measureable outcomes include but are not limited to connections made, requests filled, inventions licensed, revenue from licenses, fees generated and the variety of impacts (sales, cost savings, new products/services introduced over time, investments made or avoided) that companies might experience in finding and capturing opportunities.

The B2B Network may include a wide variety of activities including but not limited to face-to-face matchmaking events on a local and/or regional basis to bring together companies having needs with potential solution providers.

Proposals may address any one or more of the business opportunity, supplier, technology and/or market matching services sought under this program announcement. The business opportunity and market scouting and matching should, to the extent possible, include international opportunities (export sales) and possible reshoring opportunities. “Business opportunities” means a company’s purchase of manufactured goods or services related to manufacturing. A viable business opportunity is one in which the purchaser is ready to receive bids in preparation for making the purchase. “Supplier opportunities” means a company’s description of its services, capacities and capabilities that might be used by a company needing manufactured goods or manufacturing-related services. “Technology opportunities” means the identification of a technology need or use, or the purchase or sale of manufacturing-related intellectual property. “Market scouting and matching” means identification of and research into relevant new markets for a company’s products and services.

It is not the intent of this program that awardees will perform substantial infrastructure development, but rather use existing technologies for network support and match management with minimal development to connect different networks or functional modules (e.g., project management, ticketing, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), if necessary). Technology support should, to the extent practicable, be open source, interoperable and scalable to a regional or national level.

One of the ultimate goals of the program is to establish and support a national B2B Network; therefore, applicants should address how their network’s technologies and frameworks for

matchmaking will be interoperable with others, at a minimum. Specific tasks or mechanisms to ensure cooperation and interoperability may be added during award negotiations.

The B2B Network pilot projects will add capabilities to the MEP program by offering specific, timely, actionable information about opportunities and solutions. The MEP Program places high importance on ensuring that projects are well aligned with, and amplify, the work of MEP Centers and partners in order to maximize the potential and impact of existing resources for the benefit of U.S. manufacturing. Additional information on MEP Centers and their partners is provided at <http://www.nist.gov/mep/>.

2. Program Priorities

The program's priorities for this competition are noted below. Applicants will need to articulate how their particular network makes connections between items a-d below, as required by 15 U.S.C. 278k(f)(5), and the opportunity identification and matching made through the particular network's people, databases and other essential network elements as defined by the applicant. For example, including export opportunities will likely lead to increased business and a need to create jobs and train new employees in the nuances required in order to successfully export products to overseas markets. Successful proposals must address all of the following priorities:

- a. create jobs or train newly hired employees;
- b. promote technology transfer and commercialization of environmentally focused materials, products, and processes;
- c. increase energy efficiency; and
- d. improve the competitiveness of industries in the region in which the Center or Centers are located.

Proposals that do NOT address these priorities will be deemed non-responsive and not reviewed.

In addition, the most successful proposals will also address the following:

- e. High probability of making matches that result in new or expanded business for manufacturing companies and adoption of new-to-the-company technologies that expand its ability to compete. To be considered responsive to this priority, applicants must clearly demonstrate how their pilot project will identify viable, significant opportunities for companies and make matches based on company needs.
- f. Directly address major constraints that currently limit development and access to current information about needs and opportunities.
- g. Involve partnerships and demonstrate resource leveraging such that pilots are replicable in other regions. Example partnerships include those with industry, academia and local, state and federal agencies that are either sources of opportunities or technologies.

It is not the intent of this program that awardees will perform research.

The statutory authority for the Business-to-Business Network Pilots program is 15 U.S.C. 278k(f).

II. Award Information

- 1. Funding Instrument.** The funding instrument that will be used for these awards is a cooperative agreement. The nature of NIST's "substantial involvement" will generally be collaboration between NIST MEP and the recipient organizations. This includes NIST MEP collaboration with a recipient on its progress and approving changes in the statement of work. Additional forms of substantial involvement that may arise are described in Chapter 5.C of the Department of Commerce (DoC) Grants and Cooperative Agreements Manual, which is available at [http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/documents/FINAL%20Master%20DOC%20Grants%20Manual%202013%20\(03.01.13\)_b.pdf](http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/documents/FINAL%20Master%20DOC%20Grants%20Manual%202013%20(03.01.13)_b.pdf)

2. **Funding Availability.** NIST anticipates making up to 10 awards at approximately \$250,000 per award. The projects awarded under this FFO will have a budget and performance period of up to two (2) years.

III. Eligibility Information

1. **Eligible Applicants.** Eligible applicants are existing Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) Centers. Applicants are strongly encouraged to form teaming arrangements involving multiple MEP Centers and service providers such that multiple Centers share appropriate infrastructure (hardware, software and/or services as examples) to address scouting needs on a regional level. An eligible organization may work individually or include proposed subawardees and/or contractors or other collaborators in a project proposal, effectively forming a team or consortium.
2. **Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement.** Cost Sharing is not required for awards under this program.
3. **Other**
 - a. **Pre-Applications.** NIST is not accepting pre-applications or white papers under this funding opportunity.

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. For applicants without Internet access, the standard application package may be requested by contacting the NIST personnel listed below.

Diane Henderson, National Institute of Standards and Technology, Manufacturing Extension Partnership, 100 Bureau Drive, Mail Stop 4800, Gaithersburg, MD 20899-4800 (Phone: 301-975-5105, email: diane.henderson@nist.gov).

2. **Content and Form of Application/Submission.**

Complete applications must, at a minimum, include the following forms and documents:

a. **Required Forms and Documents**

- (1) **SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance.** The SF-424 must be signed by an authorized representative of the applicant organization. The FFO number 2014-NIST-MEP-B2BN-01 must be identified in item 12 of the SF-424. 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 up to two (2) years, considering all potential cost increases, including cost of living adjustments.)
- (3) **SF-424B, Assurances - Non-Construction Programs**
- (4) **CD-511, Certification Regarding Lobbying**
- (5) **SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities (if applicable)**
- (6) **Technical Proposal.** The Technical Proposal is a word-processed document not exceeding 20 pages that is responsive to the program description (see Section I of this

FFO) and the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1 of this FFO). The following is a sample format that applicants may use for the technical proposal.

- a) **Executive Summary.** Briefly describe the proposed project, consistent with the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1 of this FFO). The Executive Summary should be limited to one (1) page.
- b) **Project Narrative.** A description of the proposed project, sufficient to permit evaluation of the proposal, in accordance with the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1 of this FFO). The narrative should include a section addressing each of the following paragraphs:
 - i. **Types of Opportunities.** Describe the categories and types of opportunities to be presented on the network (buying, technology, supplier, market) including but not limited to those related to the program priorities listed in Section I.2.a-d of this FFO in sufficient detail to permit evaluation in accordance with this FFO's evaluation criteria (see Section V.1.a of this FFO). Describe the linkages between successful matches and job creation and training.
 - ii. **Strength and Depth of the Network.** Describe the applicant's market analysis, geographic location proposed to be reached and management of content needed by the network in sufficient detail to permit evaluation in accordance with this FFO's evaluation criteria (see Section V.1.b of this FFO). Describe how the applicant will engage with the companies and other resources to understand the opportunities and respond to them.
 - iii. **Technology Infrastructure Needed to Support the Network.** Include plans and requirements for any needed technology platform or services needed to support the network and the provision of appropriate, timely, high quality information on opportunities and potential matches to the individuals accessing the network. Include plans for interoperability with other, similar networks in order to ensure scalability to a national level. Provide sufficient detail to permit evaluation in accordance with this FFO's evaluation criteria (see Section V.1.c of this FFO).
 - iv. **Resources.** Describe the technical personnel and programmatic resources, staff, facilities, equipment, and linkages to external sources of business opportunities and technologies needed to carry out the various matching tasks (business opportunity, technology, market and supplier). "Linkages" means the partnerships or connections to third parties such as industry, universities, nonprofit economic organizations, and state governments to supplement/complement the applicant's ability to actively identify and match business opportunities; supplier needs, capabilities and capacities; technology needs and opportunities and market needs and opportunities to reach a large number of manufacturers. Describe the approach to partnerships that will ensure project success, including roles of participating organizations and qualifications and proposed operational or management activities of key personnel who will be assigned to work on the proposed project. This may include, for example, research laboratories, innovation institutes, sources of capital, sources of shared physical infrastructure, and other commercialization-focused entities and resources. Provide sufficient detail to permit evaluation in accordance with the FFO's evaluation criteria (see Section V.1.d of this FFO). Applicants are strongly encouraged to form teaming

arrangements involving multiple MEP Centers such that manufacturing supply chain needs can be addressed on a local or regional level, and also have a broad geographic reach to facilitate leveraging of resources and access to manufacturers on a national scale. Applicants are also strongly encouraged to adequately demonstrate the leveraging of resources and competencies tied to the industry sectors, supply chains, and technology areas that are relevant to the local regions where the applicant team resides. This may include organizations that are working with, or as part of, state or local technology-based economic development strategies such as innovation clusters. Applicants are encouraged to consider how the proposed model will be scaled as new resources emerge within the region that can be brought to bear on the program.

- v. Business Model.** Articulate one or more business models that will be tested and deployed to ensure the long-term scalable delivery beyond the period of performance to, and participation of, small- and mid-sized manufacturers. Discuss potential future financial and partnership strategies that the applicant will use to achieve outreach and financial viability in sufficient detail to permit evaluation in accordance with this FFO's evaluation criteria (see Section V.1.e of this FFO).
- c) Statement of Work.** Discuss the specific tasks to be carried out, including a schedule of measurable events and milestones, in accordance with the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1.f of this FFO). Include a coordination task for meeting with and sharing information with other awardees.
- d) Management and Financial Plan.** Address details associated with organizational structure, finances and pilot project management including past performance as identified in the Evaluation Criteria found in Section V.1.g.(1), (2) and (4) of this FFO. Include sufficient budget detail to allow linkage to and assessment of the tasks to be carried out per the statement of work. Identify and describe measurable performance outcomes that demonstrate the validity, value and success of the network. Include a plan for the allocation of intellectual property rights associated with any invention or copyright which may result from the involvement in the pilot project's technology transfer or research activities.
- e) Past Performance.** Provide specific information that addresses whether the applicant's and partners' past performance with the MEP program is indicative of expected performance under a possible new award and describing how and why performance is expected to be the same or different.
- (7) Budget Narrative.** There is no set format for the Budget Narrative; however, it should provide a detailed breakdown of each of the object class categories as reflected on the SF-424A. It should include all expenses for up to two (2) years of operation of the pilot, and it should address the Evaluation Criterion found at Section V.1.g.(3).
- (8) Indirect Cost Rate Agreement.** 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. The successful applicant will be required to obtain such a rate.
- (9) Resumes.** One-page resumes of no more than five key personnel 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.

(10) Letters of Commitment or Interest. Letters are not included in the page count.

- (a) **Letters of commitment to participate**, as applicable. If the applicant's proposal identifies third parties including contractors, subawardees, and/or other collaborators who will participate in the proposed project, effectively forming a team or consortium, then a letter from each currently known participant, describing its participation is needed. Each letter should indicate the organization's willingness to participate and what they will be doing for the project. A letter is required whether or not the organization is receiving Federal funds.
- (b) **Letters of Interest**, optional. Letters of interest may be provided from parties who might become customers for the solutions discussed in the proposed project.

When submitting 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.(10) 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 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.*

b. 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.
- (8) **Page layout.** Portrait orientation only (except figures, graphs, and pictures (see Section IV.2.b.(4))).
- (9) **Page Limit.** Twenty (20) pages.

Page limit includes: Table of contents (if included), Technical Proposal with all required sections, figures, graphs, tables, images, and pictures.

Page limit excludes: SF-424, Application for Federal Assistance; SF-424A, Budget Information – Non-Construction Programs; SF-424B, Assurances – Non-Construction Programs; SF-LLL, Disclosure of Lobbying Activities; CD-511, Certification Regarding Lobbying; Budget Narrative; Indirect Cost Rate Agreement; Resumes; and Letters of Commitment or Interest.

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

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

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

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

- 3. Submission Dates and Times.** Electronic applications must be received no later than 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday, August 4, 2014.

Applications not received by the specified due date and time will not be considered and will not be reviewed. NIST will consider the date and time stamped on the validation generated by www.grants.gov as the official submission time.

NIST strongly recommends that applicants do not wait until the last minute to submit an application. NIST will not make any allowances for late submissions, including but not limited to incomplete Grants.gov registration. To avoid any potential processing backlogs due to last minute Grants.gov registrations, applicants are highly encouraged to start their Grants.gov registration process at least four (4) weeks prior to the application due date.

When developing your submission timeline, keep in mind that (1) a free annual registration process in the electronic System for Award Management (SAM) (see Section VI.2.b. of this FFO) may take more than two weeks, and (2) applicants using Grants.gov will receive a series of receipts over a period of up to two business days before learning via a validation or rejection notification whether a Federal agency's electronic system has received its application.

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

5. Other Submission Requirements

- a.** Applications must be submitted electronically.

(1) Electronic applications must be submitted via Grants.gov at www.grants.gov, under announcement 2014-NIST-MEP-B2BN-01.

- a) Submitters 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 2014-NIST-MEP-B2BN-01 announcement, contact Christopher Hunton by phone at 301-975-5718 or by e-mail at christopher.hunton@nist.gov.
- b) 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 Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number (see Section VI.2.b of this FFO) 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. 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 authorized individual(s) 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.

- c) 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 home page. Clicking on the “Applicants” tab produces the “Grant Applicants” page.

In addition to following the “Steps” and instructions described in the “Applicant Actions” section and its sub-categories, further detailed instructions are described in “Applicant Resources” and all of its subcategories. This appears in the box near the top left of the Grant Applicants page. Applicants should follow the links associated with each subcategory.

Applicants will receive a series of receipts during a process of up to two business days before the application is either validated as electronically received by the Federal agency system, or rejected by it. 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 instructions 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.

Refer to important information in Section IV.3. Submission Dates and Times, to help ensure your application is received on time.

If timely application submissions are interrupted by the manifestation a natural disaster, such as a hurricane, blizzard, or similar extreme inclement weather event, or by the aftermath of such an event, such as power outages and/or Federal, public and/or private institution closures, NIST may: (1) consider an appeal for an individual situation involving such circumstances, or (2) extend the due date for all applicants. For an individual appeal, an applicant must request a deadline waiver and present in writing compelling circumstances, related only to such unavoidable causes involving forces of nature, which must be received by the NIST Programmatic and Technical Questions Point of Contact as listed in Section VII., within three business days of the deadline, by 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time. In addition, in the event of Federal government closure on the application deadline day, the deadline will be extended for all applicants to the next business day, under the same conditions described in the FFO. In the event of Federal government closure(s) during the week before the application deadline, NIST will post a statement at the top of the FFO on www.grants.gov and at www.nist.gov/mep/ as soon as practicable indicating whether the deadline is extended for all applicants, under the same conditions described in the FFO. The FFO may be amended to extend the deadline under these and other circumstances. For information on signing up for any amendments to the FFO that may arise, refer to Section IV.5.b. of this FFO.

- b. Amendments.** Any amendments to this FFO will be announced through Grants.gov. Applicants may sign up on Grants.gov to receive amendments by email or may request copies from Diane Henderson by telephone at (301) 975-5105 or by email to diane.henderson@nist.gov.

V. Application/Review Information

1. **Evaluation Criteria.** The applications will be evaluated based on the evaluation criteria described below, which are set in the context of the applicant's ability to align the application for accomplishing the objectives outlined by this FFO: provide active business opportunity, supplier, technology and market scouting and matching services to small- and mid-size manufacturers.

The criteria that will be used in evaluating applications and the number of points assigned to each criterion are as follows:

- a. **Types of Opportunities (20 points).** The extent to which the proposal identifies and describes the variety of opportunities (buying, technology, supplier and/or market) and their viability, consistent with the program priorities listed in Section 1.2.a-d. The extent to which the proposal demonstrates practical linkages between the opportunities described and job creation and training. Additional opportunities beyond the energy efficiency, environmental and regional industries will be evaluated in terms of their potential economic contribution to the applicant's stated geography.
- b. **Strength and Depth of Network (20 points total).** The extent to which the proposal identifies and describes the team's ability to identify and describe for others the various needs (business opportunity, supplier, technology, market) and make matches between those needs and companies that can meet those needs. Collectively, the knowledge, skills and abilities should include knowledge of manufacturing businesses and how they operate; marketing, market intelligence and analysis, including how to evaluate new market opportunities; application of new technologies to new or existing products, processes and services; and supply chain analysis and development. The evaluation of the strength and depth of the network will specifically include:
 - (1) **Market Analysis (7 points).** The applicant's knowledge of the service region's manufacturing base and resources available to provide solutions to needs as described in the proposal will be evaluated taking into consideration the region's business sizes, industry types, existing and emerging supply chains, product mix, technology requirements and technology resources.
 - (2) **Geographical Location (3 points).** The extent to which a target service region is clearly defined will be evaluated. The breadth and comprehensiveness to which manufacturing and resource providers across the region are proposed to be reached will be evaluated.
 - (3) **Active Content Management (10 points).** The methods and extent to which the data upon which matching opportunities and companies are identified and such information managed and made available to the individuals responsible for opportunity identification and matching, including entry, deletion, extraction and modification on a regular basis to ensure timeliness, validity and quality of the data.
- c. **Technology Infrastructure Needed to Support Network Activities (20 points).** The combination of hardware, software and databases, whether internal to the proposer's team or purchased as a service, to support the creation, modification, deletion and extraction of the various opportunities and matches. The ability of the infrastructure to support creation and maintenance of the various outputs and outcomes of the matching process(es).
- d. **Resources (20 points).** The strength in technical personnel and programmatic resources, staff, facilities, equipment, and linkages to external sources of business opportunities and technologies will be assessed in the context of services needed by the manufacturers targeted for service. The degree to which the applicant identifies qualified individuals with the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to describe needs and make appropriate matches will be assessed. The degree to which the applicant identifies and links with qualified partners to identify opportunities or

provide solutions also will be considered. The proposed contractual relationships and monitoring plans for relevant partnerships will be evaluated in terms of linkages as described below:

Linkages. The applicant's description of the types of third party organizations which are participating with the applicant in the network, and the arrangements by which they do so. Third parties include but are not limited to industry, universities, non-profit economic development organizations and state governments. The strength of these linkages will be assessed with respect to the region's needs, its existing industry capabilities and efforts, and the potential for substantive impacts within the region, as described in b.(2) above.

- e. **Business Model(s) (20 points).** The quality of one or more business models, described in the proposal, to achieve long-term scalable service delivery to, and participation of, small- and mid-sized manufacturers will be evaluated and include a time frame beyond the period of performance. The appropriateness and viability of the identified business models will be assessed in the context of the proposed project's plan to address potential future partnership strategies that promote scale up to a national level.
- f. **Statement of Work (20 points).** The quality, completeness and appropriateness of the proposed tasks needed to create, populate, use and maintain the pilot network will be assessed.
- g. **Management and Financial Plan (20 points total).** The quality of the management structure described in the proposal will be evaluated. The degree to which the proposed project assures management personnel can carry out development and operation of an effective pilot project will be evaluated. The appropriateness of the identified management structure and personnel, in relation to the proposed project, will be evaluated. In addition, the proposal will be assessed in the following five areas:
 - (1) **Organizational Structure (3 points).** The completeness and appropriateness of the organizational structure across all project participants will be assessed. The extent to which the organizational structure focuses on and promotes the execution of the mission of the proposed pilot project will be evaluated.
 - (2) **Pilot Project Management (7 points).** The effectiveness of the planned methodology of proposed pilot project management will be evaluated, taking into consideration the quality and appropriateness of the identification of committed local partners and demonstrated experience of the leadership team in manufacturing, outreach and partnership development. The appropriateness of the plan to ensure both the successful conduct of the pilot project's business opportunity, supplier, technology and market scouting and matching activities, as well as documentation of project learning for use as a baseline for potential future NIST investment in a national B2B Network, will be evaluated.
 - (3) **Budget (5 points).** The relevancy and cost effectiveness of the applicant's detailed two (2) year budget for meeting the program objectives and program priorities of this FFO (see Section I. of this FFO) will be evaluated.
 - (4) **Outcomes (5 points).** Steps proposed to be undertaken to assess network impact will be evaluated. The comprehensiveness and appropriateness of measures identified to provide data on efficacy of the network activities will be evaluated along with direct and indirect indicators that demonstrate depth and breadth of impacts of network outcomes.

Each of these criteria (a. through g.) will be given equal weight (20 points) in the evaluation process with a total score of up to 140 being possible. Subcriteria weights are listed for each subcriterion above.

- 2. Selection Factors.** The Selecting Official shall select applications for award based upon the rank order of the applications. The Selecting Official may select an application out of rank based on one or more of the following additional selection factors:
- a. The availability of Federal funds.
 - b. Whether the project duplicates other projects funded by the Department of Commerce (DoC) or by other Federal agencies.
 - c. Diversity of geographic distribution of awardees.
 - d. Diversity of business models proposed by applicants.
 - e. Diversity of industry sectors and/or supply chains proposed to be addressed by applicants.
 - f. Program priorities and policy factors as given in section I.

3. Review and Selection Process.

- a. Initial Administrative Review of Applications.** An initial review of timely received applications will be conducted to determine eligibility, completeness, and responsiveness to this FFO and the scope of the stated program objectives. Applications determined to be ineligible, incomplete, and/or non-responsive may be eliminated from further review. 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 Proposals.** Proposals 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 and Ranking.** All eligible, complete and responsive applications will be peer reviewed by at least three (3) independent, objective individuals with appropriate professional and technical expertise relating to the topics covered in this FFO. Reviews will be limited to technical and cost matters, based on the evaluation criteria (see Section V.1 of this FFO). A mix of Federal and non-Federal reviewers may be used. The reviewers' scores will be determined on an individual basis, not as a consensus. The reviewers may ask questions of some or all applicants in writing. Reviewers will assign each application a score, based on the application's responsiveness to the FFO evaluation criteria, with a maximum score of 140.

A rank order will be prepared based on the average of the reviewers' scores and assigned adjectival ratings in accordance with the following scale:

Fundable, Outstanding (109-140);
Fundable, Very Good (95-108);
Fundable (81-94); or
Unfundable (0-80).

The Competition Manager will review the peer reviewers' comments and the ranking of the proposals, and make funding recommendations to the Selecting Official. The Competition Manager may recommend to the Selecting Official that awards be made out of rank order based upon one or more of the selection factors described in section V.2 of this FFO.

- 2) Selection.** The Selecting Official, who is the Acting Director of the NIST MEP Program, will make funding recommendations to the NIST Grants Officer based upon the adjectival ratings and the selection factors in Section V.2. of this FFO. Recommendations for awards will be made by the Selecting Official in rank order unless a proposal is justified to be selected out of rank based upon one or more of the selection factors described in Section V.2. of this FFO. If the Selecting Official makes a funding recommendation out of rank order, a justification

memorandum will be provided by the Selecting Official to the NIST Grants Officer stating which selection factors are used and how they apply to the identified application(s).

NIST reserves the right to negotiate the budget costs with any applicant selected to receive an award, which may include requesting that the applicant remove certain costs. Additionally, NIST may request that the successful applicant(s) modify objectives or work plans and 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, its subcontractors or subrecipients. NIST may select some, all, or none of the applications, or part(s) of any particular application. 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.

4. Anticipated Announcement and Award Date. Review, selection, and award processing is expected to be completed in November 2014. The earliest anticipated start date for awards made under this FFO is expected to be December 2014.

5. Additional Information

- a. Application Replacement Pages.** Applicants may not submit replacement pages and/or missing documents once 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.
- b. Notification to Unsuccessful Applicants.** Unsuccessful applicants will be notified in writing.
- c. Retention of Unsuccessful Applications.** An electronic copy of each non-selected application will be retained for three (3) years for record keeping purposes. After three (3) years, it will be destroyed..

VI. Award Administration Information

- 1. Award Notices.** Successful applicants will receive an award from the NIST Grants Officer. The award cover page, i.e., CD-450, Financial Assistance Award is available at http://ocio.os.doc.gov/s/groups/public/@doc/@os/@ocio/@oitpp/documents/content/dev01_002513.pdf and the DoC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions (January 2013) are available at http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/documents/DOC_Standard_Terms_and_Conditions_01_10_2013.pdf.

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements.

- a. DoC Pre-Award Notification Requirements.** The DoC Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements, which are contained in the *Federal Register* notice of December 17, 2012 (77 FR 74634), are applicable to this FFO and are available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2012/12/17/2012-30228/departments-of-commerce-pre-award-notification-requirements-for-grants-and-cooperative-agreements>.
- b. Employer/Taxpayer Identification Number (EIN/TIN), Dun and Bradstreet Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS), and System for Award Management (SAM).** All applicants for Federal financial assistance are required to obtain a universal identifier in the form of DUNS number and maintain a current registration in the Federal government's primary registrant database, SAM. On the form SF-424 items 8.b. and 8.c., the applicant's 9-digit EIN/TIN and 9-digit DUNS number must be consistent with the information in SAM (<https://www.sam.gov/>) and Automated Standard Application for Payment System (ASAP). For complex organizations with multiple EIN/TIN and DUNS numbers, the EIN/TIN and DUNS numbers MUST be the numbers for the applying organization. Organizations that provide incorrect/inconsistent EIN/TIN and DUNS numbers may experience significant delays in receiving funds if their application is selected for funding. Applicants should

confirm that the EIN/TIN and DUNS number are consistent with the information on the SAM and ASAP. **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.**

Per 2 C.F.R. Part 25, each applicant must:

- (1) Be registered in the Central Contractor Registry (CCR) before submitting an application noting the CCR now resides in SAM;
- (2) Maintain an active CCR registration, noting that the CCR now resides in SAM, with current information at all times during which it has an active Federal award or an application under consideration by an agency; and
- (3) Provide its DUNS number in each application or application it submits to the agency.

The applicant can obtain a DUNS number from Dun and Bradstreet. A DUNS number can be created within one business day. The CCR or SAM registration process may take five or more business days to complete. If you are currently registered with the CCR, you may not need to make any changes. However, please make certain that the EIN/TIN associated with your DUNS number is correct. Also note that you will need to update your CCR registration annually. This may take three or more business days to complete. Information about SAM is available at SAM.gov. See also 2 C.F.R. Part 25 and the *Federal Register* notice published on September 14, 2010, at 75 FR 55671.

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.

- c. 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.

- d. Use of NIST Intellectual Property.** If the applicant anticipates using any NIST-owned intellectual property to carry out the work proposed, the applicant should identify such intellectual property. This information will be used to ensure that no NIST employee involved in the development of the intellectual property will participate in the review process for that competition. In addition, if the applicant intends to use NIST-owned intellectual property, the applicant must comply with all statutes and regulations governing the licensing of Federal government patents and inventions, described in 35 U.S.C. §§ 200-212, 37 C.F.R. Part 401, 15 C.F.R. § 14.36, and in Section B.21 of the DoC Pre-Award Notification Requirements, 77 FR 74634 (December 17, 2012). Questions about these requirements may be directed to the Chief Counsel for NIST, (301) 975-2803.

Any use of NIST-owned intellectual property by an applicant is at the sole discretion of NIST and will be negotiated on a case-by-case basis if a project is deemed meritorious. The applicant should indicate within the statement of work whether it already has a license to use such intellectual property or whether it intends to seek one.

If any inventions made in whole or in part by a NIST employee arise in the course of an award made pursuant to this FFO, the United States government may retain its ownership rights in any such invention. Licensing or other disposition of NIST's rights in such inventions will be determined solely by NIST, and include the possibility of NIST putting the intellectual property into the public domain.

- e. **Funding Availability and Limitation of Liability.** Funding for the program listed in this FFO is contingent upon the availability of appropriations. In no event will NIST or DoC be responsible for application preparation costs if the program fails to receive funding or is cancelled because of agency priorities. Publication of this FFO does not oblige NIST or DoC to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.
- 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.
- g. **OMB Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements.** Please note that on December 26, 2013, OMB published final guidance titled "Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements" (OMB Uniform Guidance) (<https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/12/26/2013-30465/uniform-administrative-requirements-cost-principles-and-audit-requirements-for-federal-awards>), which streamlines the language from eight existing OMB circulars, including Cost Principles (OMB Circulars A-21, A-87, A-122) and administrative requirements (OMB Circulars A-102 and A-110), into one consolidated set of guidance applicable to federal assistance awards. Once adopted by the Department of Commerce through the promulgation of updated financial assistance regulations, the OMB Uniform Guidance will supersede DOC's uniform administrative requirements for financial assistance awards, currently set forth in 15 C.F.R. parts 14 and 24. The DOC expects to adopt the OMB Uniform Guidance by December 26, 2014, meaning that the OMB Uniform Guidance will apply to all new awards and to additional funding to existing awards made after December 26, 2014. In addition, the audit requirements of the OMB Uniform Guidance will apply to audits of non-Federal entities beginning on or after December 26, 2014. Therefore, applicants should familiarize themselves with the OMB Uniform Guidance. Additional information on the substance of and transition to the OMB Uniform Guidance may be found at <https://cfo.gov/cofar/>.

3. Reporting

- a. **Reporting Requirements.** In lieu of the reporting requirements described in sections A.01 Financial Reports and B.01 Performance (Technical) Reports of the DoC Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions dated January 2013 (http://www.osec.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/documents/DOC_Standard_Terms_and_Conditions_01_10_2013.pdf) the following reporting requirements shall apply:
 - (1) **Financial Reports.** Each award recipient will be required to submit an SF-425, Federal Financial Report into the MEP's Enterprise Information System (MEIS) on a quarterly basis for the periods ending March 31, June 30, September 30, and December 31 of each year. Reports will be due within 30 days after the end of the reporting period.
 - (2) **Performance (Technical) Reports.** Each award recipient will be required to submit a technical progress report into the MEP's Enterprise Information System (MEIS) on a quarterly basis for the periods ending March 31, June 30, September 30, and December 31 of each year. Reports will be due within 30 days after the end of the reporting period. A final technical progress report shall be submitted within 90 days after the expiration date of the award. Technical progress reports shall contain information as prescribed in the NIST MEP Reporting Guidelines (OMB Control Number 0693-0032). The NIST MEP Reporting Guidelines may be requested by contacting the NIST personnel listed below:

Diane Henderson, National Institute of Standards and Technology, Manufacturing Extension Partnership, 100 Bureau Drive, Mail Stop 4800, Gaithersburg, MD 20899-4800 (Phone: 301-975-5105, email: diane.henderson@nist.gov).

- b. Audit Requirements.** Single or program-specific audits shall be performed in accordance with the requirements contained in OMB Circular A-133, “Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations,” and the related *Compliance Supplement*. OMB Circular A-133 requires any non-Federal entity (*i.e.*, including non-profit institutions of higher education and other non-profit organizations) that expends Federal awards of \$500,000 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 Circular. Applicants are reminded that NIST, the DoC Office of Inspector General, or another authorized Federal agency may conduct an audit of an award at any time. Additionally, applicants should take note of the new financial assistance audit requirements set forth in the recently published OMB Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements, which is cited and discussed above in Section VI.2.g. of this FFO.
- c. 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.
- d. Third Party Evaluation.** NIST intends to retain a third party to interface with NIST and award recipients for ongoing evaluation and best practice identification during the performance of B2B Network pilot program awards. Award recipients will be required to participate in this third party evaluation. More detail will be provided as part of the award documentation and at kickoff activities.
- 4. Post Client Project Follow-Up.** The recipient will be required to provide client and project data in the specified format to the organization identified by NIST/MEP in order for post-project follow-up data to be obtained (OMB Control Number 0693-0021).

VII. Agency Contact(s)

Questions should be directed to the following contact persons:

Subject Area	Point of Contact
Administrative, budget, cost-sharing, eligibility questions and other programmatic questions.	Diane Henderson Manufacturing Extension Partnership NIST Phone: 301-975-5105 Fax: 301-963-6556 E-mail: diane.henderson@nist.gov
Grants.gov - application submission	Christopher Hunton Administrative Support & Document Control Office NIST Phone: 301-975-5718 Fax: 301-840-5976 E-mail: christopher.hunton@nist.gov
Grant rules and regulations	Jannet Cancino Grants Management Division NIST Phone: 301-975-6544 E-mail: jannet.cancino@nist.gov Fax: 301-975-6319

VIII. Other Information

Webinar Information Session. NIST MEP will hold an information session for organizations that are considering applying to this opportunity. This webinar will provide general information regarding the B2B Network pilots program and offer general guidance on preparing proposals. NIST/MEP staff will be available on the webinar to answer general questions. During the webinar, proprietary technical discussions about specific project ideas will not be permitted. Also, NIST/MEP staff will not critique or provide feedback on any project ideas during the webinar or at any time before submission of a proposal to B2B Network pilots program. However, NIST/MEP staff will provide information about the B2B Network pilots program eligibility, evaluation criteria and selection factors, selection process, and the general characteristics of a competitive B2B Network pilots program proposal during this webinar, and by phone and email. The webinar will be held approximately 14 business days after posting of this FFO. The exact date and time of the webinar will be posted on the MEP website at www.nist.gov/mep. The webinar will be recorded and a link to the recording will be posted on the MEP website. In addition, the webinar presentation will be available after the webinar on the MEP website. Organizations wishing to participate in the webinar must sign up by contacting Diane Henderson at diane.henderson@nist.gov.